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# Reinstating the radical: Trajectory, debates, and proposals for strategy as practice

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A B S T R A C T

Strategy as practice (SAP) has developed from a relatively radical idea emphasising situated and knowledgeable strategy practices to a well-recognised field explaining a wide range of strategy activities and practices. Despite this remarkable trajectory, SAP continues to be shaped by ongoing onto-epistemological debates. This essay follows the call to embrace SAP's early roots in social practices and proposes reinstating the radical in SAP research. We briefly review SAP's trajectory, showing how advocates and critics have co-constructed the field as it is today. Based on this review, we identify two ongoing debates of intentionality and the macro–micro divide and highlight the onto-epistemological nature of these debates and the methodological challenges to move beyond the debates. Finally, we propose three research 'bridges' across these debates to further advance the radical SAP agenda and its growth as a vibrant intellectual community open to a wide range of research and phenomena as part of the field's continuous process of becoming.

Research on strategy as practice (SAP) has been developing for over 25 years (e.g., Kohtamäki, Whittington, Vaara, & Rabetino, 2022; Seidl, Ma, & Splitter, 2024; Whittington, 1996). While it is a well-recognised field in the academy today, SAP started as a 'radical' movement offering an alternative view to traditional economics-based strategy research (Jarzabkowski, Seidl, & Balogun, 2022). SAP research focuses on people's actions, interactions, and negotiations that shape the processes and the outcomes of their resulting strategies (Balogun, Jacobs, Jarzabkowski, Mantere, & Vaara, 2014; Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). It argues that strategy is not something an organisation *has* but about what people *do* in an organisation (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006). While SAP advocates have built a body of literature through high-quality research, its critics have played an equally important role in shaping the trajectory. This critical co-constructing process comprises recurring tensions and compromises in constructing a vibrant intellectual field. Central to these tensions are debates about the onto-epistemology of practice in SAP research (Chia & Holt, 2006, 2023; Seidl & Whittington, 2014; Sele, Mahringer, Danner-Schroder, Grisold, & Renzl, 2024; Tsoukas, 2010). Consequently, critics have repeatedly argued that SAP research has lost or failed to fully grasp its initial radicalness. As SAP as a field reaches a crossroads, it is vital for scholars to take stock of SAP's trajectory, examine the tensions and debates, and invigorate a more open SAP agenda.

In this essay, we propose reinstating the radical in SAP research to enable future research to transcend current divides and debates and sustain the vibrance of the SAP field. As radical depends on one's benchmark, by radical, we mean a social practice onto-epistemology, and associated methodology that is distinct from the largely economics and behavioural economics background that characterises traditional strategy research. Embracing the radical is intended to encourage the collision of ideas and push the boundaries of SAP research. First, we review SAP's trajectory and discuss how the field is shaped by the tensions between advocates and critics, between traditional strategy theorists and expert practice theorists, and between SAP's initial, somewhat marginal positioning and its current position as a well-recognised field in the academy. We highlight the important role that the radical criticisms have played in this trajectory. Second, we identify two key onto-epistemological tensions in SAP research that are centred around the question of intentionality by those doing strategy-related work and the macro–micro divide in explaining strategy phenomena, which we argue are also methodologically challenging. Finally, we propose three 'bridges' to connect the creation/generation of strategy with the consequences of strategy actions, interactions, and

negotiations, the macro with the micro, and the 'old' with the 'new' phenomena in SAP research, so constituting a more radical agenda. By doing so, we aim to enable future research to continue expanding SAP research openly and creatively. We highlight that SAP is still in the process of becoming and call for researchers to reinstate the radical to shape our field as a vibrant intellectual community open to all practice-based strategy work in the next 25 years.

## 1. The trajectory of strategy as practice: A very brief review

The term strategy as practice first appeared in Richard Whittington's (1996) seminal *Long Range Planning* paper, which focussed on strategists and strategizing as central pillars to a practice-based view of strategy. In this article, Whittington (1996) highlights what people do in strategy-related work, emphasising their practitioner knowledge on a continuum from local tacit knowledge to general formal knowledge in understanding strategy as practice. Hence, the initial focus of SAP was on the knowledgeable practices of strategists.

SAP gained momentum with the 2003 publication of a special issue in the *Journal of Management Studies*. The special issue expanded the notion of SAP from focusing on knowledgeable practices to including strategizing activities and processes. In the introductory article, Johnson, Melin, and Whittington (2003, p. 3) focus on "micro-strategizing" as "an activity-based view of strategy that focuses on the detailed processes and practices [...] which relate to strategic outcomes." The focus on an "activity-based view of strategy" was, arguably, a pragmatic move to position SAP as distinct from but complementary to a traditional economics-based view of strategy research. However, in doing so, this special issue carved out a space within the strategy field by distinguishing "micro-level" day-to-day strategy activities from the "macro-level of organisations." This emphasis on micro-strategies triggered two key streams of criticism from practice scholars around intentionality and the micro/macro distinction (Chia & Holt, 2006; Chia & MacKay, 2007; Tsoukas, 2010).

The first stream of criticism considers the notion of intentionality, with its connotations of deliberate, conscious pursuit of strategic action (Chia & Holt, 2006; Tsoukas, 2010). In Chia and Holt's (2006) article Strategy as Practical Coping, the authors took aim at the "intention, purposefulness, goal-orientation and causal action" portrayed in strategy generally and SAP specifically. They argued that "practical actions and relationships precede individual identity and strategic intent." (Chia & Holt, 2006, p. 637), calling into question the causal inference researchers often make between purposeful actions and strategic outcomes. They propose purposiveness as opposed to purposefulness and suggest that "actions are taken to overcome practical difficulties and, over time, a certain consistency of action seems to emerge despite the lack of intention or an overall plan" (p. 639). In 2010, Hari Tsoukas followed up with the issue of intentionality in SAP research. First, he pointed out that social embeddedness was missing from SAP research such that neo-liberal ideologies, industry changes, and strategic changes are neglected in understanding strategy. Second, he argued that SAP research has not paid sufficient attention to the cultural and historical impact on an actor's social practices and activities. This vein of criticism emphasises that the neglect of strategy practices that may be non-deliberate and purposive rather than purposeful has hindered theorising about the situated nature of intentionality in strategic actions and activities.

A second stream of critique about the micro/macro distinction in SAP research is captured by Chia and MacKay (2007). The micro/macro distinction refers to the analytic separation of people's everyday activities from their contexts, such as organisational structure and institutional arrangements. This approach offers analytic convenience in tracing how people's activities, categorised as micro, shape and are shaped by their wider contexts that are, at least implicitly, categorised as macro (e.g., Johnson et al., 2003). However, it also dilutes the onto-epistemological grounding of SAP in practice theories that

conceptualise social order as instantiated within the everyday practice that constitutes what we recognise as social order (Nicolini, 2009; Schatzki, 2002). From this perspective, it is problematic to use the language of either micro practices or macro-structures.

In response, noting that micro-activities can be interpreted as a "micro-isolationism" without considering "the larger phenomena that make it possible" (Seidl & Whittington, 2014, p. 1408), Seidl and Whittington (2014) argue for both a tall ontology in which "micro-level strategizing praxis depends hierarchically on larger macro structures or systems," and a flat ontology in which practices are "in a network of relationships." Interestingly, the tall ontology does not resolve but re-inforces, in some way, the macro/micro distinction, at least linguistically. However, the flat ontology acknowledges the more radical agenda that structure is embedded in everyday social practices that people enact through their tacit, pre-reflective knowing of how to go on when situated in context. Without a doubt, many studies that are grounded in a practice theoretical approach continue to use the term micro as a distinction from the wider social order (e.g., Jarzabkowski & Bednarek, 2018; Kouamé & Langley, 2018; Rouleau, 2005), perhaps as a pragmatic means of distinguishing between phenomena for readers who are less familiar with the SAP onto-epistemology. Hence, the notions of a flat and a tall ontology can be seen as a compromise by SAP scholars to address practice scholars' criticisms while remaining connected to scholars who are comfortable with using the micro/macro distinction, at least to explain empirical phenomena.

Some articles attempted to reset the SAP agenda in response to these tensions and critiques. First, in the introductory article of a special issue in *Human Relations*, Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) retired the terminology of micro-activities and an activity-based view of strategy, recentring the SAP agenda around the practice-praxis-practitioner framework, and "emphasis[ing] explicit links between micro- and macro-perspectives on strategy as a social practice." (p. 6). Nevertheless, the agenda reset continued to attract criticisms about the intentionality of human actions and the micro/macro distinction. These criticisms led to strategy *in* practice as a proposed alternative to strategy as practice (MacKay, Chia, & Nair, 2022).

In their effort to further expand the agenda, Vaara and Whittington (2012) review article outlined five directions to further develop SAP research, summarised in Table 1. These five directions suggested new - ways of theorising that connected with SAP's earlier position to complement but also go beyond traditional strategy research. Their proposal to include strategists "beyond the managerial ranks" and to problematise the notion of 'strategic' as taken for granted continues SAP's position vis-à-vis economics-based strategy research. Other proposals are arguably more radical in embracing a practice-based onto-epistemology and methodology, such as materiality, participation-based strategy-making, and critical analysis of practices in strategy-making. In addition, they acknowledge the criticisms around intentionality and the micro–macro divide. However, the authors did not engage with these criticisms directly, and their language seems to reinforce the divide, such as describing institutions as macro.

Many of the proposals in these and other efforts to reset and expand the agenda (e.g., Balogun et al., 2014; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Kohtamäki et al., 2022) have been taken up by SAP researchers, generating valuable contributions to SAP research. For example, following the call for attention to materiality, research concerning strategic tools and socio-materiality has become a central topic in SAP research (Balogun et al., 2014; Knight, Paroutis, & Heracleous, 2018). At the same time, the already strong vein of research on the discursive construction of strategy continued to develop (Balogun et al., 2014; Fenton & Langley, 2011). Additionally, open strategy as a novel theoretical perspective on the emergence of strategy-making has gained significant traction in the last few years (Dobusch, Dobusch, & Müller-Seitz, 2019; Gegenhuber & Dobusch, 2017; Luedicke, Husemann, Furnari, & Ladstaetter, 2017; Splitter, Jarzabkowski, & Seidl, 2023).

Despite these efforts at resets and expansion, 25 years into SAP

**Table 1**
A summary of five directions based on Vaara and Whittington (2012).

| Potential direction | Focus on future research | Implication for agenda reset and expansion |
|---|---|---|
| Agency in a web of practices | • Strategists adopt multiple practices, particularly discursive practices.<br>• Strategists "beyond the managerial ranks," e.g., frontline workers and professionals. | • Highlighting discursive practices adopted by practitioners.<br>• Proposing a broad scope of strategists (vs. a narrow scope in traditional strategic management) |
| The macro-institutional nature of practices | • Strategy as a field<br>• Practice as social, historical, temporal, and geographical embedded.<br>• Practice translation in particular contexts | • Acknowledging the nature of social practice<br>• Suggesting the macro–micro divide (at least linguistically) |
| Emergence in strategy making | • Practices as "strategic," which contribute to performance, capability, and competitive advantages.<br>• Practical knowledge and practical intelligence to deal with puzzling situations.<br>• Retrospective construction of 'strategic' vs strategy development in real-time through conversations and narratives | • Problematising the notion of 'strategic' vis-à-vis taken-for-granted in strategic management research.<br>• Acknowledging the criticism of intentionality from practice theorists |
| Materiality | • The impact of material objects on practices and praxis<br>• Bodily material and artefacts to be considered, in addition to discourse, in understanding strategy work | • Calling for research on socio-materiality, which does not sit well with the ontological position of strategic management research |
| Critical analysis | • Critical analysis of taken-for-granted practices to capture the underlying assumptions.<br>• The legitimatizing and naturalizing mechanisms of conventional practices<br>• Organisation-wide participation beyond top management in strategy-making<br>• Professionalization of strategic management | • Further strengthening discursive aspect of strategy as practice<br>• Proposing participation-based strategy making (which becomes open strategy later) |

research, scholars still call for SAP scholars to embrace its initial, more radical social practice theory agenda. For example, Rouleau and Cloutier (2022) propose that a practice-based view of strategy should be articulated around the principle of practical knowing. The authors critique existing SAP research for equating managerial activities with social practices whilst overlooking the socio-cultural dispositions in which these activities occur. Others critique SAP for being co-opted by strategy performance and process research into studying those patterns of activities that practitioners articulate as strategies (Jarzabkowski, Kavas, & Krull, 2021) rather than examining how things become strategic within people's purposive coping activities (Mackay et al., 2022). At the same time, other bodies of work in a practice vein have emphasised the need for a more radical embracing of its onto-epistemological bases and called for more methodological innovation to demonstrate these bases empirically. For example, Sele et al. (2024) adopt a flat ontology to connect the practice of organisational routines to wider social issues. These authors reinterpret existing practice-based research on routines (e.g., Feldman & Pentland, 2003) to conceptualise grand challenges as broad patterns of actions (see also Seidl et al., 2024). They note that the taken-for-granted nature of everyday practices can perpetuate social structures associated with inequality and discrimination (Feldman & Pentland, 2003), necessitating a more radical approach to understanding and reconfiguring the consequentiality of everyday practices

(Jarzabkowski et al., 2021). These ongoing criticisms and calls for a reset and extension throughout the history of SAP are the basis for our proposal for reinstating the radical in SAP research.

## 2. Ongoing debates on practices and strategy

Our brief review of SAP's trajectory suggests two ongoing debates that remain open for contribution. These debates are centred around the onto-epistemological nature of practices in strategy. One debate concerns people's intention in their actions, activities, and practices when doing strategy work. That is, whether practitioners are strategically purposeful in their strategy work or merely engaged in everyday 'practical coping' (Chia & MacKay, 2007; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007) that becomes recognisable, in retrospect, as a stream of strategic activities (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985; Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014). Two issues are central to this debate about intentionality in practice. First, how can we understand strategy outcomes in SAP research (Jarzabkowski et al., 2021)? Secondly, can we explicitly link an individual's activities and practices to strategy outcomes (Johnson et al., 2003; Tsoukas, 2010)? Most empirical SAP publications indicate that links can be drawn between practices defined by organisations that researchers are studying, such as strategic planning, and some individual outcomes of those practices, such as managerial ways of reclaiming agency (e.g., Splitter et al., 2023), organisational outcomes, such as collective sensemaking (e.g., Balogun, Bartunek, & Do, 2015; Spee, Jarzabkowski, & Smets, 2016), or inter-organisational outcomes, such as collaborative ventures (Deken, Berends, Gemser, & Lauche, 2018). This approach to identifying outcomes continues a long-lasting tradition focusing on performance outcomes in economics-based strategy research. SAP's early positioning as a complement to traditional strategy research has contributed to this focus on phenomena already defined as strategic and directed at outcomes by the practitioners being studied. Acknowledging this legacy, researchers have called for a more radical agenda to identify and follow those indirect practices and the patterns of actions they constitute that researchers feel consequential regardless of whether they are articulated as strategic by those in the organisation (Jarzabkowski et al., 2021). Further exploration is needed to address and transcend the debate of whether strategy as practice can be furthered by studying intentional strategy practices with their often-unintended consequences (e.g., Balogun & Johnson, 2005) or those unintentional practical coping activities that become strategic patterns of actions over time (Mackay & Chia, 2013).

The other debate concerns the micro–macro divide. Some scholars accept that, while not theoretically distinct, this divide is *analytically* necessary for showing, empirically, how practices shape and are shaped by 'context' (e.g., Jarzabkowski et al., 2019; Herepath, 2014). Indeed, adopting critical realism, Herepath (2014) argued that conditions of action and actions should not be conflated. However, it is problematic for researchers who engage with philosophers such as Bourdieu and Heidegger (Chia & Holt, 2006; Tsoukas, 2010). These researchers privilege the study of relationships between practices over organisations, arguing that such 'macro' structures are reflected in people's situated knowledge displayed in their everyday practices (Nicolini, 2009; Schatzki, 2001). While much emphasis has been placed on showing the link between activities and practices on the one hand and their organisational, institutional, and socio-historical contexts on the other, even this compromise is problematic for such scholars (e.g., Chia & Holt, 2006). Socio-cultural and cultural-historical dispositions are instantiated and reflected in practices; enacting practices shows one's awareness of and knowledge about these socio-cultural and socio-historical influences. Hence, suggesting that contexts can be separated from activities and practices, even for analytic purposes, neglects the socio-cultural and historical knowing that is core to practices (Chia & Holt, 2006; Nicolini, 2011; Rouleau, 2005).

To date, SAP's trajectory has been shaped by these debates. On the one hand, its pragmatic approach to bridging with traditional strategy

research by subscribing to a more functional presentation of practices, or as some argued, managerial activities (Rouleau & Cloutier, 2022), has contributed to its rise from an alternative movement to a well-recognised field, still small but open. On the other hand, it is vital to recognise that concerns and warnings from critics have prompted SAP scholars to continuously deepen their understanding of the practice-based view of strategy and endeavour to maintain its radical agenda. Indeed, recent reviews have shown that scholars who have contributed significantly to SAP's growth have consistently tried to bring social practice back to the centre of SAP research. They argue that SAP researchers must further acknowledge and embrace social practice theory's onto-epistemological principles and that, in doing so, they will also need to explore methodological frontiers to continue to revitalise the SAP field (e.g., Jarzabkowski et al., 2021; Mackay et al., 2022; Rouleau & Cloutier, 2022; Seidl et al., 2024).

## 3. Three proposals: 'Bridges' towards a more radical agenda

Looking at SAP's remarkable trajectory from an ostensibly radical movement to a well-recognised field in the academy, it is apparent that the field remains characterised by some ongoing criticisms and debates. In this section, we propose three research 'bridges' across these debates to further advance the radical SAP agenda and its growth as a field.

### 3.1. Bridging across creation/generation of strategy and its consequences

First, to address the intentionality debate, we propose that future research bridges the creation/generation of strategy and the consequences of people's actions, interactions, and negotiations, in effect considering how things become strategic (Gond, Cabantous, & Krikorian, 2018). So far, two approaches have been distinguished. One approach begins with the consequentiality of strategy activities and practices (Jarzabkowski et al., 2021). Such consequences are not always consistent with mandates or outcomes defined by organisations, but they are identified by researchers as critical through their own immersion in a context. This approach can be seen as a compromise between connecting to a research tradition that requires 'outcomes' (e.g., Bromiley & Rau, 2014) and addressing critics' concerns with the nature of intentionality in understanding strategy outcomes (e.g., Tsoukas, 2010). Following this line of argument, scholars may build upon Chia and Holt (2023) and acknowledge the implicit, indirect, and unintended consequences of practices, tracing their implications and connecting them with streams of activities identified by the researcher as strategic. Such work, which would help address the overdue concern about non-deliberate activities in strategy (Tsoukas, 2010), requires deep immersion and understanding of the phenomenon. While time-consuming, this vein of research would be hugely important to move SAP research forward.

The other approach focuses on alternative ways through which strategy is created/generated, which has been developing into a promising area of open strategy (Dobusch et al., 2019; Gegenhuber & Dobusch, 2017; Luedicke et al., 2017; Splitter et al., 2023). This stream focuses on how strategy emerges from the participatory decision-making process in well-established organisations, a direction proposed by Vaara and Whittington (2012) in their agenda expansion. The development also shows that SAP has begun to grow out of its complementary positioning vis-à-vis traditional strategy research. While recent developments remain in the domain of strategic management (Burström, Wilson, & Wincent, 2020; Seidl et al., 2024), the field is now able to pursue other strategic phenomena beyond the usual scope defined by a traditional corporate setting. Indeed, empirical work has begun to explore settings such as interorganizational collaboration and grand challenges (Couture, Jarzabkowski, & Lê, 2023; Deken et al., 2018). Focusing on the creation/generation of strategy and building upon Seidl et al. (2024), we further call for attention to the contexts of emerging organisations, such as start-ups and new ventures, and how these

organisations create and generate strategy (e.g., Thompson & Byrne, 2022). Understanding how 'strategy' emerges and whether and how strategy is articulated and defined in emerging organisations will deepen our understanding of emergence in SAP research.

### 3.2. Bridging across the 'macro' and the 'micro'

Second, we propose that future research bridges the macro–micro divide by highlighting the situatedness of strategy practices. Currently, the dominant approach is to highlight the link between local activities and practices on the one hand and arrangements at a more 'macro' level on the other. This approach has been fruitful in establishing the SAP literature and making it accessible to a strategy research audience. However, it is necessary to consider a more radical agenda. Tracing SAP's trajectory, we can identify two initial proposals that have made a comeback recently. One calls for attention to social practices and tacit knowledge in generating, enacting, and modifying practices in situ (Rouleau & Cloutier, 2022; Whittington, 2006). Tacit knowledge and knowing are central to Whittington (1996), in which strategy as practice was coined for the first time but lost in SAP's transformation into a well-recognised field. Despite the challenges of empirically showing knowing and knowledgeability, SAP scholars could draw from practice scholars in other fields (e.g., Nicolini, 2009; Nicolini, 2011). For example, using the notion of site (Schatzki, 2002, 2005) and based on a three-year investigation of three telemedicine centres in northern Italy, Nicolini (2011) shows how knowing is instantiated in nurses' everyday practices. Nicolini creatively presented various forms of empirical materials—-from field notes to detailed verbatim transcription of conversations when enacting a practice, such as making a call. His careful trailing of these practices from one centre to others shows that knowledge is translated through discourses, artefacts, and spaces in practice. Future SAP researchers could learn from these creative approaches to trace practices across sites in which "things exist and events happen" (Schatzki, 2002, p. 63) rather than sites as specific firms or groups (Nicolini, 2011). Doing so will lead SAP back to its roots in practices and knowledge when enacting practices, expanding the SAP repertoire and continuing to enrich our understanding of strategy as a social practice.

The other proposal has argued for a flatter ontology (Seidl & Whittington, 2014). The flat ontology draws attention to the connectivity and relationship among practices that may span differing regimes. In this approach, the macro–micro divide does not exist. Local activities and practices may 'travel' across differing geographic locations and circumstances. Recent research has shown that grand challenges can be understood as a web of social relations in which local actions and interactions transcend individual organisations and have a grand impact (Sele et al., 2024). Sele and her co-authors creatively reinterpreted existing research to show how a flat ontology makes it possible to understand practices in tackling grand challenges. While Seidl et al. (2024) also call for further research into the patterning of strategic activities, it remains challenging to demonstrate this with primary empirical data that concerns strategy. Part of the challenge lies in the processual nature of the phenomena and its complexity in untangling a wide range of unfolding and evolving relationships. As Kouamé and Langley (2018) reflected, although it is not impossible, it is rare for researchers to capture both the multifaceted relationships and the unfolding process of strategic efforts. We therefore argue that these challenges need to be addressed methodologically, in which any breakthrough will open a new avenue for studying strategy as practice.

### 3.3. Bridging the 'old' with the 'new'

Third, we propose that future research could bridge the 'old' with the 'new' phenomena in SAP research. By 'old' phenomena, we mean a single context, mostly corporations in a specific industry with a conventional sense of organisational outcomes, such as economic performance. By 'new' phenomena, we refer to diverse forms of context that

focus on alternative missions and outcomes, including sustainability and social inclusion, and phenomena beyond an organisation's boundary, such as inter-organisational engagement and ecosystem adaptation (Deken et al., 2018; Sele et al., 2024) or have been rarely studied in the SAP scholarship. The understanding of the 'new' should be built upon that of the 'old' phenomenologically and theoretically.

First, it is critical to be aware that 'new' phenomena could emerge from 'old' phenomena. For example, research has suggested that spin-offs should be understood in relation to their former 'parent' organisations (e.g., Corley & Gioia, 2004). Hence, it would be valuable to understand how spin-offs may carry over practices in their strategy work. Similarly, traditional performance-based strategies may morph, through people's strategizing practices, into strategies oriented at social missions such as sustainability (e.g., Hengst, Jarzabkowski, Hoegl, & Muethel, 2020).

Second, 'new' phenomena are intertwined with 'old' phenomena. For example, not-for-profit and for-profit organisations are part and parcel of the system and often wield power beyond their boundaries (e. g., Abrahamson & Fombrun, 1992), which inadvertently influences the strategy practices of these individual organisations. These broader impacts deserve great attention in the more radical agenda of SAP research.

Third, phenomena can be considered 'new' to the SAP field but informed by the SAP literature. For example, SAP scholars can take stock of the existing knowledge and expertise on strategizing to deepen understanding of 'new' phenomena, such as strategizing in start-ups and new ventures. Contexts such as start-ups and new ventures have been studied in adjacent fields that focus on a wide range of practices in relation to entrepreneurial acts (i.e., entrepreneuring) in both start-ups and well-structured organisations (Thompson, Byrne, Jenkins, & Teague, 2022; Thompson, Verduijn, & Gartner, 2020). Further attending to these 'new' phenomena to extend our existing understanding will contribute to a broad and open agenda to the practice-based perspective of all things strategic.

Onto-epistemologically, bridging the 'old' and the 'new' phenomena is useful in getting closer to a flat ontology that highlights a web of relationships rather than hierarchical levels. Doing so also helps consolidate SAP research as an existing body of knowledge that is continuing to grow. As shown above, researchers who are interested in a flat ontology face methodological challenges to show such connectivity between practices in the 'old' and the 'new' phenomena. Yet there are some methodological indications for ways forward. For example, one proposal is to translate practices from the 'old' to the 'new' by trailing practices (Nicolini, 2009) and tracking how these practices travel from the 'old' to the 'new' (at least to SAP) phenomena, such as spin-offs and start-ups. Another approach might be comparing and contrasting practices between the 'old' and the 'new' phenomena that are connected in some way, such as differing practices in an organisational field or a multistakeholder partnership (e.g., Couture et al., 2023). Future researchers can explore these approaches with their empirical materials, reflecting on the methodological challenges and solving these problems creatively while remaining grounded in the literature. More broadly, as a field, bridging the 'old' and the 'new' phenomena enables researchers to go beyond the scope of traditional strategy research and engage in an exploratory agenda around how phenomena become strategic. It might be organisational types, organisational boundaries, or even societal issues. By doing so, strategy as practice can free itself from the narrow definition of strategy that shaped its early development (Jarzabkowski et al., 2022).

## 4. Conclusion

In this essay, we look at how strategy as practice has developed from a radical movement that is distinctive from but complementary to economics-based strategy research to a well-recognised field in the academy. We also look forward to SAP's continuous flourishing by reinstating the radical in the SAP agenda to provoke the collision of ideas and motivate creative breakthroughs to occur. We acknowledge that the SAP field has been shaped by various onto-epistemological and methodological tensions, leading to ongoing debates. Reflecting on SAP's trajectory with a focus on contributing to SAP as a vibrant and open intellectual community, we propose three 'bridges' to enable future research to transcend our current debates and divides, unleashing the potential of what a practice view can offer to further advance our understanding of strategy in, around, and beyond the usual organisation settings of strategy. We acknowledge the challenges associated with the proposals but highlight the rewards of any methodological breakthrough.

We conclude by arguing that there are exciting opportunities for addressing phenomena that are not in a traditional domain of strategic management but are strategic, nevertheless. For example, future researchers can explore questions, including, but not restricted to how an SAP approach can

- shed light on strategies to address grand challenges, such as climate change, poverty, and inequality,
- help trigger meaningful changes in addressing large-scale, complex social issues,
- explore the many nuances of strategizing during new venture creations with all the permutations that entrepreneuring brings in different types of ventures and under different founding conditions
- examine how organizations strategize together given the differences in organizational size, form, purpose and power dynamics that characterize interorganizational collaboration?

As we can see, the possibilities are endless. Finally, it is worth mentioning that SAP is still in the process of becoming, and it is up to scholars to shape and support it as a community open to all practice-based views of strategy in various contexts, established and emerging, local, and global. We call for action to reinstate the radical in various ways for SAP to flourish in the 25 years to come.

## CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Qian Li:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Conceptualization. **Paula Jarzabkowski:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Conceptualization.

## Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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