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Symbols of strategy: understanding organizations through the meaning attached to strategic objects

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SYMBOLS OF STRATEGY:
STUDYING ORGANIZATIONS THROUGH THE MEANING OF STRATEGIC OBJECTS USING SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

UNIVERSITY OF WEST LONDON
The Career University

UWL Doctoral Conference
24th May 2017

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Supervisors: Professor Alexandros Paraskevas
Professor Angela Roper
Associate Professor Lorna Wang

Aim: To explore the strategic practice of a third sector organization using a symbolic interactionist perspective.

Objectives

1. To develop a typology of strategic objects and episodes in the third-sector case study organization.
2. To examine the relationship between the meaning attached to strategic objects by actors and resulting social action.
3. Produce a framework to understand practitioner, practice and praxis relations.

Three dimensions of practice:

The set of interconnected activities that exist socially;

The sense-making process that allows the negotiation of meanings of practice by practitioners;

The social effects generated by a practice and how this connects with other social practices.

(Corradi, Gherardi and Verzelloni, 2010)

Key themes in the literature

How strategy is materialised in organisations (Whittington, 2015) through specific tools (Kaplan, 2011) or episodes (Hendry and Seidl, 2003). How tools are used (Jarzabkowski et al, 2013) or not used (Roper and Hodari, 2015).

The use of objects in strategic sensemaking (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Wright et. al, 2013; Jarzabkowski et al, 2012), and how strategy is articulated through discourse (Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Regner, 2003; Paroutis et al, 2015).

Symbolic Interactionism

Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings the things have for them;

The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows;

These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.

(Blumer, 1969: p.2).

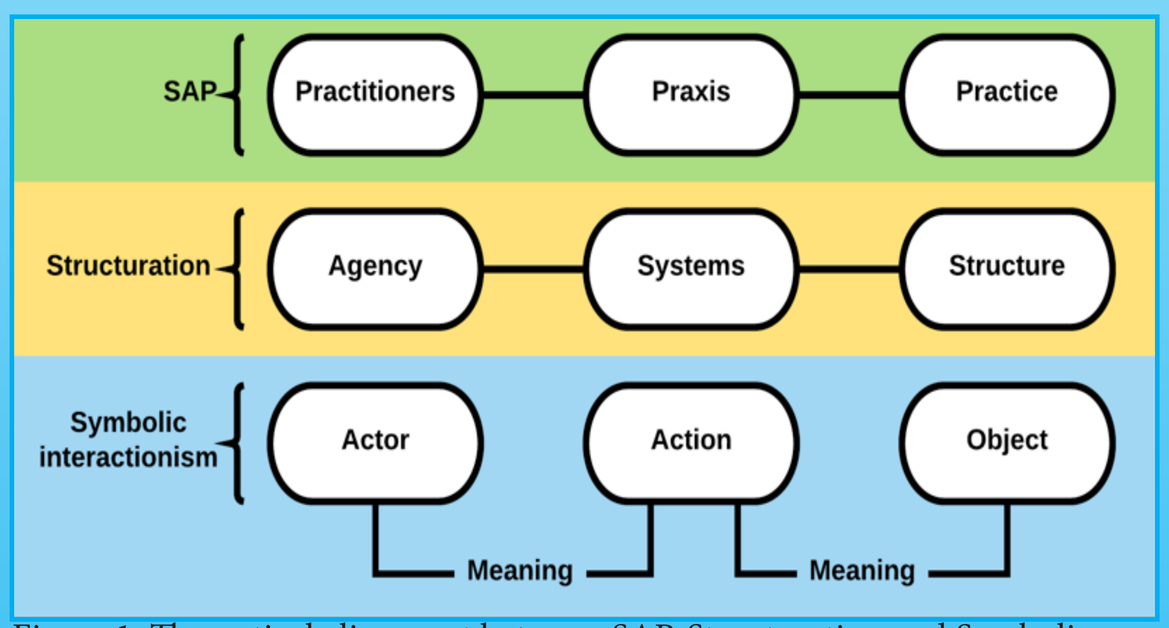

Figure 1: Theoretical alignment between SAP, Structuration and Symbolic Interactionism

Data Collection Methods

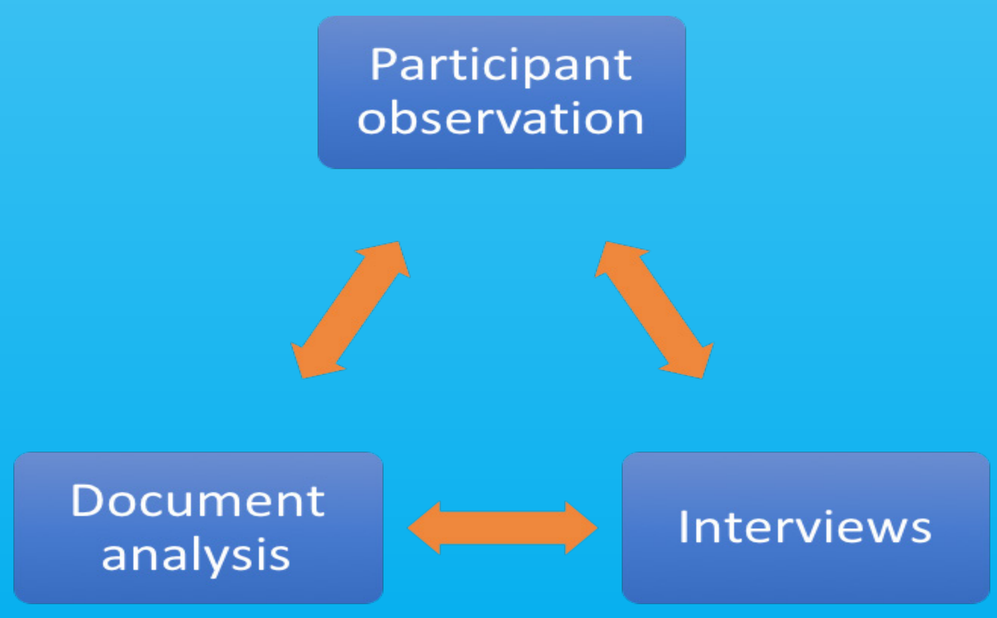

Figure 2: Qualitative data collection methods

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