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Intuition and Duration in Strategizing: Drawing on Bergson

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to investigate the question: *How can the formal gap between strategic decision and execution be reduced?* It starts with an explanation of the relevance of such a question in a world characterized by accelerated change and complexity.

Predominantly, the intention is to explain how the work of the philosopher Henri Bergson might be of help to managers and members of academia, particularly regarding intuition and duration, and how Bergson might help them appreciate why there is a need to combine both the building (or architectural) and dwelling (or practical) world views during the dynamic formulation and formation of strategy. To comprehend how concepts belonging to both the building (thought, intelligence, and decision) and dwelling (action, intuition, and execution) world views can be jointly reinforced during strategy formation, this work also turns to the Strategy-as-Practice literature and its main focus: what managers do while strategizing.

Contrary to the commonly held idea that analytic decision is followed by implementation at the mercy of individual discretionary intuitions, this project holds that not only is intuition present during the decision process, but that it also culminates in a vital requisite to i) digest huge amounts of information, ii) bring the strategic decision closer to the field of action, and iii) create “truly new” strategies capable of surprising clients and competitors, thus helping generate the potential to gain strategic advantage.

In order to investigate these topics, and taking a constructionist stance, twenty-three qualitative interviews, comprising both single and triple interviews, were conducted among fifteen CEOs, all of whom belonged to different sectors in different countries and faced different business challenges.

As its major contribution, in a context where strategic action seems more relevant than strategic models, the research highlights the importance of Bergson’s duration – a qualitative time measured in creation that departs from movement – to understand how the idea of the above-mentioned gap between strategic decision and execution might be replaced by a geometrical idea that measures strategy formation using a line whose thickness equals strategic quality.

1. Introduction

Having worked in the professional services sector for a strategy consulting firm and investment bank since the early 1990s, the author has frequently found himself in the position of “the detached transcendent observer looking from atop the *building*” (Chia & Rasche, 2011, p. 38):

[A *building* worldview presupposes that] cognition and mental representation *precede* meaningful *action*. (Chia & Rasche, 2011, pp. 34–35, my italics)

This stance is taken, since, from a “pre-cognitive separation between the actor [consultant] and the world [client]” (p. 38), the researcher has been tasked with recommending a certain course of action to companies for which “purposeful ‘interventions’ into the flow of reality to affect a desired outcome” (p. 38) have been developed. This expresses both the pre-eminence of explicit knowledge and the importance of taking a building world view toward management.

On the other hand, as a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for more than fifteen years, the researcher’s major challenge has been to speed up deployment of strategic decisions and maximize corporate capacity for absorbing and solving the emergent challenges of a competitive and fast-changing business ecosystem. Thus, it is also true to state that the author has *dwelled* as someone “intimately immersed and inextricably intertwined with [her/his] surroundings in all its complex interrelatedness” (Chia & Rasche, 2011, p. 38). Equally true is that the researcher has carried through a *modus operandi* that reflects both the importance of tacit knowledge (Collins, 2010; Mutch, 2008; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) and also intuition as a “quasi-identification with the object” (Kolakowski, 2001, p. 32):

[A *dwelling* worldview assumes that] both the individual and society are viewed as mutually constitutive [...] [and] that individual agents [strategists] are so constituted by everyday social *practices* that they *act* and *interact*. (Chia & Rasche, 2011, p. 35, my italics)

The author, therefore, has had to combine both the building and dwelling views of the world in which he works while also remaining committed to results, considering his responsibilities as CEO of a national segment of a multinational consulting firm. This has led him to explore the (dis)connections between building actions “guided by predefined goals” (Chia & Rasche, 2011, p. 39) and dwelling actions “directed towards overcoming immediate impediment” (p.

39) during *everydayness* (Dreyfus, 1991). In short, he has always had to bear in mind the enactment/execution of a certain goal/decision, either i) regarding the object of professional service, as a consultant, or ii) regarding financial performance, as a CEO of a company belonging to a multinational organization listed on the stock exchange.

In 2012, the author's interest in execution/implementation started to acquire a decisive edge. He published two books that focus on the pragmatic facets of professional life:

Fazer (Morgado, 2012a) – *To Do* in English – in which 200 *heuristic* implementation *tactics* are applied directly (although not exclusively) to the business context. These identified and illustrated with concrete situations in which paralysis should be overcome; and

Gerrir (Morgado, 2012b) – “Gerrir” is a fusion between “Gerir” and “rir” – in English *to Manage* and *to Laugh*, respectively. A study of the consciousness (reflection) of comic language/performance through eleven interviews, conducted among some of Portugal's most popular comedians, illustrates how professional an artist must be – namely by mastering the use of comic writing (building) and performance (dwelling) techniques – to deliver a spectacle that causes the most critical impact in terms of communication: to raise a laugh.

Before the publication of these two volumes, another important book had already been launched and put on sale in bookshops in 2011. Titled *O Riso em Bergson – mecanismos do cómico*¹ (Morgado, 2011), this volume explained the interaction between the building (mechanical), and the dwelling (living) worlds, through analysis of the mechanisms of laughter brought to light by Henri Bergson in 1900.

This book, which resulted from the researcher's Master's dissertation in the Philosophy of Language, allowed an interest to develop in studying both the chasm and the link between thinking and acting, and particularly allowed an interest in the work of Henri Bergson to ripen:

Henri Bergson was born in Paris on 18 October 1859 and died 3 January 1941. He was a philosopher who is best known for his work on *intuition* (a concept that endured throughout his entire oeuvre, but which was specially treated in *Creative Mind*, published 1934); *duration* (explained in *Time and Free Will* and *Duration and Simultaneity*, published 1889 and 1922, respectively); *bodily* (mechanical) and *pure* (pictorial) *memories* (differentiated in *Matter and Memory*, published 1896); *Élan vital* (a central element of *Creative Evolution*, published 1907); and *laughter mechanisms* (described in *Laughter*,

¹ In English, *Laughter in Bergson – Mechanisms of the Comic*.

published 1900). All of these publications, amply applied throughout this project, are compiled in one volume entitled *Oeuvres* (Bergson, 2001) even while, hereafter, they are referenced separately.

Maybe one of the most famous aphorisms of Bergson and certainly the most important regarding the current research is, “one must act like a man of thought [building] and think like a man of action [dwelling]” (Bergson, 2014, p. 461).

In fact, “both ‘dwelling in’ and ‘stepping back’ are equally important in getting [...] a cognitive dance going” (Ackermann, 2001, p. 447). This is because, “building [deciding] is not merely a means and a way towards dwelling [to execute] – to build [for executing] is in itself already to dwell [while deciding]” (Heidegger, 2001, p. 144). What is meant here, for example, is that there is decision in execution, since people do not act as automatons; and there is execution in decision, since to reach the latter – in order for it to become compulsory – people have to interact during a decisional process and this includes *overcoming the immediate impediments* referred to above.

The statement about the interwoven-ness between building and dwelling, and between decision and execution, is of the utmost importance. This is in order that the dynamic concept which underlies this project goes beyond corporate strategy as just a *thing*, like a strategic plan, and also in order that it reaches a point that embraces the idea of *strategizing* – “the use of the verb strategizing, meaning ‘to do strategy’” (Freedman, 2013, p. 563), or the practice of designing or implementing a strategy, as a verb, as action, which includes thinking.

In an attempt to deal with the difficulties resulting from the dualities of strategy described above, this project has been built around a conceptual framework – in which “you put the concepts together as in a jigsaw puzzle [and] you work out how all the concepts fit together and relate to one another” (Fisher, 2010, p. 141) – that, on the one hand, i) builds a comprehensive interconnection between complementary notions extracted from all of Bergson’s main works, compiled in the volume *Oeuvres* (Bergson, 2001) – for which, for the sake of clarity, chapter titles have been translated from French to English and been included in the References – and, on the other hand, ii) relates these concepts to strategic managerial concepts. Figure 1, below, illustrates these links.

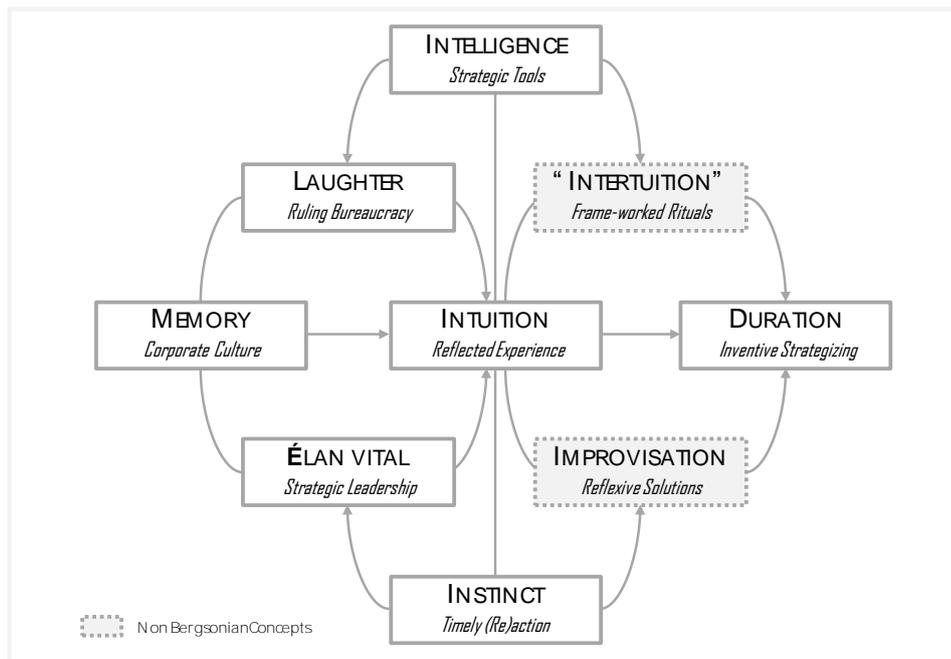


Figure 1 – Bergsonian concepts applied to strategy

Although this work focuses on intuition and duration, being the two Bergsonian concepts chosen to cast light on the production and course of strategic action respectively, some brief comments about the overall framework are appropriate in order to do justice to the whole of Bergson’s oeuvre. Leadership and culture, in particular, are touched upon briefly in this overview. They have been extensively covered in the organizational and business literature and so their place in the overall framework is only discussed to the extent that they offer further understanding of intuition and duration.

In the literature review, after an overview of the framework, the bulk of the chapter concentrates on elucidating intuition and duration, in order to frame the empirical exploration of these two concepts in strategic practice.

Furthermore, given the “particular interest in the concept of intuition [that] has arisen in the field of strategic management” (Sinclair et al., 2009, p. 400) and that “Bergson’s concept of duration and the nature of time remains to be applied to most areas of organizational studies” (Linstead, 2014, loc. 6426), in the current context, therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge the

importance of intuition and duration while strategizing, these being two of Bergson's most emblematic concepts in grasping the relationship between thinking and acting and, as will be explained below, between decision and execution—for to think intuitively is to think in *duration*, which departs from movement² [action³] (Bergson, 2001e, p. 1275).

(1.1) Research topic

The strategic question underlying the current research is: *How can the formal gap between strategic decision and execution be reduced?*

And while the strategic question departs from the trivial “practice of analytically separating implementation from formulation and decision making [...] that occurs in conventional studies of business strategy” (Sproull & Hofmeister, 1986, p. 44), the research aims to lessen this *formal* separation, namely by encouraging managers to acknowledge the importance of action that takes on a more responsive, humanized – and thus less bureaucratic and more easily implemented – and innovative way of thinking, by means of intuition that surges through the course of action. By doing so, the incentive might encourage managers to sympathize with this *course of action* by means of duration, a complex Bergsonian concept that hopefully will contribute to dissolving an artificial and very simplistic idea of strategy as i) a rigid and immobile plan followed, after a certain chronological moment, by ii) inflexible and long-lasting implementation.

As noted by Simpson (2014), changing the focus to “novelty and creativity in the flow of experience leads to a distinctive conceptualization of duration in terms of continuity and change rather than the mere elapsing of time” (loc. 7651). In this new milieu, managers as strategists are invited to change their perspective from i) comparing a *thing* – a strategic plan – with its execution after a certain “elapsing of time”, which implies a comparison of *realities*

² Movement: “The *activities* and whereabouts of someone during a particular period of time.” See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/movement> (accessed 26/11/2016).

³ Action: “The way in which something works or *moves*.” See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/action> (accessed 26/11/2016).

of different natures, to ii) trying to *place* the observer in the flow of strategic formation itself; as this work will try to explain. This shift is essential in order to understand how strategy is formed rather than adopted.

(1.2) What is new about this project?

In addition to a comprehensive and practical application of Bergson's work to corporate strategy, and partially because of it, this research will explain the fusion between pairs, usually considered *opposites* during strategizing, and their contribution to reducing the above-mentioned formal gap between decision and execution:

- **Building vs. dwelling:** the pair of opposites which inspired and motivated the project;
- **Decision vs. execution:** the pair which informs the strategic question;
- **Thought vs. action:** the pair that symbolizes one of Bergson's most famous aphorisms;
- **Intuition vs. intelligence:** the pair that represents one of Bergson's major contributions to reconciling the apparently opposing modes of decision making and knowledge creation.

In other words, a specific research question will be formulated in order to understand how concepts, which are often considered as being separate during strategizing, such as decision vs. execution, are after all entangled in order to form strategy. By doing so, the researcher will try to reunite words that must be considered as if each of them had never been separated by analysis, taking us back to an old idea of Bergson around the colour orange:

Let us take an example of a colour like orange. Taking it as a mixture of red and yellow, we can consider the orange-colour as yellow in one way and as red in another, and affirm that [orange] is a composite of yellow and red. But let us suppose that orange existing as such, neither yellow nor red had ever existed in the world: orange would then be a combination of these two colours? Obviously, not. (Bergson, 2001g, pp. 1266–67)

Of particular importance in gaining an understanding of how managers make strategic choices, is to reunite the concepts of intuition and intelligence; the former being of the utmost importance for this project – along with the illuminating concept of duration – the latter (intelligence) considered the rational, and maybe the most common mode of coming to a decision. The researcher will try to demonstrate that intelligence, as a tool (building), also intervenes before intuition in order to foster the utilitarian use of this faculty during action

(dwelling); a perspective that reverses and complements the most common direction, whereby intelligence intervenes almost exclusively at some subsequent stage – when intuition must be tested by analysis and calculation.

The interwoven nature of intelligence and intuition, which Bergson helped establish, and which implies an uncommon convergence between typically opposite concepts, can be represented by the following diagram (Figure 2) and baptized by the neologism “intertuition”:

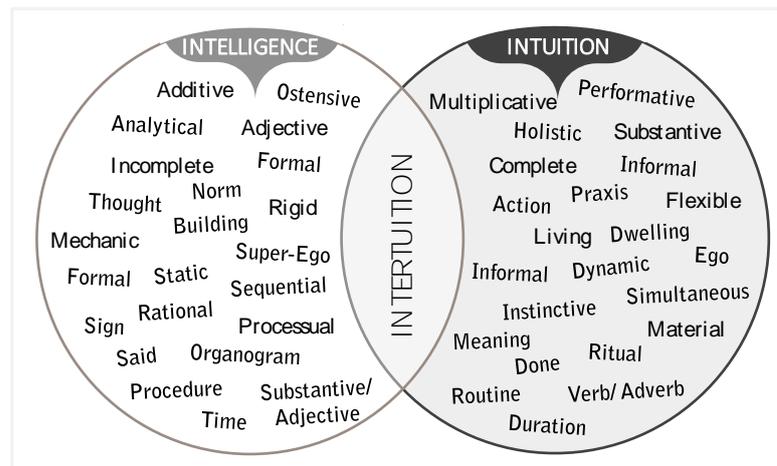


Figure 2 – “Intertuition” as the bridge between intelligence and intuition

The concept of “intertuition”, which reunites sub-concepts that usually belong to opposite worlds/natures, as illustrated by Figure 2, although not used extensively throughout this project, will be explained in more detail below in the literature review. There, it will be integrated with a comprehensive analysis of Bergson’s work to suggest, as Johnson (2013) notes, that “the intuitive and logical sides of your mind are two-and-two” (loc. 44): that they are tools to foster intuitions that will be *tested* by analysis.

The reunification of opposite pairs within corporate strategy is adjacent to Mintzberg (1987), who thirty years ago, had already pointed to this perspective when he wrote the following:

Formulation and implementation merge into a fluid process of learning [intelligence] through which creative strategies evolve. [...] In my metaphor, managers are craftsmen [intuition] and strategy is their clay. (Mintzberg, 1987, p. 66)

Nevertheless, Mintzberg, who metaphorically developed this view in his article *Crafting strategy*, pointed more to i) an exemplificative *what* instead of a comprehensive *how*, and to ii) strategy as a *thing* (clay) and not necessarily as a practice or as an immersion in the concept of duration, which as mentioned, casts light on what the course of action might mean.

In fact, as noted above, being that duration is a time “experienced rather than measured” (Linstead, 2014, loc. 6176), and that “real duration is that duration which gnaws on things, and leaves on them the mark of its tooth” (Bergson, 2005, p. 576), use of this Bergsonian concept introduces a new perspective to strategic practice. This perspective replaces the *distance* between formulation and formation, measured after a certain period of chronological time, with a notion of the interplay between the two concepts. And this might be expressed as experiencing strategic progression, not as a thing followed by its execution, but as an activity – strategizing – that leaves the “mark of its tooth” in the strategy being created.

Considering that the current work endeavours to bring the elusive philosophical perspective of intuition and duration closer to practice, it is expected that this combination of a Bergsonian, integrative, and dynamic view, applied to corporate strategy, might be considered an innovation brought to both business and academia by the current research.

(1.3) Expected contributions of this project

The potential beneficiaries of this research are managers as strategists, and members of academia. Some of the outcomes that might be of benefit to both parties are addressed below. The reference to the potential benefits will be proposed again in the Conclusion (see section 5.2), where further development of this project’s new vision will be put forward.

(1.3.1) Managers

Managers may possibly reach an understanding of why decision and execution are not two separate entities through a better understanding of Bergson’s concepts – in particular intuition and its fusion with intelligence in duration. Strategists may also reach an understanding of the concept of *strategy as a practice*, where each step, and not only the final strategic plan, ought

to be considered as a creator of strategy in itself, along a “time of consciousness (duration) [which] is inner, and immediate, experience—qualitative, heterogeneous, and dynamic” (Linstead, 2014, loc. 6178).

To acknowledge this dynamism in strategizing is to be prepared to accept the condition of a dweller-reflective practitioner who faces a world definitely marked by the *digital era*, which almost certainly will bring the immediacy and instantaneity of a decision into the centre of everyone’s life.

(1.3.2) Academia

In fact, in an increasingly turbulent, complex, global business world that has witnessed the onset of the so-called *digital era* and is beginning to see its enormous potential impacts, academia may benefit from the *theorization* of the practical aspects of managerial life brought to light by the current research.

The extensive managerial experience of the researcher, built on previous studies at both undergraduate and Master’s levels in management, law, and philosophy, as well as experience honed from having previously published seven volumes, will cast fresh light on existing views of professional life. The research will also make mention of the dual role the researcher himself assumes as both advisor/builder and CEO/dweller of a management and information technology consultancy – enlightening, and in some ways embodying, or representing, the very idea of a fusion between building and dwelling.

As an additional and interrelated benefit, academia may also take advantage of an all-inclusive and comprehensive application of Bergson’s theory in the field of management. As will become clearer in the literature review, Bergson’s work has only been used selectively in management literature; it is frequently deployed at an abstract theoretical level, making it difficult to see the practical application. In this respect, this research makes an original contribution in various ways that will become self-evident in Chapter 4, when the practice of strategizing is analysed and described through a Bergsonian lens.

(1.4) Relevant results from previous research

Two pieces of research were developed during the earlier stages of this project. A brief summary of the qualitative and quantitative studies already undertaken that contributed to some of the content of the current document, is given below.

(1.4.1) Qualitative Research

Previous research (Morgado, 2015) utilized qualitative research interviews to examine and develop the suitability of Bergson's concepts for strategizing: fifteen telephone interviews were conducted during March and April 2015. These were carried out among the most senior executives of a knowledge-intensive multinational company and included the following questions:

- What moments/activities, either during a formal decision process/plan (building) or during execution/practice (dwelling), are recognized as strategizing?
- What tools/artefacts and routines/rituals, if any, are used to assist the process of strategizing in each of its different moments/activities and what are their origins?
- At which moments/activities are i) intelligence (strategic tools), ii) intuition (reflected experience), and iii) improvisation (reflexive solutions) highlighted?

The main conclusions of the previous qualitative research highlighted i) the suitability of Bergson's ideas for strategizing and ii) the importance of two topics for orienting further research. These topics are *Strategy-as-Practice* – for which several micro-strategizing practices were illustrated – when compared with a model-based “classic view” of strategy; and *creative intuition*, which, directly or indirectly, most interviewees admitted to using.

Although duration was not in itself included as part of the *aide-mémoires* that supported the semi-structured interviews undertaken during the initial qualitative research phase of this thesis, the author felt it was necessary to further investigate this Bergsonian concept that seemed to promise reconciling or reuniting, in dynamism, the pairs presented above that are usually considered opposite or disparate. The motivation to further investigate the concept of duration and the seemingly opposite pairs arose from the interviews. The researcher detected

some “fluffiness” and an interchangeability of meaning during the interviews when talking about thinking, deciding, and intelligence on the one, hand and acting, executing, and intuition on the other; the latter sometimes used as a substitute for the word “experience”.

In this context, and bearing in mind the requirements for i) going beyond intuition and also embracing duration and ii) clarifying the nature of the pairs belonging in the building and dwelling world views and to understand their possible relationships, the researcher felt compelled to develop an additional in-depth study of these concepts in the literature review, and also to extend the range of qualitative investigation.

(1.4.2) Quantitative Research

In precedent *Quantitative Research* (Morgado, 2016), a survey was carried out between October and November 2015, in which fifty-five people from the same knowledge-intensive company as the qualitative research mentioned in the preceding section, answered the correspondent questionnaire.

It is usually accepted that with an option for a “self-completion questionnaire [a survey] is more or less simultaneously and inevitable to select an objectivist world view” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 619), which somehow seems paradoxical when considered alongside the qualitative (constructionist/interpretivist) stance this project has adopted. Nevertheless, considering that “survey-based studies are often more exploratory than this view implies” (p. 620), a constructionist approach, namely by including open questions in the questionnaire, was tied to the survey administered among those taking part. This was meant predominantly to generate new ideas about the topic under research, particularly by providing some open text boxes, although not intended to completely exclude the *challenging* of concepts already generated during the qualitative research.

In the quantitative study, the following research questions, among others, were addressed:

- What constitutes strategizing (a journey that leads to the definition and execution of a strategic vision)?

The word cloud illustrates the words that survey participants linked most saliently to sources of intuition. These are “customers”, “competition”, “experience”, and “behaviour” (of people, of employees), while other clusters of salient words also centre around the follow-up of innovative market trends as well. This is a topic that will be examined in more depth over the course of the research.

(1.5) Structure of this document

Besides the Introduction, this document consists of four main chapters comprising, Literature Review; Methodology and Methods; Research Findings; and Conclusions.

Chapter 2, Literature Review, starts with an exploration of the texts on Strategy-as-Practice, focusing on the differences and complementarities between i) decision and execution, in accordance with the strategic question, and ii) building and dwelling views of the world, a comparison that permeates this work (2.1). After centring the context in practice, the literature by Bergson is analysed in a comprehensive manner, giving rise to the conceptual framework underlying this project (2.2). Returning to the more modern literature, and drawing again on the writings of some Strategy-as-Practice thinkers, a section is devoted to complementary views of what are thought vs. action and intelligence vs. intuition, completing the context for analysing the interviews (2.3). To conclude, Chapter 2 will offer a comprehensive explanation of the concept of duration, based on six constituents, or components, that bring additional clarity to this complex topic by drawing on the idea of capturing and holding attention towards a strategic course of action (2.4).

Chapter 3, Methodology and Methods, begins to express the methodological implications of using Bergson’s theories, clarifying why qualitative research was selected as the approach of *natural* choice for a project that deals with a question that is eminently social – since strategizing comprises a series of (subjective) conversations among managers and their stakeholders (3.1). Secondly, Chapter 3 justifies why qualitative interviewing, based on single and triple interviews, conducted among fifteen CEOs belonging to various sectors in different

geographic regions and facing different business challenges, was elected as the method for the project. Here, some of the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of this option are elucidated, and a description is given on how the interviews were administered (3.3) and subsequently analysed and interpreted (3.3).

Chapter 4, Research Findings, summarizes the results of the conduct, analysis, and interpretation of the qualitative interviews carried out, and signals the limitations of the current research. The findings are divided into two parts: an analysis of how participants deal with the concept of intuition in their practical lives while strategizing; and a complementary view of strategizing as a sequence of decision/action loops along which strategy is formed in duration, namely by paying close attention to the business ecosystem and organizational politicking, both of which are seen as crucial constituents of strategizing (4.2).

Chapter 5, Conclusions, synthesizes the major contributions of this project (5.1), and, building on it, highlights its major benefits to both managers and academia, identifying possible areas for further research (5.2).

2. Literature Review

The literature review is structured as follows: first (in section 2.1), in order to contextualize the importance of action in corporate strategy as mentioned earlier, the first section presents the contribution of the more recent Strategy-as-Practice literature in order to provide an understanding of what constitutes strategizing: i.e. the actors, practices, and activities that form it. This section will be divided into two sub-sections: one casting light on the decision vs. execution pair; and the other illuminating the building vs. dwelling pair, as applied to Strategy-as-Practice.

The second section (2.2), draws on a much older corpus of literature that has not previously been adequately explored in this context and which it is felt might have important insights for Strategy-as-Practice, as well as for a better understanding of how a dynamic view of strategizing has the potential to reconcile the usually disconnected elements of the building and dwelling world views. This section of the literature review will present the most salient of Bergson's concepts and look into their relationship with different components of corporate strategy. Why the researcher turned to Bergson and his philosophic concepts has already been presented briefly in the introduction and the reasons will be made clearer below. Nevertheless, there is one overriding reason, more important than any of the others in this context, which should be clarified from the outset in this literature review. This is the implicit exploration of *connections* between the Bergsonian concepts applied (presented in Figure 1) and the potential parallel *connections* with managerial/strategic concepts that have been interwoven with philosophical ones. Put in another way, Bergson's concepts will act as "*the mechanisms that drive events* in the world" (Fisher, 2010, p. 21, my italics) of strategizing, as a critical realist⁵ might argue, although not all of these connections are treated in the current work because the intention in the here and now is to focus on Bergson's concepts of intuition and duration.

⁵ "Critical realists argue that there is a level of reality below the everyday levels of events and our experiences of them. It is at this level that the *mechanisms that drive events* in the world exist" (Fisher, 2010, p. 21, my italics).

Thirdly (see section 2.3), drawing on the literature review related to the theoretical work of Bergson, as well as on more recent literature, the focus will be on intuition, considered a pillar of this project, and on adjacent concepts that examine that concept both in its interactions with intelligence and throughout the dialectic of thought vs. action.

The final section in this chapter (2.4) will address the concept of duration, considered the second Bergsonian pillar of this project. This section will leverage additional perspectives brought by authors other than Bergson and will notably establish, in effect, a communication channel that opens the way for research into duration – usually captured through experience/intuition and not through language/intelligence. This in-depth study of duration is pivotal to an understanding of strategy formation: how strategizing evolves over a certain period of time, and the changes that may occur through emergent strategies with regard to the initial strategic intent. This section will point to duration, regarded as *strategic intensity* or thickness, as something that can fail during strategizing; and not the difference, the gap, between something that has been thought out/decided and activated/implemented. At the end of this section a framework will be presented depicting the different constituents of duration that have arisen from the fusion between the literature review and the research work.

For Strategy-as-Practice and for intuition – but not for duration, for which, as mentioned, a specific and separate framework was developed – and with the intention of clarifying some potentially elusive concepts, the researcher adopted an analytical scheme based on the apparently opposite pairs mentioned in the introduction. This relational scheme, which naturally will be explained in more depth in the following pages, can be represented as follows:

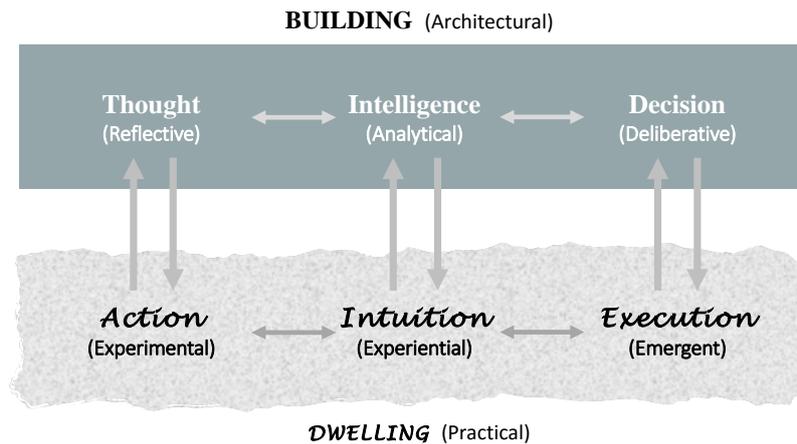


Figure 4 – Connections with apparently opposite pairs from building and dwelling perspectives

Naturally, several research questions will emerge from the literature review, namely one that specifically addresses these pairs. These will be positioned just after this chapter, serving as the bridge and context for the chapter on methodology and methods (Chapter 3).

At this stage a remark is due regarding the main “theoretical approaches” (Seidl & Whittington, 2014, p. 1407) underlying this work. Concerning Strategy-as-Practice, a special focus is put on the Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) perspective, which defends the position that: “in their micro-level activities, strategists make use of general strategizing practices such as particular techniques and tool-usages” (Seidl & Whittington, 2014, p. 1410). Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) also draws on Giddens’ structuration theory (Giddens, 2013), which explains the dialectic between structure (macro) and agent (micro). These views are complemented by Herepath’s (2014) contribution “to rethink the interplay of structure and agency in strategy formation and strategizing” (p. 858), namely by acknowledging that although that there are “structural and cultural features which characterize the strategic arena [structural conditioning]” (p. 869), agents, who have the “potential to live ‘contradictory lives’” (p. 873), have the *liberty* to ...

Identify the forms of strategic negotiation and exchange which characterize the strategic arena, focused upon power induced compliance, reciprocal exchange, and the harmonization of desire, and *determine how these shape the ensuing strategic direction*. (Herepath, 2014, p. 869, my italics)

In other words, and as will be clarified during a presentation of the framework of duration, agents/strategists are at liberty to choose certain courses of action while dwelling in certain (structural and cultural) buildings. What is more, agents/strategists have the capacity to “give

rise to structural, cultural and agential elaboration or reproduction” (Herepath, 2014, p. 869), i.e. have the capacity to build new buildings or new practices that will shape new dwellings and praxes, as section 2.1.2 and 2.4.2 will explain. In addition to these *theoretical approaches* to Strategy-as-Practice, Chia & Holt’s relationalism (Chia & Holt, 2006) and Wittgenstein’s language games (Wittgenstein, 2001) will be used, notably to explain the creative power of dwelling and building, respectively.

Finally, the use of Bergson is coherent with a process philosophy (Linstead, 2014) and with the interviewing method used in the qualitative research, which was conducted following a constructionist stance (see Chapter 3) and follows Bergson’s view that knowledge, as strategy, is constructed through the individual contributions of many inventors who create a reality rather than discover it (Bergson, 2001e, p. 1447). Furthermore, as this project is expected to demonstrate, and in awareness of the danger of any tautological reasoning, it is specifically this use of a process/dynamic philosophy that permits regrouping the different theoretical perspectives mentioned above, namely through the concepts of intuition, of its counterpart intelligence and of duration, which are central to this work.

(2.1) Strategy-as-Practice

Strategy-as-Practice “is concerned with the doing of strategy; who does it, what they do, how they do it, what they use and what implications this has for shaping strategy” (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 69): i.e. as Johnson et al. (2003) note, “what managers actually do, and with what techniques” (p. 12). These include “SWOT⁶ or technologies such as flipcharts, computers and software” (Whittington, 2007, p. 1579).

Strategy-as-Practice deals with different aspects of “strategizing: how strategists think, talk, reflect, act, interact, emote, embellish and politicize” (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 3), while “arbitrating, advocating, analysing, and advising” (Whittington, 1996, p. 732).

⁶ *SWOT* confronts (a company’s) Internal Strengths and Weaknesses with (the environment’s) External Opportunities and Threats.

This discipline, and its “growing engagement with activity [which] fits with a wider ‘practice turn’ in contemporary social theory, [and has been] gathering momentum since the 1980s” (Whittington, 2006, p. 614), shifts the focus of strategic preparedness from the competitive company and the correspondent strategy to the *competent strategist* and strategizing, turning attention to “the actors on whose skills and initiative activity depends” (Whittington, 2006, p. 615):

The practice perspective on strategy focuses on *strategists* and *strategizing*, rather than organizations and strategies. [...] The practice perspective on strategy *shifts concern* from the core competence of the *corporation* to the practical competence of the manager as *strategist*. (Whittington, 1996, pp. 731–32, my italics)

Strategy-as-Practice, by placing emphasis on “people’s actual activity ‘in practice’” (Whittington, 2006, p. 615), is related to Bergson’s theories inasmuch as the former centres its research on manager’s actions while strategizing – and not just static decision models – and, as will be seen later, the latter sets Bergson’s work around the idea of movement (Bergson, 2001d) and duration, from which derives intuitive *thinking* (Bergson, 2001g, p. 1275).

(2.1.1) Decision (deliberative) vs. execution (emergent)

Adopting a dynamic view of the world, and especially when “*formal strategic planning* has been under attack for many years” (Whittington, 2006, p. 618, my italics), it is not surprising that the current research considers the real *practice* of strategy in more depth when compared to a *classical* (Whittington, 2001) and traditional idea of strategy based on decisional, deliberative,⁷ theoretical models, like those developed by Ansoff (Martinet, 2007), Porter (1979), and others, and included by Mintzberg et al. (2009) in what these authors call *the positioning school: strategy formation as an analytical process*. “The traditional [classical] view is that managers carefully choose a strategy [*ex ante*], formulate well-specified goals [*ex ante*], establish clear and quantifiable objectives [*ex ante*], and determine the most effective way to reach them [*ex ante*]” (Wagner, 2002, p. 49). This vision embraces the “idea of

⁷ Deliberative: “Relating to or intended for consideration or discussion”. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/deliberation> (accessed 13/5/2017).

strategy as a deliberated, top-down process that was the purview of senior management” (Freedman, 2013, p. 563). According to this perspective, the process of coming to a decision is linked to a “[previously] *deliberated* conscious set of *guidelines* that *determines* [other] decisions into the future” (Mintzberg, 1978, p. 935, my italics); or has a focus on “deliberation [that in turn] entails consideration or planning” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 999). In this respect, Mintzberg asks a provocative and somewhat rhetorical question:

“First we think, then we act. We formulate, then we implement. The progression seems so perfectly sensible. Why would anybody wish to proceed differently?” (Mintzberg, 1989, p. 29)

Another perspective offers an alternative with emphasis on execution, considered *as practice* and action – or “to do the things that tend towards the mark [a movement toward concrete action] that we have set before ourselves” [(Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 999) citing (Aristotle, 1985)]. The expectation is that by dissecting the strategic question from a practice or implementation view, the above-mentioned more theoretical *ex ante* panorama, which places *decision and plan first*, will be complemented:

[A panorama in which] implementation, conventionally thought of as what happens after a [*ex ante*] decision has been reached [...], has not received the same attention from organizational theory as has decision making, [...] [even because] decision making is glamorous, exciting, even heroic. Implementation is not romantic; it is nuts and bolts, details, and mundane problems. (Sproull & Hofmeister, 1986, p. 43)

Additionally, in order to overcome a perspective in which *one moment* and what happens *after that moment* becomes paramount – a disconnected perspective that is representative of the “classical school” –, an alternative view of strategy that fuses *formulation*⁸ and *formation*,⁹ as the neighbours of decision and execution, will be privileged. In fact, for Mintzberg:

Mintzberg (1978) contrasts *intention* (actions) vs. *reality* (facts), on the one hand, and *formulation* vs. *formation*, on the other. If reality does diverge from intention, i.e. is non-*deliberate*, this is because during the formation process some strategic *directions* i) are rejected (*unrealized*) while some *unanticipated* strategies ii) are elected (*emergent*). Additionally, as the precedent citation made clear, Mintzberg admits that a *learning process* occurs during strategy formation; that, it may be suggested, leads to strategy (re)formulation. In this context, it is acknowledged that execution is no longer simply a set of actions that implements what has been decided, but, *remarkably*, a set of actions that, when

⁸ Formulation is “the action of creating or preparing something”. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/formulation> (accessed 20/11/2016).

⁹ Formation is “the action of forming or process of being formed”. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/formation> (accessed 20/11/2016).

assisted by strategic reflection, decides (formulates) alongside the strategic formation process. (Morgado, 2014, p. 12)

The following section will clarify this idea that strategic *decision* is emergent¹⁰ during execution as well, specifically because “as soon as questions of implementation came in, it was evident that micro level decisions could influence the macro level performance” (Freedman, 2013, p. 563):

In practice, of course, all strategy walks on two feet, one *deliberate*, the other *emergent*. For just as purely deliberate strategy making precludes *learning*, so purely emergent strategy making precludes *control*. (Mintzberg, 1987, p. 69, my italics)

Furthermore, this view encompasses “*conversation* [a common feature during strategizing, including during execution, which] is the site of organizational emergence” (Weick, 2009, p. 200, my italics), even because “it is undisputed that when we observe managers/strategists at work, what we see is a lot of *talk*” (Samra-Fredericks, 2003, p. 143, my italics). In other words, “strategies are simultaneously co-constructed *relationally* through direct engagement with the world they [managers] inhabit [...]” (Chia & Holt, 2006, p. 637). “Conversations *create* organizational [and strategic] reality; they don’t just represent an entity that is already there” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015, p. 36, my italics). From this perspective, “*acting* strategically is as much an instinctual, habitual and unthought response to [practical] experience as it is a deliberate, planned effort” (Chia & Holt, 2009, p. 112, my italics).

All in all, considering that “strategy making must above all take the form of [a] process learning over time, in which, at the limit, formulation and implementation become indistinguishable” (Mintzberg et al., 2009, p. 217), by using a perspective that focuses on formation rather than just on formulation ...

[i.e., evolve from a] strategy that involved central direction and control based on an original plan [to] one that [is] about learning and adaption. (Freedman, 2013, p. 555)

... it is expected that “the overarching promise of this practice approach to strategy is a societal shift towards better every day strategizing praxis, empowered by more effective

¹⁰ Emergent: “Arising as an effect of complex causes and not analysable simply as the sum of their effects”. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/emergent> (accessed 13/5/2017).

practices and a deeper pool of skilled practitioners” (Whittington, 2006, p. 629). It is this interplay among practitioners, practices, and praxis (action) that will be analysed below.

(2.1.2) Building (architectural) vs. dwelling (practical)

As Jarzabkowski and Spee state, the Strategy-as-Practice arena “has defined its broad research parameters as studying: *practitioners* (those people who do the work of strategy); *practices* (the social, symbolic, and material tools through which strategy work is done); and *praxis* (the flow of activity in which strategy is accomplished)” (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 70).

Consequently, having defined the main elements of strategizing, it is important that these be placed within the broader context of building and dwelling, considered two crucial perspectives of this project.

Practitioners

In general, “practitioners are strategy’s actors, the strategists who both perform this activity and carry its practices. [...] those who do the work of making, shaping and executing strategies” (Whittington, 2006, p. 619). Practitioners may belong to the organization in which strategizing takes place or be external to it:

A practitioner could be external [...]. External actors include consultants, gurus and institutional actors, such as chamber of industry and commerce, regulators, trade unions, media or other interest groups (such as environmentalists). (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 72)

Apart from performing the direct activities related to strategizing while dwelling, analysed in praxis, practitioners’ duties involve the building of practices, analysed below ...

Practitioners – people – are central in reproducing, transferring and occasionally innovating strategy practices (Whittington, 2006, p. 625)

... even though it is “hard to separate one particular ‘practice’ from the interwoven fabric of practices” (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 81).

The current research concentrates on CEO's views about strategizing. Nevertheless, as became explicit during the interviews, other levels of the organization are also important agents of strategy formulation and formation. In this context, throughout this work, practitioners will be called *managers, strategists, agents, and leaders*, according to the function(s) they fulfil.

After having clarified who will be considered the authors/agents of strategizing – the practitioners –, the following text will analyse their practices and praxis.

Practices (building)

Considering that “the use of these practices is essential to the doing of strategy” (Stander & Pretorius, 2016, p. 3) and that these ...

refer to the routines and norms of *strategy work*. [...] For example, analytical techniques such as SWOT or technologies such as flipcharts, computers and software [...]. These routines and tools are the *stuff of strategy*, without which *strategy work could hardly happen*. (Whittington, 2007, p. 1579, my italics)

... it is inevitable that they are compared to a building-, architectural¹¹ view of strategizing that privileges a study centred on “the *tools and methods* of strategy-making” (Vaara & Whittington, 2012, p. 285, my italics), on ...

how the practice of strategizing is being *framed by, and framing*, the perceptions, views and *mental models* of leaders as they strategize [and] on strategizing *methodologies and tools* [i.e. SWOT, BCG matrices, McKinsey 7'S, Ansoff's matrix, Balanced Scorecard] that 'mediate' (i.e. *guide*) *strategy knowledge formation*. (Jarratt & Stiles, 2010, p. 29, my italics)

... and which is particularly concerned with the strategic tools: frameworks, concepts, models, and methods (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2014), suitable for creating strategy and to “support [correspondent] collective knowledge production and learning” (Vaara & Whittington, 2012, p. 297), but also “language [which] is used by strategists to establish meanings and create a ‘discourse of direction’” (Samra-Fredericks, 2003, p. 142). In fact, apart from Jarzabkowski (Jarzabkowski & Wilson, 2006; Jarzabkowski, Spee, & Smets, 2013; Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2014), Whittington (2006; 2014), or Samra-Fredericks (2004; 2003; 2005) – authors who in

¹¹ Architectural: “Relating to the art or practice of designing and constructing buildings”. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/architectural> (accessed 14/5/2017).

contrast to Mintzberg might, for instance, be considered as belonging to the *core group* of *Strategy-as-Practice* theorists –, other authors such as Leonardi (2013), Eppler and Platts (2009), d’Aveni (1995), Teece et al. (1997), Moisander and Stenfors (2009), and Cabantous et al. (2010) sustain the argument of the importance of artefacts or tools to ascribe greater professionalism to strategizing.

Practices can be of various types and different natures, “not just obvious ones such as strategy reviews and off-sites, but also those embedded in *academic* and *consulting* tools (Porterian analysis, hypothesis testing etc.)” (Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008, p. 101, my italics):

In some accounts, influential practices originate almost by immaculate conception. Thus, Michael Porter [...] describes his concept of ‘generic strategies’, defining a whole new set of analytical practices, as an ‘eleventh hour’, logic-driven addition to his famous book *Competitive Strategy*. (Whittington, 2006, p. 624)

Strategy models that are used in everyday strategy jargon, such as a SWOT analysis, the five forces model and the Boston Consulting Group [...] matrix. (Stander & Pretorius, 2016, p. 3)

Apart from the “immaculate models” put forward by well-known authors on strategy, and by consultants, practices also include *material artefacts* and *technology* ...

[Practice] such as PowerPoint presentations and flipcharts, used in performing the action of strategising. (Stander & Pretorius, 2016, p. 3); and “PowerPoint and Excel, project management software, the analytics of Big Data and the new social media” (Whittington, 2014, p. 90)

... and “the *background knowledge* of the specific practitioner” (Stander & Pretorius, 2016, p. 3, my italics), socially framed by *organizational*, *cultural*, or even *sectorial* buildings (Jarzabkowski et al., 2015), which Whittington illustrates as follows:

‘Practices’ will refer to shared routines of behaviour, including traditions, norms and procedures for thinking, acting and using ‘things’, this last in the broadest sense. [...] Practices might be organization specific, embodied in the routines, operating procedures and cultures [...] that shape local modes of strategizing. [...] For example, there may be sectorial practices, such as the routines of environmental scanning defined by shared cognitive maps [...] or norms of appropriate strategic behaviour set by industry recipes. (Whittington, 2006, pp. 619–20)

Moisander and Stenfors (2009) highlight an aspect of *correctness* in practices, stating that *strategy tools* that are “introduced in practice through business schools, consultants, popular business articles and strategy literature” (p. 228) “impose *correct* behaviours and foster good practices” (p. 230, my italics) capable of creating competitive/strategic advantage:

strategic advantage is achieved by providing managers with ‘correct information’, ‘optimal choices’ and ‘efficient options’ [and that] the role of strategy tools is to foster *dialogue*, to help to elaborate on *new ideas* and to bring about *critical views*. (Moisander & Stenfors, 2009, pp. 238–39, my italics)

In turn, this view of competitive advantage has links to one of the values ascribed to intuition, which, as will later be analysed, is the creation of the “truly new”, that Jarzabkowski and Wilson (2006) associate with expressions such as “disrupting”, “new areas”, “surprise”, and “innovation”:

competitive advantage is based upon a guerrilla logic of continuously *disrupting* current positions and strategies in order to generate *new areas* of advantage [...] resorting [to] tools and tactics associated with speed, *surprise*, *innovation* and flexibility. (Jarzabkowski & Wilson, 2006, p. 353, my italics)

Although this work defends the idea of a strategic need for *real innovation* (Bergson, 2001e, p. 1276), or the “truly new” (Dane & Pratt, 2009), created by intuition, and fosters ...

attention on practices that have a ‘*strategic*’ role in the sense that they form the basis of organizational *success or survival* – as in the case of routines or capabilities serving to create *competitive advantage*. (Vaara & Whittington, 2012, p. 313, my italics)

..., the aptness of specific “strategic” practices to foster *competitive advantage* is not part of the current study. This is because even “competitive advantage”¹² might be considered nothing more than an analytical and abstract military metaphor:

abstract and analytical [...] *structural* perspective [...] [that appeals to] military metaphors for strategic thinkers [...] in which strategists build positional fortresses [...] to *try* and *protect* their firm from competitors. (Cunha et al., 2012, p. 266, my italics)

Consequently, in the current work, *competitive advantage* and *competitive strategy* will always be preceded by the word “potential”, since the conceptual cause-and-effect “recipes” that could be brought by an immaculate model – sometimes marked by “fads and fashions” (Freedman, 2013, p. 562) – may not be as important as studying the contribution i) of intuition for strategizing, the correctness of which needs to be “confirmed” by analysis or experience/result, and ii) of duration, which, conceptually, does not admit to the causality between a specific action and an inexorable result – contradicting “the myth that there were

¹² Competitive Advantage is “a condition or circumstance that puts a company in a favourable or superior business position.” See https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/competitive_advantage (accessed 3/12/2016).

reliable rules for success that once discovered could ensure the success of a business” (Freedman, 2013, p. 569).

In addition, the word “practice” is not used with the exact same meaning throughout. It will not always, as in this section, be used to convey for example a “method/tool”, but will also be used as a word which embraces practices in *sensu lato*, i.e. also denoting strategic activities in the sense of praxis, or “actual activity”. “Practice” only in *sensu stricto*, i.e. in the sense of building, or the sense that “practices shape strategy praxis” (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 83), will be extensively associated with Bergson’s concept of *intelligence*, explained below in later sections.

Praxis (dwelling)

Considering that “praxis refers to the *stream of activity* in which strategy is *accomplished over time*” (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 73, my italics), inevitably praxis is linked to action and duration ...

This *flow of activity* is, however, not only in a singular direction, as these actions might run parallel, might intersect, might diverge from or depend on each other or even collide. (Stander & Pretorius, 2016, p. 3, my italics)

... and to compare it to a dwelling-, practical¹³ view of strategizing that puts analysis “at levels of the individual or group’s experience of a specific episode, such as a *decision*, meeting or workshop” (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 73, my italics) ...

the Greek word ‘praxis’ refers to actual activity, what people do in practice. [...] The domain of praxis is wide, embracing the routine and the non-routine, the formal and the informal, activities at the corporate centre and activities at the organizational periphery. [...] Praxis is an artful and improvisatory performance. (Whittington, 2006, pp. 619–20)

The notion that “we build [...] because we dwell [...] we are *dwellers*” (Heidegger, 2001, p. 146) has already been noted, but it is a critical notion that gets to the nub of the challenge of combining worlds/pairs of different *natures*, for when strategizing is grasped processually/dynamically, neither the manager (as if s/he was the *painter*) nor the strategy (the painted

¹³ Practical: “Of or concerned with the actual doing or use of something rather than with theory and ideas”. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/practical> (accessed 14/5/2017).

mountain), as noted by Helin et al. (2014), “act upon the world; [but] both are implicated with one another, pulled along and mixed within the fluidity of the fact” (loc. 206):

Actors are conceived of not as atomized individuals, but rather as *active respondents within nested and overlapping systems* (which we prefer to call temporal-relational contexts); the construction of temporal perspectives is fundamentally an *intersubjective* process, constituted by the ability to hold simultaneously to one’s own and to another’s viewpoint. Actors develop their deliberative capacities as they confront emergent situations that impact upon each other and pose increasingly complex problems, which must be taken up as challenges by the responsive (and communicative) intelligence. (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 969, my italics)

In order to interact with other people, within “an intersubjective process”, practitioners develop *conversations* (Archer, 2003) – “the culmination of sociality in communicative interaction, in which social meanings and values develop out of the capacity to take on the perspectives of (concrete and generalized) others” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 969) – while ...

Planning, Rehearsing, *Mulling-over* [dwelling upon a problem/situation], *Deciding*, Re-living, *Prioritising*, Imagining [the future, including ‘what should happen if ...’], Clarifying, Imaginary conversations, [and] *Budgeting* [including money, time, and effort]. (Archer, 2003, p. 161, my italics)

That is to say, managers develop joint activities, including strategizing, “much of which is accomplished through talk” (Samra-Fredericks, 2003, p. 141). By doing so, through *relationalism* (Chia & Holt, 2006) – which “acknowledges the latent primacy of relations and practices over the individual or organization” (p. 638) –, managers amplify/modify their individual strategic will/intention, creating ideas that would not be brought to the strategic puzzle if these fruitful interactions were absent (Hayashi, 2001), i.e. if not through *collective intelligence* (Mataric, 1993). This relationalism also embraces what Jarzabkowski et al. (2015) call “rationality”, or “relation(s) among practices (patterns of activities) that construct a facet of the market” (p. 207) as a whole, i.e. relations with stakeholders. Chia and Mackay (2007) explore “a *discernible pattern* emerging in a stream of actions” when managers manage while *dwelling* (Heidegger, 2001), while *being-in-the-world* (Dreyfus, 1991). This view is coherent with a Bergsonian perspective, since:

The world is presented as what Bergson calls an extensive manifold, a region of things in relation to one another. [...] [Something that] can be very complex, and changeable. (Helin et al., 2014, loc. 422)

According to this view, strategy is seen as *process and emergence* (Mintzberg et al., 1976; Mintzberg, 1978; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985) and not just as some static formula/recipe, in

the sense of “procedural strategising” (Jarzabkowski, 2008); a chain of decisions that leads to the formation of a response to a strategic problem/opportunity. Throughout this process, managers’ activities are all but scientific, since, as Mintzberg et al. (1976) note, social routines, such as control, communication, and politics – which Mutch (2013) considers “an element of structure [...], as setting the conditions for action, as providing logics for that action” (p. 2) – and time constraints, like scheduling, feedback, comprehension, synchronization, and reiteration, all come into play. This, in turn, creates a potential gap between intended and realized strategy (Mintzberg, 1978; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985).

Moreover, strategies may sometimes be generated by some sort of retroactive baptism – “this is *strategy*” – implicit in the legitimation of, as Baker et al. (2003) note, “past tactical improvisations as if they had been parts of a coherent forward-looking strategy” (p. 262). To put this in another way, the purpose of a manager’s activities during a strategic process – which “can be *purposive* [actions and not just facts] without the actor having in mind a *purpose*” (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 93) – might be found at an ulterior stage. This can include the stage of i) unexpected results generated by activities performed on their own: “everyday practical coping action can produce unexpected strategically important outcomes” (Chia & Holt, 2006, p. 643); but also ii) “inarticulate and even the oftentimes unconscious aspects of strategy-making” (Chia & MacKay, 2007, p. 237), which might influence “strategy-making on an everyday basis [that] takes place unreflectively, on-the-spot and in the twinkle-of-an-eye” (p. 238).

But is this strategy or improvisation? The question could be conceptually dissolved by the logical impossibility that impedes the marriage between improvisation and strategy: in fact, since strategy is a “future oriented” activity (Jarzabkowski, 2005) and “im-provisation” is the negation (“im”) of planning and premeditation (Weick, 1998), then the two terms (strategy and improvisation) are (potentially) incompatible.

Nevertheless, the reactive/improvisational role of managers as disturbance *handlers* (Mintzberg, 1973) exists, and so the potential paradox must be dissolved. Cunha et al. (2012) suggest a solution, by comparing improvisation to:

‘real time foresight’, i.e. the discovery of opportunities and threats still in the making and the translation of this discovery to action at the right time. (p. 267)

According to a *real time foresight* perspective, therefore, improvisation can no longer be considered as strategic disbanding or dispersion. Rather it ought to be seen as a sort of strategic *jazz-banding* that claims room for enrichment in order to achieve an intended strategic performance, anchored on a certain *head*: a strategic vision (Hatch, 1999).

To express this point differently, if “strategic ‘intent’ is viewed as immanent [inborn] in every adaptive action” (Chia & Holt, 2006, p. 635), due to managers having a *top* (main theme) in mind, and thus, as Parikh et al. (1994) note, “lead[ing] and creat[ing] simultaneously without losing the beat or the direction of the overall composition” (p. 20), improvisation, considered as adaptation/adoption of a vision, therefore, is compatible with strategy.

The word “praxis” is not often used in the current work. Instead, to define what managers do while strategizing, words like “activity”, “practice”, or “action”, are used.

In summary, this section (2.1) has seen an unusual perspective adopted regarding the pair decision vs. execution. The perspective adopted here focuses on facets of these that previously have received less attention from organizational theory: execution, in the sense of practicality, as opposed to decision, in the sense of a model, or a plan. Nevertheless, as noted, once the Strategy-as-Practice theory is analysed, the idea surfaces that a lot of decision making, formulation, emerges out of conversation and its neighbouring concept *relationalism*.

Some investigation was undertaken into practices and praxis, used in the sense of building vs. dwelling, respectively, in order to understand exactly how practitioners organize this creative combination of decision and execution. This investigation led to the conclusion that it is through strategic practice that managers create the conditions for purposeful praxis, which is quite different from improvisation, management-by-surprise, or an instinctual by-reaction. In turn, through praxis, managers also learn how to fine-tune or change practices in an informed/educated virtuous circle.

The ascertainment of a mutually reinforced interaction between building and dwelling is developed further below in the next section (2.2), namely in the form of a respective interaction between intelligence and intuition. Here it is explained how the philosophical work

of Bergson, and its underlying processual/dynamic view of the world, can build on the understanding of how apparently opposite pairs can, after all, be reunited.

(2.2) Bergsonian concepts applied to strategy

The appeal to Bergson in the managerial literature is rather limited, “with only *a handful* of articles making reference to several of his works” (Mutch, 2016, p. 2, my italics).

In fact, in the majority of literature cited in the current research, only partial aspects of Bergson’s work were the focus. For example, Dörfler and Ackermann (2012) appeal to Bergson to explain intuition in itself; Chia and Holt (2009) use Bergson to explain *practice* as a “negotiated relationship between the depiction and the depicted” (p. 131) – that is, between the act¹⁴ and the product.¹⁵ Helin et al. (2014) reference Bergson to explain *processual philosophy* and the correspondent dynamism, in duration, of *reality* – “receiving the situation so that one belongs to it, become with the event of ‘painting it’” (loc. 251). This is a concept that approaches Shotter’s (2006) thinking about “a *relationally*-responsive form of understanding – or a *witness*¹⁶ understanding – to contrast it with the representational-referential (or aboutness) understandings” (p. 590, my italics). Lastly, Linstead (2014) presents *Bergson’s key ideas*, but does not make an all-inclusive connection between them explicitly.

The expectation in taking this approach is that two major weaknesses of the current literature may be bridged: i) the incomplete and non-interconnected use of Bergson’s concepts applied to managerial activity and ii) the limited involvement of these concepts with concrete managerial practice, and specifically with corporate strategy.

¹⁴ As in the act of *strategizing*.

¹⁵ As in a *strategy*.

¹⁶ “Witness” with an “h” and not “witness”.

(2.2.1) Intuition and adjacent concepts

In this section, intuition will be treated together with two other Bergsonian concepts: duration and memory.

Intuition

Intuition penetrates the entire Bergson *oeuvre*. It is treated in detail in *Creative Mind* (Bergson, 2001g), which dedicates one chapter to “The Perception of Change” and another to “The Pragmatism of William James – Truth and Reality”. The same volume also deals with i) “Philosophical Intuition” – in a chapter where the essence of philosophy is defined as the spirit of simplicity (Bergson, 2001g, p. 1362), which, in duration, lives (in) an intuitive life (p. 1364) capable of capturing reality in movement (p. 1363) – and ii) in an “Introduction to Metaphysics”, which places intuition as something *absolute*, that penetrates things, sympathizing with them, through an effort of the imagination that requires no symbols, rather than as something *relative*, which revolves around objects and just sees them from different perspectives, and partial effort (p. 1393):

Let us consider a character of a romance in relation to which adventures are narrated [...]. Description, history, and analysis leave me in the relative. Only coincidence with the person her/himself could give me the absolute. [...] The absolute can only be reached by intuition [...]: the sympathy by which one places her/himself into the interior of an object, to coincide with it, which is of the unspeakable. (Bergson, 2001g, pp. 1394–95)

In the current work, the idea that is always present is that of intuition. It is the *sympathy* that, through action, is acquired, along with the different challenges/solutions arising across the strategizing process, with the strategist placing themself in the interior of it, breaking down the barriers with the unspeakable, i.e. going beyond the limits of language.

Considered by the French philosopher as the self-conscious instinct,¹⁷ intuition is what makes humans capable of reflection upon a certain object and which gives them the ability to enlarge it indefinitely (Bergson, 2001d, p. 645). Through a direct vision of the spirit by the spirit

¹⁷ Even though, as will be explained, intuition and instinct are two different concepts.

(Bergson, 2001e, p. 1273), obtained throughout a contact/coincidence with the object perceived:

Intuition means above all consciousness, immediate consciousness, a vision that is hardly distinguishable from the object seen, knowledge that is in contact with it [the object seen] and that even coincides with it [the object seen]. (Bergson, 2001e, p. 1273)

As pointed out above, intuition requires a certain movement, a specific *action game*, so to speak – to make a parallel with Wittgenstein’s *language games*,¹⁸ a perspective which authors like Mantere (2011) brought to Strategy-as-Practice –, or it needs a specific *sympathetic context*, to be shaped:

Even if one produces thousands of explanations to describe walking, it does not require the same skill, nor will it teach the appropriate (re)action on entering water – even if, once swimming, one may deduce that both mechanisms are *similar*. (Bergson, 2001d, p. 659)

So that, in fact (for instance), out of the *context* water, it would be difficult to grasp intuitively what swimming is.

As the sections that follow attempt to explain, a strategizing that is capable of creating such *language games*, through use of practices framed by strategic tools and artefacts, may be suitable to create “truly new” movements capable of catching competitors off guard, since intuition, which (as stated) departs from movement (Bergson, 2001g, p. 1275), constitutes a radically new [“truly new”] idea (p. 1276) formed in duration:

Duration means invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new. (Bergson, 2005, p. 206)

The concept of intuition, defined in the quote above, will be further developed in section 2.3.2.

Duration

Duration is initially approached in *Time and Free Will* (Bergson, 2001a), where it is notably contrasted with *determinism* (vs. free will), *contingency*, *prediction*, and *causality*, implying a

¹⁸ In quite synthetic terms, Wittgenstein’s *language games* imply that “the meaning of words and propositions depends on the context in which they are used” (Morgado, 2009, p. 6).

reflection on the extent to which future events are the result of present decisions – something vital to strategy. Duration is then woven in to examine how it relates to creative formation, both in *Creative Evolution* (Bergson, 2001d), in which a link to *élan vital* is predicted, and in *The Creative Mind* (Bergson, 2001g), where a link to intuition is seen as inexorable.

The creation of intuition, “already presupposes *duration*” (Deleuze, 2011, p. 13, my italics) and promotes a germination and flowering, both of which take place in *lived* time of a certain form (Bergson, 2001d, p. 783). Intuition represents a sort of incubation period, which managers embody while strategizing.

The time, so to speak, associated with duration is neither chronological nor quantitative, but rather inventive – either time is invention (creating the “truly new”) or it is nothing at all (Bergson, 2001d, p. 784) – and qualitative. Lived time is intensive and qualitative, rather than measured, extensive, and quantitative (Bergson, 2001a, p. 71) like “mechanical clock time” (Styhre, 2003, p. 17). For example, duration is embodied in a painting and vice versa (Bergson, 2001d, p. 783) – we can see lived time passing in the completeness of the picture or when “tracing a line [growing progressively longer] [...], which is thus movement” (Colombo, 2009, p. 262). In duration, time is “constituted through emergent events” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 968).

Duration, then, is the opposite of time decomposed into dimensions (past, present, and future) or parts (moments, instants, etc.) (Worms, 2000, p. 21). It is not every insignificant stroke on a canvas, each tick, or tock, of a clock someone hears before falling asleep, but the painting and the melody that are created in duration (Bergson, 2001a, pp. 70–71). It is not each and every word that is written, or each word spoken that creates meaning by itself, but the *act* of speech that brings them to life (Chia & Holt, 2009) through conversation.

Helin et al. (2014) illustrate the distinction between time measured (e.g. a minute) – which, as Styhre (2003) notes “is ‘spatial’, i.e., there is an equidistance between all time units” (p. 17) – and *time* experienced, or duration, remembering how qualitatively different a minute of boxing time is – a long or short minute depending on how close a knock-out is –, a scuba dive – a long minute when coming up to the surface –, or bird-watching – when a minute tends to

be quicker. And, again, Styhre complements the vision of Helin et al. (2014) with the following remark:

[Lived] time can be experienced as extremely slow (e.g. when visiting the dentist), while on other occasions it can be very swift and momentary (e.g. when having a good time with your friends). (Styhre, 2003, p. 17)

While strategizing, managers live in moments of intensive strategy production; this is in contrast to indolent moments of non-productivity during which intended and emergent strategies seem not to evolve. Additionally, different strategic streams, stages, might have different *natures* of duration. And this, most of the time, is independent of chronological time:

A mountain exists at a much slower speed than organisms like human beings. A mosquito exists in a different duration than a human being or an elephant. All have their own durations that combine with other durations to make up a flux of different forms that maintain their shapes at different speeds relative to other organic and inorganic lifeforms. (Lorraine, 2011, p. 10)

What is interesting in this passage is that as nature has different speeds, strategy can also have different components acting at different levels of detail, which during the formation process should be reunited towards a common outcome.

The concept of duration will be developed in greater detail in section 2.4.

Memory

When *language game* and *context* were introduced with reference to intuition, the idea of **memory** implicitly hovered in the air. For Bergson the past, memory, serves in two different forms: i) on the one hand, by *bodily/motorized mechanisms*, or a dwelling based on *habitus*, closely associated with duration; ii) on the other, by *independent remembrances*, based on building, on instant(s)/images(s), which *stick* in one's mind (Bergson, 2001b, p. 224), created/imprinted during the time while *travelling*:

My mental state [and its built images], *travelling in time*, is continuously *dwelling* with[in] the *duration* [that incubate intuitions] it accumulates [...] like some sort of *snowball rolling upon itself*. (Bergson, 2001d, p. 496, my italics)

Predictably, memory receives the most attention in *Matter and Memory* (Bergson, 2001b). Here other topics are discussed, along with an extensive explanation of the distinction

between pure, pictorial, and mechanical memory, or “muscle-memory” (Patton, 2003, p. 993) – i.e. one that *imagines* and another that *repeats* (Bergson, 2001b, p. 228). These include: i) *remembrances vs. attention*, something highly relevant to the context of culture, understood as memory, and of attention alongside duration; ii) *remembrances vs. recognition*, the act by which one acknowledges the past in the present; and iii) *remembrance vs. recognition vs. movement/action* – to recognize an object is to know how to use it ..., but to know how to use it implies having already envisaged the correspondent movements, driving impulses (Bergson, 2001b, p. 239) – are approached, giving rise to an idea of an inseparable continuum between thinking (image memory) and acting (mechanical memory) and between past and present:

As just retained from the past, movements intelligently co-ordinated that represent accumulated efforts [...] engraved in a rigorous order and systematic character, which characterize current movements. (Bergson, 2001b, pp. 227–28)

In business organizations, *mechanical* memory is linked to corporate culture; acquired for the efficient repetition of the same effort, being embodied in a system of automatic movements – actions, practices –, as are “the rites¹⁹ and rituals²⁰ of our company” (Schein, 2009, p. 21). Becker (2010) uses the word “habit”²¹ which can be linked to mechanical memory, if taken in its psychological definition of “an *automatic* reaction to a specific situation”:

Organizational routines [and rites and rituals] capture stable structures in collective action that emerge from the interrelating of individual action [...] that can itself be patterned in stable ways, as expressed by the individual-level concept of *habit*. (Becker, 2010, p. 5, my italics)

Naturally, since we pass, by insensible degrees, from i) remembrances kept throughout time to ii) movements that design the rising action (Bergson, 2001b, p. 225), corporate culture resides in various *sites*:

[*Embrained*] Dependent on conceptual skills and cognitive abilities; [*Embodied*] Action oriented; [*Encultured*] Shared understandings and meanings; [*Embedded*] Resides in organizational routines; [and] [*Encoded*] Conveyed by signs and symbols. (Mutch, 2008, p. 59)

¹⁹ Rite is “A social custom, *practice*, or conventional *act*.” See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/rite> (accessed 27/11/2016).

²⁰ Ritual is “A series of *actions* or type of behaviour regularly and invariably followed by someone.” See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ritual> (accessed 27/11/2016).

²¹ For a definition of “habit” see <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/habit> (accessed 15/5/2017).

Culture has an impact on intuition and vice versa because real intuition, instant intuition so to speak, as Bergson states, is of little consequence when compared to all that our memory supplements (Bergson, 2001b, p. 213). These intuitions will then be intelligently captured and imprinted on a certain strategic vision, which, in turn, through *remembrance*, will influence corporate culture, and so on. Bergson describes this learning process using a splendid example:

I study a lesson, and to learn it by heart I first scan each verse; I repeat this operation several times [*habitus*, mechanic]. In each new reading, a new progress is achieved; words are read better and better; they end up linked, organized. At this exact time, I know my lesson by heart; it is said that it has become remembrance, imprinted [instant, image] in my memory. (Bergson, 2001b, p. 225)

Corporate culture might act as the hotbed of practices that, together with *élan vital* – which in turn is linked with leadership and with agency – function seamlessly as ignition for action, by creating a living organism that is accustomed to thinking in action while combining agency and structure in a *nuanced interplay*:

Indeed, structural, cultural, relational, and temporal dimensions are accommodated, together with their mediation to the agent via reflexive deliberation or non-reflexive socialization (*habitus/habituatio*), thereby depicting social practice as the outcome of such *nuanced interplay*. (Herepath, 2014, p. 858, my italics)

From a *popular* point of view, culture is the “how we do things around here” statement (Bremer, 2012, p. 31; Schein, 2009, p. 27). It can also be “some individual’s [managers’, leaders’] own assumptions about *what is right or wrong, what will work or not*” (Schein, 2010, p. 25, my italics), which influences, and at the same time is influenced by, “language, rituals, stories, myths” (Morgan, 1980, p. 616), and also by “ideals, goals, values, aspirations, ideologies, rationalizations” (Schein, 2010, p. 24).

(2.2.2) Intelligence and adjacent concepts

In this section, intelligence will be treated together with the concept of “intertuition” and with laughter – a Bergsonian idea that represents an excess of bureaucracy.

Intelligence

Bergson (complemented by Deleuze) states that our social life gravitates around the manufacturing and use of artificial instruments (Bergson, 2001d, p. 612) through intelligence. He points out the difference between this form of thought and intuition as follows: intelligence, which is based on the static, on things, and on a rearrangement of pre-existent elements (Bergson, 2001g, p. 1275), is the analytical, scientific, mode of understanding and interacting with the world; it is the attention of the spirit towards matter (Bergson, 2001g, p. 1319); it is acquaintance with matter, it marks our adaptation to matter, it moulds itself on matter (Deleuze, 1991, p. 88).

Intuition, however, represents the spirit's attention to itself, which is an act of reflection (Bergson, 2001g, p. 1273).

From the passages just quoted, the idea is retained that, despite being based on the static and on rearrangements of the existent, intelligence is the analytical and scientific mode of thought that can be used as a tool, in the sense that it moulds the matter in hand. In this regard, intelligence – a concept that will be further developed in section 2.3.2 – is linked to a faculty for building artificial objects, using particular tools to make tools, and to varying this fabrication infinitely (Bergson, 2001d, p. 613); a practice that is connected with “intertuition”.

“Intertuition”

In “intertuition”, “inter-” is used in the sense that strategic activities, including the detection of problems, are viewed through the lens of a strategic framework (Porter,²² Kotler, BCG,²³ etc.); and “-tuitio” is used in the sense of an act of creation that is assisted by tuition, teaching, and observation as part of a learning organization. Below is an etymological breakdown of the word:

²² Michael *Porter* (b. 1947) is a reference from the positioning school, namely due to the publication of his best-selling books *Competitive Strategy* (1980) and *Competitive advantage* (1985).

²³ The Boston Consulting Group (BCG) is a strategy consulting company famous for its BCG Matrix, which relates companies' market share (vis-à-vis their competitors') and growth potential of the business in order to define a specific positioning in the market.

- Intelligence: *Intelligere* = Inter (between) + Leger (choose) – *conceptualization* (to form concepts, analytically, from a detached position in relation to the field of action);
- Intuition: In (at, on) + Tution (take care, look after) – *creation* (to make or to produce something “new” in the course of action);
- “Intertuition”: Inter (between) + Tution (take care, look after) – *conception* (to conceive, to give birth to, by coupling frameworks with daily action).

From the first *impulse*, created intelligently as tools/artefacts and which can be embedded in management rituals, a movement is created that, in duration, will produce an *educated* intuition by combining academic knowledge and experience ...

The development of expertise and the concomitant capacity for intuition is an arduous journey; [...] it requires a blending of conceptual/analytical knowledge, probably best gained in the classroom, with experiential knowledge. (Hodgkinson et al., 2009, p. 287)

... in an “intentional automatism” capable of *conception*:

While intelligence and intuition are connected to *conceptualization* (approach) and *creation* (formation), respectively, “intertuition” relates to *conception* (fertilization). To *intertuit* would be more than merely to *create*: it would be to *conceive*, since the process of *giving birth* to new strategic ideas would be obtained by the *coupling* of i) daily actions, information, etc. (dwelling) and ii) the strategic framework (building), by which we ‘enact a situation through a *frame* to make use of available *stock of knowledge*’ (Rasche & Chia, 2009, p. 719, my italics) and create a certain ‘grammar of action’ (Pentland & Rueter, 1994) by which creation *makes* (strategic) *sense*. (Morgado, 2014, p. 45)

The author of the current research is of the belief that strategic thinking requires support at first in order to evolve, since “the human mind does not deal well with *non-events*” (Kahneman, 2011, p. 200). Hodgkinson et al. (2009) complement this view with the following statement:

Neither insight [which succeeds intuition] nor intuition occur in a cognitive vacuum or in an ‘unprepared mind’; rather learning and experience constitute the substances on which such associative process operate. (Hodgkinson et al., 2009, p. 279)

Additionally, it is crucial to recognize “the *performativity* of rational choice theory” (Cabantous et al., 2010, p. 1531, my italics), in the sense that rational choice activates strategic ideas. The following passage is deliberately extensive, in order to illustrate various *buildings*:

This *thing* that is put *before* a strategic idea (and which has given birth to this one) can be: i) a certain strategic *framework* (such as SWOT analysis or Porter’s Five Forces); ii) a meeting, at a location where

participants are bracketed; the agenda set, the chair selected, the level of freedom decided upon during discussions, or the potential existence of a vote (Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008), which may lead to strategic conformity or divergence; iii) the use of a certain *device* – such as “computer and various software packages, telephones, flip charts, [or] Lego-based strategy models” (Rasche & Chia, 2009, p. 18); iv) the analyses of a selected set of KPIs and their performance (which *per se* are business-relevant events); v) the language used and culturally embedded in the organization (Langley, 2007; Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Sandelands & Drazin, 1989; Tietze, Cohen, & Musson, 2003); or even vi) the plans, when considered as artefacts – which play a role in “shaping routine enactments” (Parmigiani & Howard-Grenville, 2011, p. 444) – in the hands of “managers as craftsmen” (Giraudeau, 2008, p. 292). (Morgado, 2014, p. 42)

In corporate strategy, “intertuition”, used in the sense of *fabricated intuitions*, turns into the practices that were presented in section 2.1.2 and which connects with duration, because intelligence “[...] *molds* itself on matter; but it only does so by means of mind or *duration*” (Deleuze, 1991, p. 98, my italics).

Using the concept of “intertuition”, managers might take advantage of dwelling in many buildings – “interpretative grids” (Fisher, 2010, p. 136), or strategic “mediation frameworks” (Jarratt & Stiles, 2010), such as SWOT analysis or Porter and BCG models – and of being creative in the conception of those, given that building is a deliberated intermediate tool to create the “truly new”, provided that abuses of intelligence/of artificiality, are avoided.

Laughter

Although the analytic and tools/artefacts-oriented manner of doing strategy is necessary in order to create a systematic context for intuition production in duration, Bergson points to the dangers of excessive artificiality/of bureaucracy through the concept of laughter:

Stiffness (the blind application of rules), automatism (brainless routines), distraction (toward market challenges), unsociability (alienation from common interest), when they all intertwine, provoke the comic in a character. (Bergson, 2001c, p. 417)

When managers manage with a solemnity that overtakes them, creating a sort of *professional stiffness*, this means that they no longer care about being useful to a certain public (Bergson, 2001c, p. 472). They begin to act as simple machines (p. 472), moving like mechanic robots superposed onto the fluidity of life, which in turn provokes laughter, as happens when someone slips on a banana skin, acquiring the motion of an object (Morgado, 2011).

Moreover, apart from something mechanical encrusted upon the living (Bergson, 2001c, p. 410) – like some over-rigid intelligence inhibiting the intuitive – the exaggeration of some *irregularity*, as in the case of a manager obsessive about rules, in itself provokes laughter. The laughable character: the image of the distracted manager, who in their stiffness puts professional *rules* above the common strategic interest, brings to mind Bergson’s customs official, who, having bravely leapt into the water to save some shipwrecked souls, starts to ask if they have anything to declare (Bergson, 2001c, p. 409) ...

There is an expectation that these caricatures, well exemplified by Dilbert cartoons, will provoke the revenge of the organization against the abuses of bureaucratic power which *fast-foods* the haute cuisine of strategy-creation; laughter is there to punish their distraction, to release them from their dreams. (Bergson, 2001c, p. 451) provoking:

freedom from stultifying, stupid bureaucracy, and its common cohort, meaningless, busywork-making layers. (Farris & Welch, 2015, loc. 2120)

Alongside the work by Bergson, in which intelligence and its abuses assume a vital role as part of his explanation of the mechanism of the comic in the volume *Laughter* (Bergson, 2001c) –, as already mentioned in *Creative Evolution* (Bergson, 2001d), intelligence is contrasted i) with instinct, both being *instruments* in constant interplay, not least in trying to master life (Bergson, 2001d, p. 578), and ii) with intuition – in the chapter “The mechanism cinematographic of thought and the mechanistic illusion”. In the latter, as in *Laughter*, intelligence is linked to the mechanic while intuition is linked to the living. Intelligence is further contrasted with intuition in *Creative Mind* (Bergson, 2001g), where topics such as metaphysics and science are subject to analysis, and where, linked with intelligence and science, analysis itself is defined as translation, a development in symbols, a representation (always incomplete), taken from multiple perspectives, which meet already known concepts (p. 1396).

(2.2.3) Instinct and adjacent concepts

In this section, instinct – a concept that is different from intuition and, surprisingly, comes closer to intelligence – will be treated together with the concept of improvisation and with *élan vital*; a Bergsonian concept that displays traits of leadership.

Instinct

Instinct has little to do with intuition, since the former is all-too-animal, being based on timely unreflective reaction to something unexpected, while the latter is all-too-human and based on reflective action. In fact, even if intuition is sometimes referred to as a “gut feeling” or “gut instinct” (Dane & Pratt, 2009), the two concepts are quite different. Instinct is considered i) “an innate, typically fixed pattern of behaviour in animals in response to certain stimuli”²⁴ “that [unlike intuition] is outside the threshold of awareness” (Parikh et al., 1994, p. 40). In addition ...

According to Bergson, the more instinctual an organism is, the more its responses will be in keeping with repeatable patterns of the past; perception will be selective, taking from a situation what the organism needs to know in order to launch the response from a limited repertoire of responses that seems most appropriate. (Lorraine, 2011, p. 8)

Intuition, however, ii) involves a reflective exercise that is different from an instinctual reflexive reaction, a “conscious perception of a ‘sense of coherence’” (Sadler-Smith, 2012, loc. 2074). The listening to a “quiet inner voice” (Robinson, 2006, loc. 77), is what gives consent to the existence of the verb *intuit* and produces the corresponding results. Goldberg (1983) mentions different outputs of intuition – discovery/invention, creativity/imagination, evaluation/yes or no, operation/feeling, prediction/premonition, and illumination/transcendence – which again is all-too-human to be just instinctual.

In *The Two Sources of Morality and of Religion* (Bergson, 2001f), instinct and intelligence are linked by their capacity to be used as instruments: in the latter case (intelligence), through invented (mechanical) instruments, and thus variable and unpredictable; in the former case (instinct), through organs provided by nature, and thus unchangeable (p. 997). The contrast

²⁴ See Oxford dictionaries online: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/instinct>.

between these two *instruments* takes place in *Creative Evolution* (Bergson, 2001d), a book in which the nature of instinct is classified as organic, linked to vital processes by which organisms react against threats (p. 636). Nevertheless, reinforcing a vision underlying this work, whereby instinct can act as a sort of strategic radar capable of fostering timely reactions to changes to the SWOT, Bachelard notes that “if intellect dims then instinct awakens” (Bachelard, 2000, loc. 473), thereby instinct is also seen as acting as an antidote against *paralysis by analysis* (Langley, 1995; Lenz & Lyles, 1985).

Improvisation

The idea of instinct is seen as an instrument of reaction, or of improvisation, considered as the *thoughtless* faculty that allows managers to permanently survey possible changes to their company’s SWOT. As pointed out, instinct acts as a kind of permanent radar, it provides a capability for alertness; what Cunha et al. (2012) call “cultivated attention” (p. 270), which creates the conditions for a leader’s survival in “fast changing landscapes” (p. 270), and is linked to “complexity and dynamism in hypercompetitive business environments” (Hodgkinson et al., 2009, p. 278).

Section 2.1.2 also explained how, since strategy is created by a chain of interactions between managers and their ecosystem (Mintzberg, 1978), the potentially random solutions that are simply improvised responses that “emerge ‘on the hoof’ *unintentionally*” (Chia & Holt, 2006, p. 644), or “on the spur of the moment” (Weick, 1998, p. 544) could nevertheless be *framed* by a strategic direction, by a strategic duration. Bergson completes this explanation by reuniting instinct and organization, two apparent opposites, through use of the following image:

When a chick breaks the egg with its beak, we witness instinct; but this action grounds its origin on the (organized) embryonic life – in turn, during embryonic life, a lot of processes have an instinctive origin (Bergson, 2001d, p. 635).

Instinct is *sympathy* (Bergson, 2001d, p. 645), or affinity with *organization*: it is difficult to define where organization ends and instinct starts (p. 635); and this improbable combination is related to another Bergsonian concept called *élan vital*, and to his view that “even instinctual creatures that live out their lives in mindless repetition of set patterns of behavior

evolve new behaviors over time in the differing flow [élan] of life [vital]” (Lorraine, 2011, p. 9).

Élan Vital

Élan vital attracts focal attention in *Creative Evolution* (Bergson, 2001d). The concept is also treated in *Mind-Energy* (Bergson, 2001e), where it assumes vital importance, both i) as the word “energy”, ready to be converted into movement/action (p. 825), and ii) in the statement, “the *triumph* of life is creation” (Bergson, 2001e, p. 833, my italics) and the link it might offer between life and strategy with regard to creation. *Élan vital*, including its moral and social facets, is also approached in *The Two Sources of Morality and of Religion* (Bergson, 2001f) and compared to a faculty for solving problems by removing obstacles and resistance (Bergson, 2001f, p. 1071).

Alongside intuition, instinct, and intelligence, there is *energy*, which complements the forces at work while strategizing. This energy is represented by an *élan vital* – which acts as a sort of last-resort problem solver, when all other faculties seem insufficient for maintaining and developing a company – and is considered as an organism. *Élan vital* could, paradoxically, be linked to a sort of organizational *physical inertia*,²⁵ if it were not for the impulse (*élan*) in its name, and were it not for its intrinsic orientation to movement (to action) in the sense of creation and triumph – qualities that are consensual representatives of the competencies a strategic leader might be expected to demonstrate:

On man’s line of *differentiation*, the *élan vital* was able to use matter to create an instrument of *freedom* [...] ‘to use the determinism of nature to pass through the meshes of the *net* which this very determinism has spread’. (Deleuze, 2011, p. 107, my italics)

As we watch or hear a conversation [a strategic creation done interactively in duration] travel, so we will be able to notice times when the trajectory or mode of conversation *changes*. I call these moments of leadership. (Ramsey, 2016, loc. 4656, my italics)

This *élan of life*, “or *life-drive*” (Kolakowski, 2001, p. 34, my italics), linked to a strategic/transformational leadership, “consists, in brief, in a claim for creation” (Bergson,

²⁵ (Physical) Inertia is “A property of matter by which it continues in its existing state of rest or uniform motion in a straight line, unless that state is changed by an external force.” See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/inertia> (accessed 4/12/2016).

2001d, p. 708), through a movement that produces an evolving strategic duration: “the triumph of life is *creation*” (Bergson, 2001e, p. 833, my italics):

Even should a certain global *élan* (some systemic tendency to evolve) be acceptable, individuals (agents) will use this energy to further their own interests: this is called adaptation. (Bergson, 2001d, p. 537)

The impetus [*élan vital*] can be viewed as a typical characteristic of entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs who are able to innovate because they stay in duration, which means that they are part of the processes emerging within the organization and within the environment [adaptation]. (Colombo, 2009, p. 266)

An explicit departure from the driver (or racer) position of the dweller-leader – he who accelerates and brakes while steering in order to keep moving along the road (organization), taking a certain direction (strategy), and observing some *procedures* of driving (culture) along the way – resides also in the “process of creative *improvisation*” (Painter-Morland & Deslandes, 2014, p. 854, my italics) and in the correspondent (re)action to the challenges of environment while executing a strategic *plan*, which does not have to be considered as some sort of *fatality*. It is this that Lenz & Lyles (1985) note to good effect when they affirm, “the occurrence of excessive rationality in strategic planning is a result of a myriad of complex administrative and technical processes. However, these processes are not inevitable in the sense that nothing can be done to arrest their momentum” (p. 70):

If the evolution of life [impelled by an *élan vital*] is nothing more than a *series of adaptations* to accidental circumstances, then it cannot correspond to the *realization of a plan*. A plan is given in advance. (Bergson, 2001d, p. 582, my italics)

[W]hen we approach organisational change, [in that] processes are seen as driven by intuition and impetus [*élan vital*], more than planned or designed. (Colombo, 2009, p. 265)

The vital impetus, or *élan vital*, is the human creative *drive* [...] an autopoietic²⁶ *move* that invents itself. (Linstead, 2014, loc. 6261, my italics)

Should leadership be absent, the (rigid) vision/plan, defined as a strategic direction, would probably become obsolete during execution (due to plan rigidity). This would result in a positioning well behind leading competitors (survival of the fittest, according to a Darwinian perspective). To avoid this, Richards (2013) proposes a different word for plan, which is *planning*:

²⁶ “Relating to or characterized by autopoiesis; self-maintaining and self-regulating.” See <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/autopoietic> (accessed 17/04/2016).

A plan [which “starts with a bunch of assumptions”] assumes what’s going to happen – even though you don’t. By contrast, *planning* in its truest sense [“instead of obsessing over the assumptions”] is a reality-based process that allows for life’s unpredictability [...] [since] we [keep] checking a situation and adapting to it. (Richards, 2013, loc. 920–90)

According to the concept of *élan vital* ...

Practitioners also have the possibility of changing the ingredients of their praxis. By reflecting on experience, practitioners are able to adapt existing practices; by exploiting plurality, they are sometimes able to synthesize new practices; by taking advantage of openness, they may be able to introduce new practitioners and new practices altogether. (Whittington, 2006, p. 620)

... practitioners, being agents and leaders, are able to invent many buildings or structures for many dwellings, many intelligences for many intuitions.

In summary, from Bergson’s theories, the following connections with strategizing can be extracted. Intuition, which is generated in duration, in action/movement, and differs from an instinctual “gut feeling”, may be crucial to generating potential competitive strategy since, among other factors that will be discussed later, only intuition is suitable to create the “truly new”, capable of surprising competitors and clients. Nevertheless, intuition must be complemented by intelligence, in the sense of an analytical tool that is suitable to ascribe some firmness/building, some purposefulness and usefulness, to strategic work. This complementarity between intuition and intelligence, which also acts before intuition surges, was captured by the neologism “intertuition”. However, as Bergson warns, notwithstanding the usefulness of intelligence, all excesses of it in the sense of a bureaucratic machine, can become laughable, since what was supposed to be human, capable of bringing about smoother dwelling, can become robotic and thus incapable of intuition. Intuition, importantly, is also affected by memory, which might be associated with corporate culture or structure, a fact that transforms the latter into a concrete target of intervention when strategic change is at stake. Duration, as section 2.4 explains, dispels the notion of a static strategic decision followed by execution. Instead, it proposes that strategy should be seen intuitively as a continuous process moving along through different stages, whereby strategy is formed with more or less the same *strategic intensity* or thickness throughout.

The concepts of intuition, specifically its relation with intelligence/rationality, and of duration, are next to be analysed.

(2.3) Intuition

“In this information age, [where] we are glutted with communication” (Lorraine, 2011, p. 17), managers might face the challenge of changing their customary mode of thinking and making decisions, not least because “gathering all the relevant information and evaluating it carefully would use up more resources [management time and money] than the potential gains from getting the correct answer” (Freedman, 2013, p. 591). Taking a similar direction, Sinclair et al. (2009) state that “the rational choice model”, one of the most commonly accepted among strategists (see section 2.3.2) might be challenged by doubts regarding data availability/quality and understanding of “cause-and-effect relationships”:

The rational choice model is predicated upon several assumptions that are highly questionable from a psychological standpoint, given the complex, uncertain and time-pressured environments confronting many organizations. [...] The assumptions that the required data actually exist in a tangible and, ideally, quantifiable form, and the cause-and-effect relationships are understood sufficiently to enable outcomes to be predicted on the basis of logical and quantitative analysis are also dubious. (Sinclair et al., 2009, p. 394)

In addition, the rational-choice model uses the “‘academic intelligence’ types of tasks found in the classroom and on IQ tests” (Wagner, 2002, p. 43), and not really those types found in the practical world. These *intelligence*-type problems tend to be:

(1) well-defined; (2) formulated by others; (3) come with all information required for problem solution; (4) have one correct answer; (5) have one or at most several methods for obtaining the correct answer; and (6) be unrelated to everyday experience. (Wagner, 2002, p. 43)

Nonetheless, although in an era of robots and artificial intelligence, or maybe because of them, an affirmation made by Mintzberg more than twenty years ago is still relevant and all the more opportune, for it highlights how strategy cannot be created by the same mechanic logic used in assembly lines:

Organizational strategies cannot be created by the logic used to assemble automobiles [...] [in which] every component [...] produced by the machine as specified and assembled in the order prescribed [to produce] an integrated product. (Mintzberg, 1994, p. 13)

If therefore i) complexity and changeability, ii) over-rationality, and iii) artificiality are complications that need to be overcome in this current era, then maybe decisional processes that use higher doses of intuition could be an answer to this three-way change. Sinclair et al.

(2009) offer some characteristics through which intuition can very probably add value in facing these challenges:

- *Fast digestion of huge amounts of information*: “intuitive processing has been linked in strategic management to the fast ‘digestion’ of complex, ambiguous sources of information that complements rational processing” (Sinclair et al., 2009, p. 401);
- *Humanize decision-making, bringing it close to execution*: “Intuition [is] an experienced-based phenomenon, drawing on tacit knowledge accumulated through experience and quickly retrieved through pattern recognition” (Sinclair et al., 2009, p. 400);
- *Foster creative and “truly new” strategies*: “Intuition is employed by strategic decision makers and other key stakeholders as a means to support or engage in creativity, visioning and foresight” (Sinclair et al., 2009, p. 400).

The advantages of intuitive decisional processes for strategizing might then be subsumed into the following abbreviations: i) *fast digestion*; ii) *humanized simplicity*; and iii) the “truly new”.

Below, after an important examination of how ideas are grasped and enacted, a comprehensive view on the nature of intuition will be offered, along with how it can be used while strategizing interwoven with Bergsonian intelligence.

(2.3.1) Thought (reflective) vs. action (experimental)

As Bergson affirms, “one must act like a man of thought and think like a man of action”²⁷ (Bergson, 2014, p. 461). In fact, in the same sense underlying this section, “thinking may drive doing, but doing just as surely drives thinking. We don’t just think in order to act, we act in order to think” (Mintzberg & Westley, 2001, p. 91). This virtuous circle might result each

²⁷ Action is “The fact or process of doing something, typically to achieve an aim.” See <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/action> (accessed 11/05/2016).

time someone is able to combine a reflective²⁸ posture together with a propensity to act, albeit in experimental²⁹ mode, “making rapid determinations” (Wilkinson, 2015, loc. 1062):

That is how pragmatic people function when stymied: They get on with it, believing that if they do ‘something’ the necessary thinking could follow. It’s *experimentation* – trying something so that you can *learn*. (Mintzberg & Westley, 2001, p. 91, my italics)

While strategizing, strategy arises – not linearly but “cycling back” (Mintzberg & Westley, 2001, p. 90) – from “a *discernible pattern* emerging in a stream of actions”, as Chia and Mackay (2007, p. 224) well recall, “and not through having ideas and mental images as Descartes presupposed” (p. 231). This idea reinforces the notion of *language games* mentioned above, which end up ascribing particular meanings according to the different buildings where managers dwell:

action [shall] not be perceived as the pursuit of pre-established ends, abstracted from concrete situations, but rather that ends and means develop conterminously within contexts that are themselves ever changing and thus always subject to revaluation and reconstruction on the part of the reflective intelligence. (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 967)

Thinking while acting through “on-the-spot examination and testing of a manager’s intuitive understanding of a situation, often in the form of a reflective ‘conversation’ with the situation” (Wagner, 2002, p. 51), “entails the capacity of actors to make *practical and normative judgments* among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 971, my italics). Ideas and thoughts once more occur within these *language games*, practiced while dwelling in certain buildings,:

Within an organization, an idea occasionally appears about how to do something new. This idea may include notions about an organizational problem or opportunity, how current practice should be changed or augmented to address it, what personnel and material resources are necessary, and a strategy for how to make changes actually happen. (Sproull & Hofmeister, 1986, p. 45)

Taking an alternative perspective, here there are the “realities of pervasive uncertainty, unknowable and unpredictable futures, learning by *trial-and-error*, and the inevitable lag of

²⁸ Reflective: “Relating to or characterized by deep thought; thoughtful”. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/reflective> (accessed 14/5/2017).

²⁹ Experimental: “Based on untested ideas or techniques and not yet established or finalized”. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/experimental> (accessed 14/5/2017).

sensing behind *motor actions* (I see only what I've already done)" (Weick, 2009, p. 195, my italics). This attitude, which is only suitable if a culture of educated trial-and-error is fostered, also reflects a culture of "doing first" instead of "thinking first", both being views based on very different features/resources, as Mintzberg notes:

'Doing first' features: craft; venturing, learning; the visceral; experiences; [...] 'Thinking first' features: science; planning, programming; the verbal; facts. (Mintzberg & Westley, 2001, p. 91)

As Bergson points out, in order to learn to swim, one must already know how to float in the water, which means that, in order to be capable of swimming, one must already be a *swimmer* (Bergson, 2001d, p. 658); i.e. before starting the intended action, one must wiggle to stay afloat, and thus be concerned first and foremost with the beginning of an impending action.

Considering that "activity can be *purposive* without the actor having in mind a *purpose*" (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 93), "a culture with a strong sense of urgency" (Spence, 2009, loc. 114), that pushes people to do things, to act, supported by mutual trust/unity/cohesion; intuitive knowledge; mission contract/orders; and focus of effort (Richards, 2004, loc. 3230), might foster more strategic ideas, and these in turn will generate new ones ...

[...] the primed ideas have some ability to prime other ideas, although more weakly. Like ripples on a pond, activation spreads through a small part of the vast network of associated ideas. (Kahneman, 2011, p. 53)

... and, at the same time, produce alternatives that can be chosen from among others:

That means doing various things, *finding out which among them works*, making sense of that and repeating the successful behaviors while discarding the rest. (Mintzberg & Westley, 2001, p. 91, my italics)

In a demanding contemporary business environment marked, as Moussa et al. (2016) insist, by "volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, or VUCA" (loc. 2147) and undergoing fast-paced change, "in a world where hard facts have become increasingly exceptional" (Painter-Morland & ten Bos, 2011, loc. 268), time-consuming "rational approaches to management have been on decline" (Wagner, 2002, p. 45), with a predominance of the more practical tasks that are often:

(1) ill-defined; (2) formulated by the problem solver; (3) missing information essential to solution; (4) characterized by having multiple solutions, each associated with liabilities and assets; (5) characterized

by having multiple methods of obtaining each solution; and (6) related to everyday experience. (Wagner, 2002, p. 44)

In this context, where “the response to the need for a decision is usually rapid, too rapid to allow for an orderly sequential analysis of the situation” (Simon, 1987, p. 57), Wagner tends to privilege the intuitive side of decision making, affirming that “managers [people of action rather than of analysis] deviate from the rational model especially in terms of their propensity to act before the facts are in [...] [an] action that is nearly spontaneous, and based more on intuition than [as mentioned] on rationality” (Wagner, 2002, pp. 48–50).

Instead of separating thought from action, Bergson fuses both through effort:

Between idea and action, a scarcely sensible and *sui generis* middle interposes itself: the effort. And from idea to effort and from effort to action, progress is so continuous that hardly can one say where idea and effort finish and where action begins. (Bergson, 2001a, p. 138)

Going further, Bachelard reinforces the point of view that all action requires a corresponding effort, since he also seems to reject the idea that, even when an action is already known to be desired, i.e. after a conviction that a certain thought is to be pursued, this desire as such might not be an automatic/direct trigger of the correspondent action:

Once an action has been willed, once it is conscious action and one that draws on reserves of psychic energy, it cannot flow continuously. It is preceded by hesitation, it is expected, deferred, provoked, and the subtle distinctions prove that it is isolated and that it appears in a *dialectical* wave-motion. (Bachelard, 2000, loc. 731, my italics)

According to the Bergsonian view of *action = thought + effort*, considering “effort” as “a vigorous or determined attempt”,³⁰ and assuming a managerial context in which the discipline of effort, referred to above, prevails, “talk and analysis without action are unacceptable” (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2013, loc. 3629), even considering Bachelard’s “hesitation”. Furthermore, thinking without acting – including *speech acts*³¹ (Searle, 1969) and the things we can *do with words*³² (Austin, 1976) – leads to *management* paralysis: the paralysis that occurs when

³⁰ For a definition of “effort”, see <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/effort> (Accessed 3/6/2017).

³¹ According to Searle (1969): *speech acts* may be *assertive* (convey opinions); *directives* (give orders); *commissive* (assume commitment); *expressive* (express attitudes); and *declarative* (constitutive).

³² According to Austin (1976), the performative impact of words can be *locutionary* [informative, like a journalist’s]; *illocutionary* [rhetorical, like a politician’s]; and *perlocutionary* [striking, like a humorist’s].

excessive analysis, or “research about the research” (Coffman & Sorensen, 2013, loc. 3517), sees management “frozen into indecisiveness” (Sadler-Smith, 2012, loc. 808); or when, as Cohen (1998) notes, “like many individuals who know they should stop smoking, see a physician, start exercising, or begin dieting, the management team ignores, avoids, delays or simply acts contrary to what they already know they should do” (p. 30).

Naturally, as Bergson would certainly not refute, according to the aphorism with which this section started, *acting without thinking* is not a desirable option either, as it may lead to (a company’s) “extinction by instinct” (Langley, 1995), i.e. the destruction of a company based on precipitated irrational actions.

(2.3.2) Intelligence (analytical) vs. intuition (experiential)

Having recalled the major differences between a rational decision-making process – which is mainly linked to Bergsonian intelligence, an analytical³³ form of thought – and a more intuitive and experiential³⁴ managerial course of action while strategizing ...

The rational system [...] [linked with intelligence] is conscious, relatively slow, analytical, primarily verbal, and relatively affect free [...]. The experiential system [...] [linked with intuition] is preconscious, rapid, automatic, holistic, primarily nonverbal, intimately associated with affect [...]. [(Sinclair et al., 2009, p. 399), citing (Pacini & Epstein, 1999, p. 972)]

... and having acknowledged the differences and complementarity between intelligence and intuition during the literature review on Bergson, presented in section 2.2, this section is now aimed at elucidating how intuition can complement rational/intelligent decision-making processes while strategizing.

It is known that “proponents of rational approaches have argued that one of their major strengths is that managers can apply them without having prior knowledge of, or experience

³³ Analytical: “Relating to or using analysis or logical reasoning”. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/analytical> (accessed 15/2017).

³⁴ Experiential: “Involving or based on experience and observation”. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/experiential> (accessed 15/5/2017).

with, the problems they confront” (Wagner, 2002, p. 46). This is an indisputable idea that might explain why so many young MBA graduates have assumed CEO and similar executive posts in important companies, even considering the criticisms that can be directed to this state of affairs (Mintzberg, 2004). Additionally, it is considered that many companies are still “machine bureaucracies, top down and obsessed with rationalization” (Mintzberg & McHugh, 1985, p. 191). Both these “academically ready” and “bureaucratic machines” approaches might still attract many supporters.

Nevertheless, a suggestion should be put forward here, “that this rational, or ‘think first’ model of decision making should be supplemented with two very different models – a ‘seeing first’ and a ‘doing first’ model” (Mintzberg & Westley, 2001, p. 89), which are models primarily linked with intuition, and according to which new ideas and decisions are “achieved as much by insights which are visioned, imagined and *intuited* as through a *rational* analytical process of defining, diagnosing, designing and deciding” (Sinclair et al., 2009, p. 393).

In fact, although intuition relates to “*holistic*, and contextual thinking inspires vision, hunch, an expanded view of untapped resources, and a feeling of the potential of the enterprise” (Allinson et al., p. 34, my italics), this faculty is not in conflict with rational modes of thought, but rather complementary to them:

Intuition is not opposed to reason, but works with it in a complementary fashion. Typically, flashes of intuitive insight follow the exhaustive use of logic and reason. (Vaughan, 1979, p. 150)

Confident decision makers *blend* logic and intuition (of thought and feeling), the so-called *two wings* that allow leaders to soar. (Patton, 2003, p. 995, my italics)

On the other hand, while Bergsonian intelligence is based on “rational, analytic, and cause and effect oriented processes” (Allinson et al., 2000, p. 34) ...

‘Intuiting’ is defined as a [complementary] process leading to a recognition or judgement that is arrived at rapidly, without deliberative rational thought, is difficult to articulate verbally, is based on a broad constellation of prior learning and past experiences, is accompanied by a feeling of confidence or certitude, and is affectively charged. (Sinclair et al., 2009, p. 393)

Intuition, taken in the Bergsonian sense of an ability to conceive a radically new idea created in action (Bergson, 2001g, pp. 1275–76), is central to the direction of this research, since it is hardly thinkable that any company would be able to create a potential *competitive* strategy, if

novelty – capable of surprising market actors – were absent. In this regard, the *United States principles of war*, based on Clausewitz (1780–1832), one of the first (military) strategists, cited by Mintzberg et al. (2009), affirms that “*surprise* results from striking an enemy at time, place, and in a manner for which he is not prepared [a fact that creates a competitive advantage for the attacker]” (p. 95).

In recent years, many authors have referred to intuition as a faculty that almost inevitably is used in order to master reality. Fontcuberta (2008) goes as far as to say that one day we will discover that “the only knowledge is intuition” (p. 245) and what we call knowledge today, based on reasoning, is nothing more than a *mechanical* aspect of reality.

In the literature, two major classes of intuition are usually identified: expert intuition, which is centred in the automatic use of experience, and creative intuition, which uses patterns from this experience to form *grids* for innovation.

Expert intuition

Expert intuition, shared either by the calm of the chess player or a rushed fire-fighter, can be defined as immediate knowledge, picked up from experience/learning and engraved in the memory, without the interference of analytical thought (Dane & Pratt, 2007; Isenberg, 1984; Klein, 1999; Myers, 2002; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Patton, 2003; Sadler-Smith & Shefy, 2004). And this is also why ...

It is a fallacy to contrast ‘analytic’ [intelligence] and ‘intuitive’ styles of management. Intuition and judgment—at least good judgment—are simply analyses frozen into *habit* and into the capacity for *rapid response*. (Simon, 1987, p. 63, my italics)

In itself, expert intuition may be a source of potential competitive advantage when seen from the perspective of a “master craftsman [and the correspondent] wealth of expertise ‘at his fingertips’ after years of experience” (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995, p. 8). The same grade of expertise can happen in companies, especially when an atmosphere of trial-and-error is fostered, since failure provokes learning:

Encourage them to *cultivate the habit* of making mistakes, the best learning opportunities of all. (Dennett, 2013, loc. 396)

Creators share one trait: failure. [...] But something deeper occurs as a result: failure provokes learning. (Wilkinson, 2015, loc. 1322)

Notwithstanding, a trial-and-error atmosphere needs to be accompanied by increasing levels of expertise so that managers get closer and closer to the “perfect shot”. To put this in another way, although action is experiential, the rightness of enacting certain decisional processes might be more and more accurate if, instead of just actions, managers trigger educated actions backed up by a constant disposition to reflect in/on the activities undertaken and the correspondent results. In fact, as Boud et al. (2005) remark, “reflection is an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it” (loc. 318). In turn, Pritchard (2014) complements the activity of reflection with other learning profiles for which a possible interaction with the former could be established as follows:

Activists [, who] prefer to learn by doing [like some strategists] rather than, for example, by reading or listening [would be transformed into] *Reflectors* [for whom it might be helpful to recall] what they have taken in when watching and listening to thoughts and ideas of others [that in turn evolve into] *Theorists* [, who] like to adapt all of their observations into frameworks [and finally in] *Pragmatists* [, who would] look for the practical implications of any new ideas or theories. (Pritchard, 2014, loc. 1077–90)

In short, an activist (a dweller) through reflection may frame some uniformities (building) that can, pragmatically, also be used by other people, reinforcing their experience/knowledge. The discipline that covers most aspects related to reflection-in/on-action and learning is commonly referred to as Action Learning (McGill & Brockbank, 2004; Pedler, 2008), which Marquardt and Waddill (2004) translate according to the following formula: *Learning = Programed knowledge (books, organizational memory, etc.) + Questioning (fresh information) + Reflection (remembering, thinking about, trying to comprehend)*.

According to this formula, apart from reflection, understanding is improved both in terms of i) the elements of knowledge that strategists must organize in order to develop a knowledge-creating company (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), and ii) in making use of the generative process of intuitions, “by focusing on the right questions rather than on the right answers” (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004, p. 192) including, as Cohen (1998) remarks, “the underlying causes that loom beneath any given performance problem” (p. 32):

The effort of *invention* consists most often in raising the problem [i.e., true freedom lies in a *power to decide, to constitute problems* themselves]. (Deleuze, 1991, p. 15, my italics)

The rationality of problem solving, and the rationality of decision making too, depend on the prior practical rationality of attending to what ‘the problem’ really is. (Forester, 1999, loc. 514)

According to this view, considering that “the deliberative practitioner learns from conversation and action” (Forester, 1999, loc. 217), the process of creation and problem solving is like a *permanent interview*, during which intuition is dialectically activated while answering questions that, in turn, activate further questions (Day, 1997).

Creative intuition

Creative intuition (creativity) is the synthetic impression that comes into consciousness with an aura of certainty (a *Eureka!* moment) after a certain period of incubation. It is “the pause that enlightens” (Goldberg, 1983, p. 63), inscribed in a continuous mental process (Dane & Pratt, 2009; Hayashi, 2001; Hodgkinson et al., 2009; Myers, 2002; Sadler-Smith & Shefy, 2004; Shapiro & Spence, 1997; Wild, 2013).

Miller and Ireland (2005) associate expert intuition with a feeling of *familiarity*, while seeing that creative intuition produces a sensation of *being right*. Nevertheless, the latter depends on the former inasmuch as ...

The more ideas and images each of us gained through accumulated learning [experience], the more chances we have to combine the building blocks in creative ways. (Myers, 2002, loc. 965)

In contrast to expert intuition, creativity supplements memory with external elements in order to generate the *novum* (Dörfler & Ackermann, 2012) by synthesis, i.e. something “truly new”:

Expert intuition relies on your own experience, while strategic intuition draws on the experience of everyone else in the world as well. (Duggan, 2013, loc. 1026)

Because creative intuitions tend to involve blending or integrating fairly diverse aspects of information in novel ways, they are often associated with discovery or the generation of something ‘truly new’. (Dane & Pratt, 2009, p. 10)

Creative intuition is of the utmost importance to strategy, therefore, since it “may lead to insights which can result in major creative breakthroughs and commercial innovations” (Sadler-Smith, 2012, loc. 1421).

In fact, the importance of creative intuition to strategy was confirmed in the 1990s, in a study undertaken by Parikh et al. (1994), in which 1,312 managers from nine countries participated,

and where the importance of intuition was ranked number one for corporate strategy and planning (selected 79.9 per cent of the time).

The connection between creative intuition and strategy may explain why the latter demands certain duration to produce its effects, not only in execution, but also in formulation:

An incubation period is often necessary for insight to occur because it enables non-conscious processes to operate more freely by relaxing constraints imposed by rational analysis. (Hodgkinson et al., 2009, p. 279)

Intuitions are [slow] intimations of [fast] insights. (Hodgkinson et al., 2009, p. 279)

Insights are culminations of sustained underground activity called “incubation”. (Kounios & Beeman, 2015, loc. 422)

Conditioned by one’s genetic heritage, surrounding culture, and previous learning, the mind combines fragments of ideas, information, conjectures, impressions, etc., to form ‘many-sided, implicit cross-references’, which become a new orientation. (Richards, 2004, loc. 1121, my italics)

In other words, to produce an insight by creative intuition requires “an incubation period”, “[slow] intimations”, an “underground activity called ‘incubation’”, and “genetic heritage, surrounding culture, and previous learning”, all demanding a certain duration.

Can intuition be trusted?

This said, however, considering that intuitions are not always right and that “feelings can be expensive” (Richards, 2013, loc. 1095), how are managers to distinguish “the marvels of intuition from its flaws” (Kahneman, 2011, p. 235) when listening to these inner voices?

Kahneman and Klein (2009) affirm that the successes brought by intuition (intuitive skill) are “unpredictable in zero-validity environments [as is the case of *guesses* in a casino]” (p. 524). From an alternative viewpoint, this would suggest that intuition should not be used in situations for which it is impossible to establish a grounded (and sustainable) relation between cause and effect (Fisher, 2010):

[For instance] Ignore your feelings about the direction of the stock market. (Richards, 2013, loc. 1095)

Johnson (2013) offers a more concrete list of when to trust intuition and when it is inadvisable to do so. Miller and Ireland (2005) on the other hand note that i) holistic hunches (creative

intuition) and ii) automated expertise (expert intuition) are more suitable for exploration of the unknown (e.g. a company's new market positioning) and exploitation of the known (e.g. a company's current information systems), respectively, where they recommend that the correspondence is not reversed.

In addition, Kahneman and Klein (2009) note that for people who base intuition in mature, learned, lived experience – as Thaler and Sunstein (2009) affirm, “the automatic system [intuition] can be trained with lots of repetition [...] but such training takes a lot of time and effort” (loc. 334) –, “the product of intensive learning, practice and feedback” (Hodgkinson et al., 2009, p. 287),

[including] “deliberate practice”, where an expert coach [...] takes you through well-designed training over months or years, and you give your full concentration [to it]. (Goleman, 2013, p. 163)

... since these people have a greater tendency to be right than those who base intuition in heuristic processes, deciding recklessly “by [non-educated] trial-and-error or by rules that are only loosely defined”.³⁵ Dane and Pratt (2007) also subscribe to this idea, adding to it the notion of *domain-relevant schemas* ...

Individuals who can bring complex, domain-relevant [i.e. applied to a specific reality] schemas to bear on a problem are more likely to make effective intuitive decisions than those who employ heuristics and simpler, domain-independent schemas. (Dane & Pratt, 2007, p. 43)

... and of explicit learning ...

Explicit learning will positively influence *the effectiveness of intuitive decision making* through the formation of complex, domain relevant schemas. (Dane & Pratt, 2007, p. 43, my italics)

More as an *image* than something that could be measured by the minute, Ericsson et al. (2007), when talking about the time it takes to become an expert, point to the need for ten years (10,000 hours) of hard practice to acquire respected experience. Nevertheless, Goleman (2013) draws attention to the fact that the 10,000 hours might represent a myth if people make the same mistakes over and over, never learning from them.

³⁵ See <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/heuristic> (accessed 27/02/2016).

Finally, since intuition also includes the

cultural and emotional biases of that lifetime (Bonabeau, 2003, p. 118, citing Bruce Henderson, founder of the Boston Consulting Group)

... it is important to assess the rightness or wrongness of possible cultural or emotional biases by playing devil's advocate. This is because, "with remarkable ease, we [also] form and sustain false beliefs" (Myers, 2002, loc. 1034), especially if it is considered that "people are susceptible to irrelevant influences from their immediate environment (which we call *context effects*), irrelevant emotions, short-sightedness, and other *forms of irrationality*" (Ariely, 2009, loc. 3370, my italics), alongside bounded (or politically biased) rationality. This type is well illustrated by the *organized anarchies* of the Garbage Can Model, developed by Cohen et al. (1972), "plagued with goal ambiguity and conflict" (p. 16), and even (or, sometimes, "except") in rational (thought) situations for which "the display of emotion [is] one key tacit resource for the 'production of persuasion'" (Samra-Fredericks, 2003, p. 163).

Playing devil's advocate is also important for detecting and fighting against *indisputable* economical and business *truths*, since as repeated almost *ad nauseam*, and as reinforced by Dobbs et al. (2014):

the collision of technological disruption, rapid emerging-markets growth, and widespread aging is upending long-held assumptions that underpin strategy setting, decision making, and management. (p. 1)

By playing devil's advocate and generating counter-arguments – (counter-)arguments that in themselves contain patterns (typical of certain classes of arguments) which may be studied and used in *sophisticated* conversations (Morgado, 2003) – "executives can probe intuitive decisions for inconsistencies, inaccuracies, and irrelevancies" (Sadler-Smith & Shefy, 2004, p. 86), by, as Milkman et al. (2009) note, ...

Simply encouraging people to 'consider the opposite' of whatever decision they are about to make reduces errors in judgement caused by several particularly robust biases: overconfidence, hindsight [remembrance], and anchoring. (p. 361)

All in all, it can be said that the more an action is *educated*, i.e. honed by reflecting on experiences, the more an intuition can prove accurate. This assertion possibly implies that strategists as dwellers should invest in the construction of buildings that, while not reducing

their freedom of movement – with “movement” being literally taken in the sense of a processual/dynamic view of reality –, will protect them from *strategic randomness*; i.e. protect them from instinctual improvisation combined with disoriented intuition, something that inconsequent *small talk* among inconsistent management would most probably permit.

In summary, in starting to analyse the pair thought vs. action, this section on intuition brought to light the function of action, which can be just experimental, as i) a trigger of intuition and ii) a generator of a practical trial-and-error reflection that at times due to volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA), does not always allow for a traditional rational decision-making process where actors are capable of digesting all information and making reliable cause-and-effect predictions. And in addition, it was also noted that acting without thinking might lead to a company’s *extinction by instinct*.

The literature study, in relation to the intelligence vs. intuition pair, analysed further how intelligence, representative of rational thought, and intuition might interact; with the first assigning building to the second, and thus contributing to *useful* intuitive decision-making, and the second ascribing dwelling to the first, and thus bringing analytical intelligence closer to the *field of action*. Taking this direction, intuition was then divided into *expert* intuition and *creative* intuition, the first capturing the experiential side of sympathy with action, and the second capturing the possibility of using former patterns to generate new insights or innovative re-creations of strategic thinking.

Section (2.3.2) ended with an explanation of the conditions that must be observed in order for intuition (considered a non-rational mode of decision making) to be trusted. Among other insights, the importance of playing devil’s advocate and the need to heed the dialectics it generates were highlighted, not only for testing intuitions but also to further foster creation. As section 4.2 will clarify, this dialectic wave of thinking and acting is directly linked with the flow of duration – a complex and dynamic concept – and thus an elusive one that will be studied in more detail below.

(2.4) Duration

This section seeks additional perspectives on how it may be possible to analyse and communicate – using Bergsonian intelligence, considered a tool – something that is captured in “*living time, time experienced through intuition*” (Styhre, 2003, p. 17) – a faculty that “is possible only from the inside and requires a sort of sympathy with the known entity” (Colombo, 2009, p. 263). This *something*, captured by intuition, is duration – a concept for which “there is no juxtaposition of events; [and] therefore is no mechanist causality” (p. 262). When this non-causality is borne in mind, i) when the causality between current strategic decisions and the future effects of their execution is what is at stake; ii) when an ethnographic method was not the/an option chosen for this research, a fact that undermines the possibility of experiencing a direct living time from *inside*; and, additionally, iii) when all of this must be communicated – since “in fact Bergson considered linguistic abilities functional to intellect more than to intuition” (Colombo, 2009, p. 266) –, it makes it easier to see why a new angle for inspecting duration is now needed.

Although, as seen in previous sections, Bergson links duration to intuition and intuition to the “truly new”, as Cunningham (1914) adverted to: “the past is never merely old [dynamic memory] nor is the present ever wholly new [dynamic imagination]” (p. 539). This remark is essential to an understanding of why, although the “truly new” is a requisite of a (competitive) strategy capable of *surprising* competitors and clients, strategy formulation and formation is nevertheless a (conscious) process that possesses one (controllable) characteristic: “its anticipatory [i.e. non-surprising] nature, its tendency to become, not just anything, but *something*” (p. 539).

Change as such

Nevertheless, as implied above, although a deliberated/captured strategy holds as an essential requisite for the logically unforeseeable “truly new” – something that might be seen as paradoxical if a deliberated/captured strategy is seen as quite the opposite of unforeseeable – it is still possible and not contradictory, as Kleinherenbrink (2014) points out, since Bergson compares duration – as in the case of strategy creation/formation – to “a melody [that] is constituted by *change as such*” (p. 224), i.e. to something that is difficult to *arrest*.

This processual/dynamic concept of Bergson's may sometimes seem difficult to grasp, due to the paradoxical nature of the oxymoron "arresting (imprisoning) movement". In fact, strategically speaking, how is it possible to deliberately create the "truly new" and fix it in a plan, if movement/duration is needed to create this "truly new"? Or to put the question in somewhat different terms, how is it possible to *hold on* while deliberating and then, after this moment, act, execute? A plausible answer might be "by making the mistake of not considering duration, of not considering change as such", as a melody embodies:

When we listen to a melody, we have a clear perception of movement and succession which is not the movement of 'something' [but change as such]. (Chia, 2002, p. 865)

In this context, strategists must be prepared to master *change* (Bremer, 2012; Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Katzenbach & Khan, 2010; Kotter, 1990; Kotter, 2012) *as such*, and not just pursue artificially fixed (deterministic) plans if they want to succeed in a strategy that, in order to be considered *as such*, must include duration:

The future [future strategy] does not exist [for a determinist] [...] since for a determinist every event merely unfolds the ready-made reality hidden in existent conditions. [...] On the contrary, the life of the universe [including strategizing] is a creative process, whereby something new and thus unpredictable appears at every moment. (Kolakowski, 2001, pp. 2–3)

This becoming world-view [in duration] privileges *change* over persistence, activity [verb] over substance [substantive], *process* [dynamic] over product [static] and novelty over continuity. (Chia, 2002, p. 866, my italics)

One must reintroduce her/himself into duration to capture reality on the mobility that is the essence. (Bergson, 2001g, p. 1272)

With this supremacy of "creative process", "novelty" and "mobility" in mind, it is close to inevitable that this section will try to bring some understanding to the confrontation – or better put, contrary – acquaintanceship, between strategic deliberation and unpredictability, between act and fact, between dynamic memory ingrained in the manager's experience and future dynamic creation in the course of strategic duration/creation, which leads to newness.

One key element that might be suitable to reconcile these complementary opposites – deliberated-unpredictable, act-fact, or memory-future – is *attention* and its condition as an expression of *purpose*, considered an intrinsic element of any strategy:

Every act of *attention* is the expression of a *purpose*, either immediate or remote, either in the form of a clearly conceived end [a strategic vision] or in the form of a sub-conscious tendency [conceivably interwoven with corporate culture]. [On the other hand] purposes [...] anticipate the future, and, through this anticipatory quality, control the passing ‘presents’ of conscious experience. (Cunningham, 1914, p. 534, my italics)

In other words, strategy implies a purpose and this purpose requires attention. This attention will lead to a sort of selection of the “truly new” f/acts, which will be labelled as strategically relevant, as a *strategic issue*: “an emerging development, trend or event which is potentially relevant to the organization’s strategy” (Dutton & Duncan, 1987, p. 281), and which will have originated through interaction with stakeholders – i.e. “those individuals, actors, and organized groups and institutions that have bearing on the policies and actions of the organization” (Dutton & Duncan, 1987, p. 282). Regarding these interactions with stakeholders, Jarzabkowski et al. (2015) note the existence of “a global ‘nexus’ of practices” (p. vi) and “rationalities through which different elements of the market are coordinated within collective practice” (p. 53) or “a pattern of activities that is recognizable” (p. 206).

In this context strategizing is clearly not about engaging in an uncontrolled process by which duration and its apparent unpredictability assumes the lead as inconsequential artistry. On the contrary, strategizing implies that managers shall be *attentive* and *selective* in relation to certain issues that will trigger and then maintain a deliberated course of action in preference to any other. Hereafter, various definitions of attention/selection are provided:

Attention as *selection* has been the most common paradigm for research. (Roda, 2011a, loc. 603, my italics); Bottom-up processes [of attention] select stimuli on the basis of their *saliency*, where saliency is determined by how much an item stands out from its background [a SWOT analysis]. (Roda, 2011a, loc. 674); Top-down processes, instead, select stimuli on the basis of their relevance to the current task or goal [strategic objectives]. (Roda, 2011a, loc. 684); Focalization, concentration, of consciousness are of its [attention’s] essence. It implies [like strategy] withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others. (James, 2011, loc. 7243); Attention’s essential effect is to render perception more intense and to get rid of details. (Bergson, 2001b, p. 245)

Naturally, if this selective exercise, settled by attention, is pushed to the limit with leaders rejecting the “truly new” because it has been labelled as “irrelevant” and, simultaneously deciding against *change*, both newness and change are cancelled out by a blind and stiff “propulsion [drive] of anticipatory [strategic] purposes and aims” (Cunningham, 1914, p. 535). In similar conditions, then, it could be said that competitive strategizing should be suspended since, as implied in the current work and as noted above, strategic creation involves duration shaped by *change as such*, which implies that acceptance of a certain dose of its unpredictability is essential.

Furthermore, if this exercise of paying attention to the *known* (the opposite of the “truly new”) – either as part of a purposeful strategy or due to being imprisoned in memory/culture – is pushed to its limit, then the “truly new” will be tyrannically transformed into the *truly known*. Now, through this despotic behaviour, it might be that artificial strategy will be made/baptized *ex post*, and leaders will rhetorically reinforce their self-fulfilling prophecies and correspondent linguistic legitimacy (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005), defining *reality* (Zbaracki, 1998) as almost divine leaders. This artificiality does not correspond to strategy-creation, but only strategy baptism, which at best can be useful to gain legitimacy in order to convince corporate stakeholders to favour the continuation of a certain strategy.

In conclusion, it could be said that duration – “the stuff out of which [strategic] conscious existence is made; for a conscious being, to exist is to change and to change is to endure” (Cunningham, 1914, p. 526) – is a concept that may help managers to determine the strategically effective range within which their strategic guidance shall evolve. Too little guidance, refraining from labelling relevant future f/acts, due to a lack of purpose and attention, will lead to a predominance of fortuitousness; and too much control, in the sense of an enclosed dictatorship and its dogmatic attention, will lead to non-change – and thus, non-duration/non-strategic creation – or to an *ex post* baptized strategy.

In light of this – and having as a fundamental requisite leaders’ openness to engage in constructive dialogue, instead of dictatorship, either with the researcher in the course of this project, or with their stakeholders – the current research sets out to analyse how the participant CEOs pay *attention* to the “truly new”, as one of the chosen techniques to rationalize something (duration) that belongs to experiential intuition.

Could this technique of rationalization, of paying attention to *attention*, be considered too artificial? No, not if attention is considered as a requisite of survival; in order to surpass “immediate impediment” (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 39) while dwelling – an overtaking action that implies a “mental faculty of considering or taking notice of someone or something [the immediate impediment]”³⁶ that “is said to *guide action*” (Stojanov & Kulakov, 2011, loc. 5746), “implying a degree of reactive spontaneity” (James, 2011, loc. 7245) – and furthermore, since during the current project dwelling has been attached so closely to intuition, the answer may again conceivably be *no*, because:

[Although] during last century information was a scarce resource; [n]ow, *human attention* has become the scarce resource whereas information (of all types and quantities) abounds. (Roda, 2011b, loc. 322)

Chia – for whom “reality *is* change” (Chia, 2002, p. 866) and thus, as “change is indivisible [like a melody]” (p. 866), “the past would be *immanent* in the present” (p. 866) – gives an additional reason for the essentiality of attention in a context where managers do not need to remember but, on the contrary, need to selectively forget the past that is already immanent in the present:

Organization³⁷ [as in our brain] is a censoring/centring device that works to create a figure/ground effect [which includes a strategic vision] so that *attention*, focus and purposefulness are *directed* towards productive outcomes. (Chia, 2002, p. 866, my italics)

Furthermore, since “for Bergson, the past, present and future are always related in *durée* [duration]” (Styhre, 2003, p. 18), it is essential to understand how it is possible to separate these moments/stages while asking interviewees/managers to talk about i) what they presently intend to execute going forward and in the future, and ii) what they have actually done in the past; this notably in order for the researcher to carry out the research underlying this section. This need, in essence, is what leads to the concept of a virtual strategy and to the notion that a strategy can be real while being actual: that is, a strategy can be a strategy even if it is not the final strategy yet. And why is this precision important? Because this project has shifted perspective from i) strategy as a supposedly finished *thing* – a plan – ready to be implemented

³⁶ On attention, see: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/attention> (accessed 30/07/2016).

³⁷ Chia considers that “Organizations’ are conceptually-stabilized abstractions: ‘islands’ of fabricated coherence in a sea of chaos and change” (Chia, 2002, p. 866).

at a later time, to ii) an activity during which strategy is created, i.e. it is in the course/process of formation.

Virtual strategy

As Colombo (2009, p. 264) and Styhre (2003, p. 18) reaffirm, citing Proust, the “virtual is real without being actual and ideal without being abstract”. This affirmation means that these authors are likely to share a processual/dynamic view of reality, this, also applied to knowledge: “actionable knowledge can only be *virtual* knowledge” (Colombo, 2009, p. 264, my italics), since “knowledge is always in a *state of becoming*, i.e. in a state of being further refined, developed, used and transformed” (Styhre, 2003, p. 19, my italics).

Making an intuitive parallel between knowledge and strategy, since both are subject to a cognitive process of formation, we can affirm that strategy, translated into the vision and action plan managers intend – *ideal without being abstract* – to execute – to be *actual* – and which steers their attention “is still real and ideal without being abstract to us” (Styhre, 2003, p. 19), i.e. it is virtual, it is *something*.

In other words, a possible answer to the state strategy stands in now – given the fact that it is developed in duration, and that duration conceptually has no defined past/present/future – while in the state of being formed, i.e. in the state of becoming *actual*, in duration, is that it is *virtual* and consequently *real*, since “duration [is] where the real and the virtual meet” (Linstead, 2014, loc. 6178).

This virtual state reinforces the vision that strategy is not only that which is implemented, i.e. what is actual, since “the totality of our knowledge [strategy] is always a combination of virtual and actual knowledge [strategy]” (Styhre, 2003, p. 20), a fact that reinforces the perspective underlying this project, which is the mastering of duration.

In addition, and considering the discussion in the initial paragraphs of this section, it may also be assumed that attention is what maintains duration, what makes it *active* between these two moments – virtual and actual, between current actions and future results – and, thus, associates i) a gap between decision and execution with ii) a breach of attention. Naturally,

the idea is not to reproduce the entire *answer* for the strategic question here – since this is the ultimate goal of the current research as a whole. Instead, here, the intention is to offer a number of contributions that seek to comprehend what the drivers of attention are; thus extracting some clues towards understanding how the gap between decision/virtual and execution/actual might possibly be reduced.

The method elected to analyse possible breaches of attention – the conceivable cause for the fissures in strategic formulation and formation already referred to – is not based on analysis of inattention, such as “*selective inattention* [...] [to] things that people who have been accustomed to the life of the organisation *do not see*” (Schon, 1970, p. 4, my italics). Instead, it is based on the contrary view, i.e. how to foster/hold attention.

Directly associated with the actions of fostering and holding attention are the concepts of *highlighting* (information) and *framing* (meanings), bearing in mind that, as Ramirez et al. (2013) note, “all acts of highlighting are also acts of framing” (p. 827).

(2.4.1) Fostering attention – Highlighting

“Highlighting is an act of conceiving and promoting issues, thereby *directing attention* to certain issues ahead of others” (Ramírez et al., 2013, p. 827, my italics). There are various articles related to this topic (Dutton & Jackson, 1987; Dutton & Duncan, 1987; Dutton & Ashford, 1993), namely on i) *labelling* an issue as strategic, ii) the creation of *momentum* to focus attention on it, and iii) *selling* this, highlighting it, to senior management and dominant stakeholders – such as, for instance, those stakeholders that *limit* companies under intervention and branches of multinational companies.

Labelling

It has already been noted that strategic issues are captured/created in response to external challenges, since ...

The *short-term effectiveness* and *long-term survival* of organizations are determined partly by the actions they take in response to [strategic issues on] their external environments. (Dutton & Jackson, 1987, p. 76, my italics)

Managers ascribe meanings to strategic issues by categorizing them by use of labels.

Labelling/categorizing is a crucial strategic activity, because “it reduces the complexity of the stimulus world by organizing objects into meaningful groups” (Dutton & Jackson, 1987, p. 78), fostering a closer, more consensual relationship between “strategic *issues* and eventual organizational *action*” (p. 79, my italics). As Bergson affirms, we do not see a thing in itself, but only the practical *tag* that it carries (Bergson, 2001c, p. 460).

However, seen another way, considering that “an *interpretative view* of meaning and action predominates any attempts to link individual cognition to organizational actions” (Dutton & Jackson, 1987, p. 76, my italics), then labelling/categorizing assumes a crucial role, since it may create strategic *reality*. In fact, managers do so inasmuch as it gives rise to selective managerial attention/disregard or positive/negative tendencies towards *issues/non-issues* or *opportunities/threats* that may emerge; what could be termed a fact or non-fact, which gives rise to an act or non-act. Naturally, and in accordance with Dutton and Jackson (1987), managers can affect labelling during/for strategizing, namely i) by working on the criteria underlying the task, and ii) by ascribing positive or negative values to the labels, connecting them to positive or negative individual outcomes.

Momentum

Once a topic/action is labelled relevant/irrelevant, or an opportunity/threat, to mention but two possible categories, it is important to ascribe it a priority, i.e. to identify the *momentum* that puts it *on the table*. According to Dutton and Duncan (1987), evaluation of urgency and feasibility, within an organizational environment that has already been characterized as interpretivist and constructionist, is what decides action, starting with decisional action.

Urgency in this respect is related the cost resulting from paralysis, the result of doing nothing, in resolving a problem, or taking advantage of an opportunity; while *feasibility* is related to the capacity to i) identify a suitable solution and ii) to economically implement it. If both urgency and feasibility are low/high, the consequences in terms of action are clear: stop/start,

respectively. If urgency is high and feasibility is low, then *organizational frustration* based on inaction might increase; whereas if urgency is low and feasibility high, opportunistic actions of the spare-time action type can most probably take place.

Selling

The sponsorship of senior management, but also of stakeholders, seems vital in labelling a certain issue as *strategic*, a previous condition of allocating attention to it that, according to Dutton and Ashford (1993), is “a necessary precursor to their taking substantive *action*” (p. 404, my italics). To attain this sponsorship, managers have to *sell* an event as a strategic issue, by capturing the attention of senior management/major stakeholders to focus this attention on a certain issue, by organizing resources/routines in the desired direction.

Dutton and Ashford (1993) also advocate the idea that sellers may act i) as pure *constructionists*, building a reality that is supported, as shown below, by certain frames; ii) by *impression management* (Goffman, 2016) centred on creating a good impression, acting as a sort of reward-henchman; and iii) by *persuasion*, namely by means of rhetorical devices (Morgado, 2003).

Raising a certain strategic issue to the top of the agenda/priorities of leadership/stakeholders, persuading them to buy-in and offer their sponsorship, can be measured by “(a) the *naming* of an issue, (b) collection of relevant *information*, (c) *conversation* about the issue, or (d) creation of either *roles or task forces* devoted to the issue” (Dutton & Ashford, 1993, p. 404, my italics). Among other factors, Dutton and Ashford (1993) link the success of selling to the following:

- (i) *Credibility* of the seller; (ii) presenting the issue with an attached *solution*; (iii) demonstrating the *high payoff* in considering the issue as strategic; (iv) higher *expertise of leadership/stakeholders* in the issue at stake; (v) the use of a convincing/consensual *frame*; (vi) the use of effective *emotion*; (vii) *evidence* that supports claims; (viii) being *synthetic* (right to the point).

Consequently, a good seller of a strategic labelling and/or momentum most likely increases their potential for being very successful if they are *credible*, advance a *solution* instead of a problem, draw a business case that shows *payoff*, are considered an *expert*, know how to use

emotion, provide *evidence*, are *right to the point* and, as will be analysed hereafter, have a convincing/consensual *frame* that gives sense/ purpose, to a certain course of action.

(2.4.2) Holding attention – Framing

As Creed et al. (2002) note, frames “define boundaries [windows] and *direct our attention* to what events and texts are relevant [perspectives] for our understanding of an issue or situation” (p. 36, my italics). Various authors have published papers on the characteristics of framing (Gamson & Lasch, 1980; Kaplan, 2008; Ramírez et al., 2013), including on i) *scheme*, ii) *political status*, and iii) value-added (or value-destruction if/when frames become straightjackets that hinder attention to the emergent) brought about by *consensus*.

Scheme

With regard to the subject of a *scheme*³⁸ – this is a framing – a “day-to-day sense making technique” (Creed et al., 2002, p. 36) that creates “packages of meaning” (p. 37), references, grounds and reasons; each of which, according to Gamson and Lasch (1980) contains its own *signature*, its own “set of elements that suggest its core frame and position in a shorthand fashion” (p. 3), sometimes rhetorically, as if someone were “try[ing] to tell a tale around a specific set of circumstances” (Freedman, 2013, p. 563). As an example of a scheme, or schemes, eight different possible *signatures* have been assumed, which may be synthesized as follows:

- *Metaphors*: when an idea (principal) is presented in terms of the characteristics of another idea (association) – a common example is when someone wants to characterize a company as resource-intensive with low value, and refers to it as a *white elephant*;
- *Exemplars*: to create a sort of *past metaphor*, in which the associated idea is a memorable (strong) past idea (event) – may often be used in economic turnaround situations, in which the past is used as an example of what not to do;

³⁸ A scheme is “a large-scale systematic plan or arrangement for attaining some particular object or putting a particular idea into effect”. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/scheme> (accessed 27/5/2017).

- *Catch-Phrases*: “are attempted [memorable] summary statements [tag-lines, titles, slogans] about the principal subject” (Gamson & Lasch, 1980, p. 5) – a typical catch-phrase is “clients first”;
- *Depictions*: act like *weak* metaphors/exemplars, limiting their function to colour the principal with *strong* adjectives – if managers want to cut certain expenses they consider unacceptable they can refer to them as *delirious* expenses, *outrageous* expenses ...;
- *Visual Images*: “we include here icons and other visual images that suggest the core of a package” (Gamson & Lasch, 1980, p. 5) – logos, created to accompany certain internal meetings and programmes, are a good illustration of the strong symbolic value of images;
- *Roots*: when a package gives sense to certain elements that are based on the background of the current situation to *illuminate* it – managers usually appeal to past mismanagement (system) in order to explain the reason for making members of the workforce redundant ...;
- *Consequences*: where a certain package is anchored to foreseen consequences that the principal (current situation) will generate – ... or to the sustainability of the company and, consequently, the preservation of many jobs;
- *Appeal to principal*: when “packages rely on characteristic moral appeals and uphold certain general precepts” (Gamson & Lasch, 1980, p. 6) – these may include appeals to values belonging to a specific corporate culture, like working hard, client-centricity, or low cost.

Politicking

Apart from the strategic value that framing and its inherent language game brings, by making sense of, and providing a certain “truth” to certain strategic decisions/actions (Samra-Fredericks, 2005), framing is also a purposeful *political* activity in its own right, especially, as Carter et al. (2008) note, with regard to “how power and politics shape the strategies that emerge” (p. 83).

Framing is on the agenda for managers who engage in a sort of competition for *selling* a *predominant collective frame* (Kaplan, 2008) – “practical accomplishments forged in contention [dispute]” (p. 744) – which may achieve the status of *law* and its correspondent *true* outcomes. These framing actions, which represent execution while deciding, make up part of “a process [of sense-making] by which these outcomes are [thus] *constructed*” (p. 746, my italics), not only by moulding ideas, but also by creating “contexts for action” (p. 747),

moving further away from probably naïve “conceptions of strategy as a set of neutral or ‘rational techniques’” (Samra-Fredericks, 2005, p. 804).

Taken from a perspective referred to by Mintzberg as *political games*, politicking assumes more *belligerent* facets:

The competing goals of individuals and coalitions ensure that any intended strategy will be disturbed and distorted every step of the way. People play all sorts of ‘political games’ in organizations [insurgency, counterinsurgency, sponsorship, alliance (peer power)-building, empire (power with subordinates)-building, budgeting, expertise, lording (by decree), line/staff, rival camps, strategic (promote) candidates, whistle-blowing, young Turks (reformists)]. (Mintzberg et al., 2009, pp. 244–46)

These belligerent facets identified by Mintzberg, in which “insurgency” or barriers to change might assume a crucial role in a process of strategic change, can be complemented by what Buchanan and Badman (2008) call “management turf [*territory*] tactics”, organized around:

Image building [appearance]; *information games* [manipulation]; *scapegoating* [blaming]; *alliances* [support]; *networking* [influence]; *compromise* [negotiation]; *rule games* [bureaucracy]; *positioning* [visibility]; *issue selling* [propaganda]; *dirty tricks* [underworld]. (Buchanan & Badham, 2008, p. 16, my italics)

Finally, *unethical politicking* includes “situations that involve bargaining,³⁹ whereby purely selfish people tend to perform *less effectively* than others who have a strong emotional commitment to norms and fairness” (Frank, 1988, p. x). More vicious still is the unlawful defence of personal interests, another power source or turf-war trait that gives rise to white-collar crimes (Morgado, 2005), and particularly to corruption (Morgado, 2007), distorting and jeopardizing a vital goal of any organization: to sustainably serve their stakeholders.

Consensus

The dominant frames will “focus and shape management attention [to issues/responses] [...] which would have otherwise remained peripheral” (Ramírez et al., 2013, p. 827), thus increasing political clout. The choice of dominant frames, therefore, potentially mobilizes a high level of *consensus*. Sometimes, however, the frames need not be concerned with

³⁹ On negotiation, taken as a value-added process rather than just a bargaining tool, see *O Processo Negocial* (Morgado, 1994).

consensus but just compliance, if in the meantime decisions have already been converted into a binding project or action plan around specific strategizing.

But even consensus, according to Homburg et al. (1999), may not always be a good thing. One specific case in which the lack of consensus might be better is, as Murrell et al. (1993) suggest, while playing devil's advocate. This has already been referred to in section 2.3.2 as an instrument to enhance the reliability of intuitive thinking.

Nevertheless, having acknowledged this, with the objective that managers avoid blindly pursuing consensus, strategic consensus – i.e. what Kellermanns et al. (2005) call “the shared understanding of *strategic priorities* among managers at the top, middle, and/or operating levels of the organization” (p. 721, my italics) – is still considered crucial to effective strategy formation and is easier to achieve among a homogeneous group of managers, sharing simple and stable beliefs (Dutton & Duncan, 1987).

But in what sense can consensus be crucial to effective strategy formation? Consensus should i) enhance managers' *understanding* of a certain strategy, by combining or synthesizing “the various separate understandings into a unity that reconstitutes, or provides a better understanding of, the concrete” (Herepath, 2014, p. 874); and ii) foster *commitment*, which is maximized [namely] when strategic objectives are aligned with a bonus scheme (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992).

And naturally in terms of framing, as noted above, if it is *blind* either through negligence or deliberately, it will be converted into a value-destroying liability: it will imprison managers in straightjackets, creating artificialities that, as Bergson points out, might be laughable.

In this context, and considering that framing – which can be formed of various sub-frames and permits the coexistence of several frames, even if one is the *frame-of-frames* (Ramírez et al., 2013) – may be followed by reframing, in turn triggered by new highlighting(s), it is reasonable to acknowledge that a certain frame is what keeps a certain strategic duration going, while a certain highlighting is suitable in order to create a new frame (i.e. changing strategic course) in a close and mutually influential relationship, in which cause and effect are not clearly defined:

[...] Framing and reframing acts took place, which were aimed at group consensus regarding which signals to highlight. (Ramírez et al., 2013, p. 832)

With this in mind, it was nearly inevitable that questions underlying the research of duration should comprise the concepts of *highlighting* and *framing* and correspondent characteristics/causes, as depicted in Figure 5 – a framework conceived in order to analyse strategic duration, titled *Framework of Strategic Duration*:

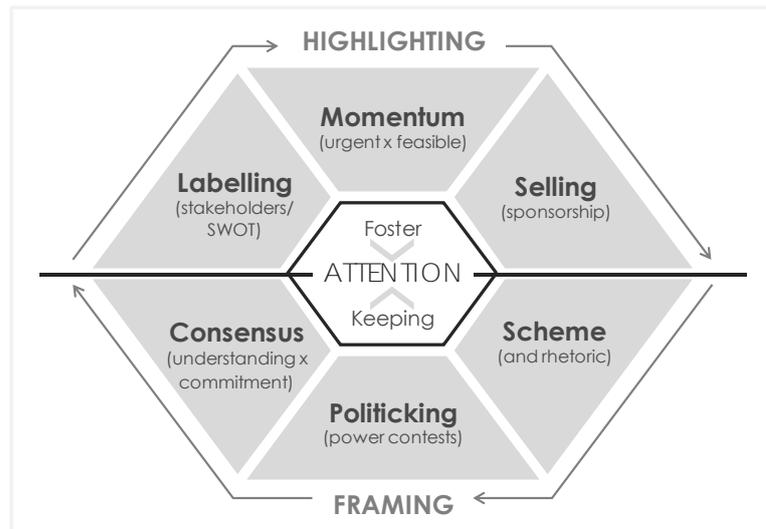


Figure 5 – Framework of Strategic Duration

This framework will serve as the nodes and lenses, through which analysis and interpretation of the interviews on duration will take place over the course of the qualitative research presented in sections 3.3 and 4.2. In the introduction to Chapter 4 – the research findings – and especially in section 4.2, some additional literature has been introduced to explore how duration, presumably a flow that is accessed intuitively, can best be explained intelligently/analytically, namely by *breaking* its continuum into six constituents represented in Figure 5 above.

It is also important to note at this point that, despite the fact that any constituents analytically identified for duration might create an idea of a duration (which after all can be fragmented into separate parts, as will be seen), the notion that strategic duration can be spatially

represented as a line traced by a pen, as mentioned in section 2.2.1, is still valid. As presented above, this line is formed by a forward movement, although possibly slowed down by back-and-forth movements at different stages/constituents, and this forward movement is what gives *strategy its thickness*;⁴⁰ i.e. its strategic quality, since duration *measures* qualitative time. Should a strategy disregard one or more of the constituents, the strategy might then become thinner and thus more prone to *breaking*.

All in all, the literature review consolidated the opinion that, to answer the strategic question that underlies this work – *How can the formal gap between strategic decision and execution be reduced?* – a processual/dynamic view of reality would best be adopted.

To bring this idea to the forefront, the researcher turned both i) to the discipline of Strategy-as-Practice and ii) to philosophy, making use of Bergsonian theory.

From looking at the discipline of Strategy-as-Practice and through analysis of Bergson's philosophical theories, notably in terms of decision vs. execution and building vs. dwelling, the researcher reinforced the need to focus the current study on the activity of strategizing rather than on strategy as a model/plan and, by the same token, developed the notion that the activity undertaken by managers while strategizing had to be, in some way, framed by building practices that could ascribe some deliberate direction to dwelling praxis.

Taking an overview of Bergson's theories, the researcher came to a decision about which Bergsonian concepts to select in order to analyse reality in dynamism, particularly in relation to strategizing. The selection made was, on one hand, concerned with intuition and its interactions with intelligence and, on the other hand, with duration. Intuition is essential to strategizing because it brings about the "truly new"; this being the key to creating a strategy capable of surprising competitors and clients. Intelligence is also needed to ascribe usefulness to intuition, by "intertuition". Duration is required in order to reconcile and reunite these concepts, because it is only in the course of action that they can be approached. This selection developed into further investigation on these topics.

⁴⁰ Thickness is "a broad or deep part of a specified thing". See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/thickness> (accessed 4/6/2017).

The literature review around intuition focused on the pairs thought vs. action and intelligence vs. intuition. The major learning extracted from this study was that, especially in a world characterized by Volatility-Uncertainty-Complexity-Ambiguity, educated (reflective trial-and-error) action replaces, in part, the decisions once taken exclusively by rational thought. This argument was further developed by studying the interaction that takes place between intelligence and intuition, the former understood as a human tool used to *foster (ex ante)* and *test (ex post)* the latter; and then taken up in “intertuition” – a neologism that represents an assembly of concepts that can only be separated through analysis.

The literature on duration examined how strategic control might subsist in a flow (duration) that in itself symbolizes the creation of the “truly new”, something that cannot be anticipated. Part of the answer was provided by the need to master, as far as possible, *change as such*. This possibility was connected to the need of strategists to highlight and frame attention on some issues instead of others, while navigating in “a stream [duration] against which we cannot go” (Bergson, 2005, p. 505). Each of these modes of capturing and holding attention gave rise to different constituents of duration and to the correspondent framework represented in Figure 5. It is these constituents that give thickness to a line along which managers seek to connect the dots while strategizing, in duration.

These concepts, which were captured/deepened over the four sections of the literature review, constitute the building blocks that frame the current research, the dwelling activity that substantiates this project and the method and findings which are presented in Chapters 3 and 4 that follow.

3. Methodology and Methods

This chapter analyses the methodologies and methods underlying the current research, beginning with an explanation of how coherence with the theoretical work of Bergson frames the research stances and the strategies followed. This analysis includes an explanation about the ontology and epistemology underlying the research developed for this project, before finally turning to discuss the chosen method of qualitative research interviews. These examine the following research questions (RQ) in accordance with the strategic question – *How can the formal gap between strategic decision and execution be reduced?* – and the findings of the literature review (Chapter 2):

- **RQ1** – How do the usually-considered “opposite” **pairs** – building vs. dwelling, intelligence vs. intuition, thought vs. action, and decision vs. execution – combine while strategizing?
- **RQ2** – What is the importance of **intuition** to strategizing and how is this revealed?
- **RQ3** – How does strategy formation evolve over a certain period of time, through specific stages, along which a specific **duration** is produced?

(3.1) Implications of Bergson’s theory for methodology and methods

Henri Bergson shares an important element of his philosophy with the American philosopher and psychologist William James (1842–1910), specifically in his pragmatism, which defends a *truth* that is built by the individual contributions of many inventors, who create a reality, rather than discovering it (Bergson, 2001e, p. 1447). This is a truth that might be measured “in terms of the success of their [theories or beliefs] practical application”,⁴¹ such that Bergson would not refute a constructionist stance of the world for which reality is *constructed* or “continuously shaped by social activity and human intervention” (Ng & Coakes, 2014, p. 32).

⁴¹ Pragmatism is “an approach that evaluates theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application.” See <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/pragmatism> (accessed 2/5/2016).

Additionally, for the French philosopher, “the world is presented as what Bergson calls an extensive manifold [many and various], a region of things in relation to one another [...], [something that] can be very complex and *changeable*” (Helin et al., 2014, loc. 421, my italics), a view that is compatible with *process philosophy*:

Process philosophy encourages us to follow the *goings-on* of organizations, finding a world of swelling, falling away, erupting, and becalming *without rest*. (Helin et al., 2014, loc. 393, my italics)

Process philosophy also seems to suit management and strategy studies, as Helin et al. also note, referencing topics like “creativity”, “innovation”, “power”, “resistance”, or “influence”, terms that are approached throughout this work:

Force, intensity, the enquiry after movement, is what concerns studies of creativity, innovation, and (again) entrepreneurship, operations management and supply chains, and governance, as well as power, resistance, and influence (such as governmentality studies) and gender and identity studies. Finally, potentiality, that which ‘might become’, is what grounds strategy studies and broader enquiry into the possibility of alternative economic and social settings (such as in social entrepreneurship). (Helin et al., 2014, loc. 278)

The literature review has already offered this dynamic view of reality using Bergson’s concept of duration, the *flow* of which we cannot go against (Bergson, 2001d, p. 527). This concept is implicit to the view underlying this research into strategy, where an *action verb* – strategizing – regulates the methodologies and methods used to guarantee coherence with “the enquiry after *movement* [...] [which] concerns studies of creativity, innovation, and [...] entrepreneurship”, as Helin et al. mention in the passage quoted above.

It is worth noting that, contrary to expectations the concept of the *subjective*, for Bergson, means that which appears *entirely* and *adequately* known (Bergson, 2001a, p. 57, my italics). This is an idea developed further by Nayak ...

It is the subjective that is *real*, imageless, continuous [as in a film] and heterogeneous. (Nayak, 2008, p. 180, my italics)

... it is a view that brings credibility to the constructionist stance referred to above, as a strategy to capture reality, and that contributes to the creation of a “fit between the research question[s], the theoretical framework and the methods used to collect and analyse data” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 290).

In this context, therefore, it is not surprising that the *ontology*—the “nature of the world” (Ng & Coakes, 2014, p. 29) or, according to Ormston et al. (2014), “reality and what there is to know” (p. 4)—underlying this research is constructionism, since it holds that “reality is *socially constructed*” (Van de Ven, 2007, p. 39, my italics), mainly “through the use of language in *conversation*” (Ng & Coakes, 2014, p. 30, my italics), which leads to a “convincing *interpretation* of the subjective ‘reality’ of the phenomenon being researched” (p. 33, my italics).

There is a need for precision here: constructionism is different from constructivism; in fact, although constructivism is “sometimes used instead of, or interchangeably with, (social) constructionism [...] [it] can be applied more *individualistically and psychologically oriented* than constructionism” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, pp. 328–29, my italics). For example, according to the psychologist Jean Piaget’s constructivism, the child is “inner-driven” (Ackermann, 2001, p. 446), while according to the mathematician and computer scientist Seymour Papert’s constructionism, the child advocates a more external orientation, in which knowledge is built “through discourse in interaction” (Ormston et al., 2014, p. 13). The latter explanation is the concept most coherent with strategizing, here seen as a relational process, as presented in the literature review:

Papert’s ‘child’ [...] is more relational and likes to get in tune with others and with situations. [...] S/he learns from personal experience rather than from being told. [...] [and] enjoys gaining understanding from singular cases, rather than extracting and applying general rules. (Ackermann, 2001, p. 446)

The *epistemology*—“the ways of knowing and learning about the world” (Ormston et al., 2014, p. 6), capable of establishing “valid knowledge” (Collis & Hussey, 2009, p. 59)—correspondent with constructionism is interpretivism, a “position that requires the social *scientist* to grasp the *subjective* meaning of social action” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 715, my italics). Thus, it “is fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences” (p. 16), and aware that natural science usually deals with palpable facts, and is focused on testing the known rather than generating the real/truly new, by constructionism.

(3.2) Method adopted in this project: qualitative interviews

Considering that “an interpretivist stance is consistent with a largely *qualitative structure*” (Ng & Coakes, 2014, p. 45, my italics), it is not surprising that qualitative research, a strategy that can be defined as:

a set of interpretative, material practices that make the world visible [through] a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to self [...] (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3; cited by Ormston et al., 2014, p. 3),

...was the elected method for this research, centred on interviews. The following paragraphs seek to provide evidence in relation to “what happened” (Symon et al., 2016) during the qualitative research conducted as part of this research.

Qualitative interviews

Interviewing, considered “the most common method of data gathering in qualitative research” (King, 2004, p. 11), is a technique that assumes “both [researcher and participant] are working hard” (Yeo et al., 2014, p. 178) and implies that “the researcher is an active player [hopefully *prudently active*] in the development of data and of meaning, and [that] the interview is potentially *transformative* for both parties” (p. 179) participating in the “specific construct that the researcher wants to understand and describe” (Köhler, 2016, p. 406).

Qualitative interviews are characterized by open-ended questions, the objective of which is “to capture the range and diversity of participants’ responses” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 79). This view is coherent with the adopted semi-structured interview approach, in which ...

The interviewer has [just] a schedule to remind them of the issues and topics that need to be covered by the respondent. (Fisher, 2010, p. 175)

As explained in more detail below, in addition to holding one-to-one interviews with ten interviewees – single interviews –, the researcher, with the objective of accessing duration, also undertook a sequence of interviews with five other participants – triple interviews.

“To remind” the researcher of what topics to cover (although these were complemented by a set of more practical questions) the *Bergsonian concepts applied to strategy* (Figure 1) and the *Framework of Strategic Duration* (Figure 5) were used, for the single and the triple

interviews respectively, as “aide-mémoire[s]” (Ng & Coakes, 2014, p. 103) – which in turn became the nodes around which the ideas underlying this research were organized.

The decision to choose qualitative interviews as the method underlying this project was not based only on the popularity of interviews as “the most common [qualitative] method of data gathering” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 77; Cassell & Symon, 2012, p. 11). The decision was taken equally, and especially, because of the suitability of interview methods “to explor[e] understandings, perceptions and constructions of things that participants have some kind of *personal stake* in” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 81, my italics).

To explore this from another perspective, here is a question: what did this research seek to analyse once the decision to focus on practice had been taken? If analysis of both i) “what *managers* actually do” (Johnson et al., 2003, p. 12, my italics) while strategizing, and ii) how *they* (think they) do/did it (presumably) *right*, then interviews with CEOs, seemingly the *commanders-in-chief* of strategizing – a non-consensual military metaphor used to demonstrate the likelihood that CEOs lead strategic change, dealing with what is “*essential* in fighting a war”⁴² –, does fulfil the requirement of a *personal* stake. What is more, if one considers the CEO’s answers partially as narratives of *practice* (Rouleau, 2011), and that the research seeks to explore “the reconstruction of the life [or parts of] stories of successful executives” (p. 259), as well as to understand “the experience of the individuals whose lives reflect those issues” (Seidman, 2013, loc. 463), this is more likely to be obtained through qualitative interviews, a method that “is deeply satisfying to researchers who are interested in other’s stories” (Seidman, 2013, loc. 467).

Naturally, considering that “most papers associated with [the] Strategy-as-Practice perspective have been based generally on longitudinal case studies drawing on ethnographic methods” (Rouleau, 2011, p. 258), some authors could argue that ethnographic methods are more suitable to discovering “what managers *actually do*, and with *what techniques*” (Johnson et al., 2003, p. 12, my italics). As a counter-argument, Seidman offers the following elucidative analogy:

⁴² Military, strategic means “essential in fighting a war”. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/strategic> (Accessed 3/6/2017).

If a researcher is asking a question such as, ‘How do people behave in this classroom?’ then participant observation might be the best method of inquiry. (Seidman, 2013, loc. 410);

If the researcher is interested, however, in what it is like for students to be in the classroom, what their [lived] experience is, and what meaning they make out of that experience – if the interest is in what Schutz (1967) calls their ‘subjective understanding’ – then it seems to me that interviewing, in most cases, may be the best avenue of inquiry. (Seidman, 2013, loc. 414–18)

With the objective of investigating elusive phenomena such as intuition and duration, observation — a data-collection activity used in ethnographic research (Bryman & Bell, 2011) — would probably be most unsatisfactory. As Seidman (2013) recalls, the researcher is in pursuit of learning about managers’ experiences while strategizing and what meaning, in the context of intuition and duration, they extract from that experience. In this context, participants in the current research were invited to reflect on the circumstances and contexts, on the actors involved in strategizing; their decisions, behaviours, tools, methods, and the lessons learnt ...– together with the constituents of the conceptual frameworks presented in the literature review – when, at present or in the past, they were performing activities recognized as *strategic*.

Unsurprisingly, considering the very elusive nature of the concepts being studied, some intermediate concepts with which managers are more familiarized, such as leadership and culture, or in the case of duration its six constituents (represented in Figure 5), needed to be used during conversations as *bridges* to practice. The use of these *bridges* reinforced the idea that the elected method was the most appropriate, since the “research interview is ideally suited to examine topics in which different levels of meaning need to be explored” (King, 2004, p. 21) – this was particularly true, for instance, when the interviewer had to clarify that intuition was not the same as an instinctual gut feeling.

All in all, as the goal was “to have participants reconstruct his or her experience [from their point of view] within the topic under study” (Seidman, 2013, loc. 495), and being that these topics are hardly amenable to observation, “asking people about them represents the only viable means of finding out about them within a qualitative research strategy” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 496), a remark that is totally coherent with the option of turning to interviews.

Recruitment of participants

The recruitment of the fifteen interviewees who participated in the study was based on a mix of *convenience sampling*, “selected because it is accessible to the researcher” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 57), and *stratification*, in the sense that the “sampling [must] ... ensure that the range and diversity of different groups in a population are included in your sample” (p. 57).

Regarding accessibility, interviewees were selected from the researcher’s own network through leveraging his position as the CEO of a professional services company and thus his inherent proximity to senior representatives of companies belonging to different sectors. In this context, the interviews were conducted with fourteen current and former CEOs from well-known companies in their respective markets and one Minister, considered as the *CEO* of the bodies under his responsibility.

Why just CEOs? Whittington points out that “historically, elites have often taken a leading role [...] associated with the transfer of innovative practices” (Whittington, 2006, p. 625), whereby likewise the researcher believed that CEOs were the most likely to be aware of what happens while strategizing in their organizations. Nevertheless, highlighting some limitations of centring the research on CEOs, Sproull and Hofmeister (1986) note that the researcher “should not rely on one informant, typically a senior manager, for data on how an innovation [as an example] has been implemented in his or her organization” (p. 57). In this context, although the researcher did not interview anyone other than the CEOs of the organizations concerned, he did take care to ask about the other strategists that strategize(d) with the interviewees and their roles.

Regarding stratification of the participants, a quest for sector and business-issue diversity was followed, concluding in the following selection:

- *Nationalities*: Portuguese and Spanish companies, linked to the fact that the researcher is Portuguese and the CEO of a Spanish company (belonging to a multinational), although some of the interviewees belong to multinationals;
- *Sectors*: banking (5); energy (3); construction & infrastructures (2); consultancy & technology (2); healthcare (1); telecommunications (1); and government (1);

- *Business issues*: Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A); Business Development (BUD); Multinational Contexts (MTN); Turnaround/Intervention (TAR); and Privatization (PRV).

The reason for the variety among sectors/issues was not due to some sort of a quest for quantitative representativeness. Rather, selection was based on two factors considered primordial to choosing this group of senior executives: i) the need to cover different types of strategic contexts linked to various business issues, in most of the cases related to ii) the proposed interviewee having a history of strategic accomplishment to share, translated into a publicly known transformational process relating to the business issues raised above.

On the other hand, although authors/actors of demonstrated strategic transformational accomplishment are likely to be competent at conveying a set of strategic practices, as demonstrated by studies that link “strategist[s] to outcomes in terms of their individual practices” (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 87), the fact that all of the participants are/were leaders, and that leaders are keen to use rhetorical techniques and metaphors (Tietze et al., 2003), constituted an inherent limitation of this study.

Still, and since the researcher was alert to the need to control the potential “fancy”⁴³ (Silverman, 2011, p. 4), and “challenged to overcome the *staged* performance of a *positive* self-identity” (Hay, 2014, p. 513, my italics), which could potentially adulterate the conclusion, as seen in the next chapter, this limitation could be partially overcome not least by the researcher pointing out some concrete examples of *epic rational styles*, since ...

Business strategy, like military and revolutionary strategy, could suffer from its own heroic myths. It acquired an unrealistically elevated status as the ingredient that could make all the difference between success and failure. (Freedman, 2013, p. 569)

Apart from controlling the *greatness of strategy*, since “research, like almost everything else in life, has autobiographical roots” (Seidman, 2013, loc. 904), the researcher, who has “some passion about his [...] subject” (loc. 908) has, nonetheless, not only controlled a potential “tendency to prescriptive hyperbole” (Freedman, 2013, p. 569), but also been careful to avoid becoming, and in renouncing, the behaviour of those interviewers that:

⁴³ “Fancy”, a word that Silverman places in opposition to “fact” (Silverman, 2011, p. 4), means: “The faculty of imagination” (noun); or “Elaborate in structure or decoration” (adjective). See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/fancy> (accessed 21/5/2017).

Are so intimately connected to the subject of inquiry that [...] what they are really hoping to do is corroborate their own experience; they will not have enough distance from the subject to interview effectively. (Seidman, 2013, loc. 915)

Being a CEO as well as the researcher/interviewer, it was particularly important to avoid the temptation to express “one’s own voice” and to obtain strategic views different to those that prevail in the organization where the interviewer/researcher is a CEO. For this reason, contrary to the former qualitative and quantitative research, with one exception, participants were selected from outside the researcher’s own organization.

Ethical issues

With regard to ethical issues (Collis & Hussey, 2009; Miles et al., 2014), all the interviews were conducted and recorded with the consent of participants, whose confidentiality/anonymity was guaranteed, and whose participation was entirely voluntary and came with the right to withdraw from the research.

All the names of the interviewees have been anonymized using the following pseudonyms: Bond, Collier, Corwin, Ferdinand, Idelle, Ivy, Jarvis, Jonathan, Lowell, Mark, Martina, Melville, Miles, Ramsey, and Warren.

Administration of the interviews

The interviews were led in person (78%), via video-conferencing (13%), and by telephone (9%). As the high percentage of in-person (in Portugal and Spain) and video-conferencing (from Spain) interviews demonstrate, despite quite a wide geographic spread, visual contact was always preferable, so that the researcher was “in a position to respond to signs of puzzlement or unease on the faces of respondents when they are asked a question” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 208).

As already stated, the researcher conducted both single and triple interviews.

(3.2.1) Single interviews

Single interviews, which mainly, though not exclusively addressed Research Questions 1 and 2, took place among ten participants. They were conducted between March and April 2016, lasting for about an hour each.

The Bergsonian concepts framework (see Figure 1) was employed to build both the *aide-mémoires* of a semi-structured interview script and the codes,⁴⁴ i.e. *analysis* (Miles et al., 2014), “used to retrieve and categorize similar data chunks” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 72). Examples of the key questions, used as *aid-mémoires*, discussed during interviews are provided below:

- *Strategy-as-Practice [setting the context]*: Differences between Strategy-as-Practice and strategy as plan; intended vs. executed; deliberated vs. emergent; role of conversations for the emergence of strategy: with whom, when, with which tools; role of analysis; decision vs. execution; thought vs. action; management paralysis; the role of values and ritual; typical behaviours; action-oriented culture; the role of bureaucracy; principles while executing ...
- *Intuition [main topic]*: What is the role of intuition [if any] during strategizing? Expert vs. creative; who draws the first vision sketches/takes the first steps? An action-oriented impulse: how does it happen? Combination with analysis and how to foster intuitions? Making mistakes and learning from action; the need for duration (of quality “time”) for strategic effects; the importance/role of experience and of learning from experience; the importance/role of action (and which action) to foster intuition; building vs. dwelling views ...

The single interviews, although insightful into what managers do while strategizing, were nevertheless limited by, sometimes even *coloured* by, an immobile view of the past, views that could be seen as almost contradictory to capturing the concept of duration, which underlies the dynamic view assumed in this project. For this reason, and in an attempt to bring to the forefront an idea of dynamically *sympathizing* with strategic formation, the study also included a set of triple interviews, which were designed to be conducted at three different moments in time, over a set period of time.

⁴⁴ “In qualitative research, coding is the process whereby data are broken down into component parts [codes], which are given names” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 713).

(3.2.2) Triple interviews

With the idea to at least partially overcome a frozen view of the past, and considering, as Langley et al. state (2013), that “process studies focus attention on how and why things emerge, develop, grow, or terminate over time” (p. 1), the triple interviews were designed to complement the information gathered from the single interviews, mainly addressing duration. In fact, in order to better capture this Bergsonian concept, the triple interviews were conducted among five interviewees, each scheduled to be interviewed at three different times, over the duration of approximately nine months, although there were two exceptions.⁴⁵

With the initial intention of these triple interviews, designed to capture a sense of duration by momentarily sharing the flow of experience with participants over a stated period, in very simplistic terms, the method consisted of first starting a discussion about participants’ likely strategic initiatives over the following months and, after a certain period of time quantitatively speaking, and a certain duration in qualitative terms, to check what elements had gone as planned and what had failed, or turned out differently from the outcome initially forecast. Apart from the inherent difficulties concerning confidentiality around such topics, especially when they are part of strategic initiatives intended for future implementation, and not from reports relating to the past ...

Accessing elites’ practical work as an everyday affair is a major problem and one obvious reason for this is *confidentiality* [...] (Samra-Fredericks, 2004, p. 128, my italics)

... for reasons that will be explained in the following chapter, the triple interviews proved to have some limitations in terms of accessing duration over three separate chronological periods of time, with researcher and participants concentrating an important part of the conversation around the constituents of duration presented in Figure 5 of section 2.4, in the second and third interviews. Still, the triple interviews went ahead with these five participants, as stated,

⁴⁵ For two of the participants, Ivy and Ramsey, the second and third interview questions had to be adapted to fit into just one interview (the second/final one), due to the following reasons: one interviewee delayed July’s interview to mid-September due to agenda constraints, offsetting the passage-of-time effect for the third interview; and another announced that they would be changing company after the second interview. In both cases, “third interview” questions included the nature of strategizing and the impacts of duration.

each of whom was interviewed over three different groups of questions for approximately one hour. These interactions occurred in March/April, July, and September/October 2016, and were based on the following main questions:

- *First interview*: participants were invited to describe the intended strategic objectives and correspondent actions for the period covering the two interviews (decisions that led to the implementation of these objectives were not addressed): What strategic practices and with which tools? Developed with whom? What are the expected outcomes? What are the measures for success? What might go wrong? How do you intend to mitigate risks? ...
- *Second interview*: during the second and third interviews, participants were invited to reflect on past actions and the degree/quality of achievement of the correspondent objectives (a task that ended up being almost impossible to complete successfully, due to reasons explained in the introduction to this chapter): How did the initial strategic intent turn out? What worked/failed and why? What new ideas (including intuitions) did this stage bring? What is the *evolved* strategic intent for the coming months? (As the framework of duration started to have form, some of the third interview questions were anticipated in the second interview).
- *Third (final) interview*: during the final interview, participants were invited to reflect on possible *theorization* (building) – although not expressed in such an ambitious and *scientific* way – of their actions and the circumstances surrounding them (dwelling), including answers to questions about other situations that may fit into one or more of the six dimensions that form the framework created to understand duration (see section 2.4).

Although participants in all the interviews were invited to participate in a reflection exercise, oriented by the researcher, the first interview phase was immanently of the *reflection-on-action* and *reflection-for-action*-type, being the initial [*on action*] form of reflection “refer[ed] to reflection after the event”; while the second [*for action*] “refer[red] to planning, being able to think ahead” (Thompson & Thompson, 2008, p. 16). On the other hand, whereas the second interview may have had some characteristics of the first [*on & for*], it came closer to the third (or second and final interview for two of the participants), which was almost fully concentrated on *reflection-on-action*. All material quoted from participants in the triple interviews will indicate from which interview their words were extracted.

In this context of a predominance of *reflection-on-action*, the *narration* of past experiences did not cease to be the most common way to construct knowledge and, in fact, despite all the

limitations, these narrations did go some way to capturing and conveying meaning in a context of a processual/dynamic perspective of reality:

Lived experience is the breathing of meaning. In the *flow of life*, consciousness breaths meaning in a *to and fro*⁴⁶ movement: a *constant heaving* between the inner and the outer [...]; in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience. (Van Manen, 2016, loc. 902–06, my italics)

Seen in another way, despite the apparent contradiction of capturing something that has already happened, i.e. that is no longer *live*, “a lived experience has a certain essence, a ‘quality’ that we recognize in retrospect” (Van Manen, 2016, loc. 910), and thus is suitable to be accessed by interview:

Therefore we must contrast those experiences which in their running-off are undifferentiated and shade into one other, on the one hand, with those that are discrete, already past, and elapsed, on the other. The latter we apprehend not by living through them but by an act of attention. This is crucial for the topic we are pursuing: because the concept of meaningful experience always presupposes that the experience of which meaning is predicted is a discrete one, it now becomes clear that only past experience can be called meaningful, that is, one that is presented in retrospective glance as already finished and done with. (Schutz, 1967, loc. 1649–54)

What Schutz seems to be doing here is to *reconcile* a discrete access to experience based on interviews and narratives of the past, on the one hand, while providing a processual/dynamic view of reality on the other that, according to Bergson, is intuitively accessed in duration through a sympathy that transports us to the interior of the [living] object, in order to coincide in what is unique about it *and thus inexpressible* (Bergson, 2001g, p. 1391, my italics).

(3.3) Analysis Process

The interviews were conducted in either Portuguese or in Spanish according to the nationality of interviewees. They were taped, and analysed using NVivo⁴⁷ (www.qsrinternational.com), which was employed essentially to dissect, classify, and organize the twenty-three audio

⁴⁶ To and fro means “in a constant movement backwards and forwards or from side to side”. See https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/to_and_fro (accessed 2/5/2017).

⁴⁷ “NVivo is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software package produced by QSR International. It has been designed for qualitative researchers working with very rich text-based and/or multimedia information, where deep levels of analysis on small or large volumes of data are required.” See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NVivo> (accessed 1/5/2015).

recordings: i) ten single interviews, plus ii) five triple interviews for which thirteen sessions were conducted (since, as noted, two of the scheduled interviews did not take place).

NVivo's nodes/codes followed the strategic framework and its main concepts for single interviews (represented in Figure 1) as well as the constituents belonging to the framework (see Figure 5, section 2.4), which was assumed in an attempt to understand duration by undertaking the triple interviews reflecting the constituents: *labelling*; *momentum*; *selling*; *scheme*; *politicking*; and *consensus*.

Each audio recording, including video-conference tapes, was integrally listened to/analysed and the relevant passages transcribed and coded within each node and sub-node. Passages were selected “in such a manner that the subject of the enquiry was correctly identified and described” (Collis & Hussey, 2009, p. 182), in order to assure the credibility of the study, while ensuring/guaranteeing a “*substantial* contribution to management theory” (Symon et al., 2016, p. 9, my italics), and that the topics were “internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 287). Transcriptions were made in NVivo, before being transposed to Microsoft Word; the time “location” of each excerpt was noted, to allow navigability between texts and audio files, and thus to assure accuracy and auditability. To achieve “a good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts” (p. 287), the narrative gives direct voice to all the participants. The excerpts are coherent with the researcher's posture to extract a “reality” (although not refusing critical views), by inviting interviewees to self-report on what they say they do while strategizing.

The credibility of the study was reinforced by the involvement of the researcher “in the study for a prolonged period of time [...] [and subject to] peer debriefing – acting as a kind of indirect ‘member checking’ (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 282) – by colleagues [both from practice and academia] on a continuous basis” (Symon et al., 2016, p. 9). For example, in relation to conforming to the procedure for correction and selection/interpretation of interviews and relevant excerpts, most of the concepts were contrasted against various published interviews with Spanish CEOs.⁴⁸ These acted indirectly as *appraisers* of the

⁴⁸ See <https://paulomorgadoweb.com/en/encuentros-de-alta-direccion/> (accessed 10/6/2017).

relevancy and potential contributions of the constructed/selected content: had these interviews indicated that the proposed questions were irrelevant, then that would have been a warning about the credibility of the uniformities created throughout this project. These interviews were published in the magazines *APD*⁴⁹ (the central theme of interviews is the impact of *Digital* technology on company strategy) and *TDN*⁵⁰ (these interviews touch upon many topics studied in this project related to strategy). Thus, although these Spanish CEOs did not participate in this study – and thus their opinion does not constitute a triangulation⁵¹ in the strict sense –, as implied, they could indirectly *confirm* the relevancy/credibility of the topics being theorized by this research. Additionally, it is worth noting again that, having worked in professional services companies for more than twenty years, the researcher possesses valuable practical experience in strategic topics such as those being studied. This fact allows him to “understand participants’ (subjective and situated) meanings and experiences” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 283) and allows him to place himself ready to be “[prudently] *active* in the research process; [for which] themes do not just ‘emerge’” (p. 283).

For the single interviews, the analysis of each node gave rise to a new internal group, composed of sub-nodes, generated along a “thorough, inclusive and comprehensive” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 287) process as part of the data condensation process: “writing summaries, coding, developing themes, generating categories, and writing analytic memos” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 12). These notes were then subsumed to sections that use the same concepts employed to dissect the subject areas of Strategy-as-Practice and Intuition, in the literature review.

For the triple interviews, since some topics to be discussed were already too centred in the possible constituents of duration, the goal was essentially to i) complete/refine and ii) examine the practicality of the *Framework of Strategic Duration* (Figure 5). Thus, the six

⁴⁹ *APD* is a Spanish association for the progress of managers. See <http://www.apd.es>. *APD* magazine publication dates: May-16 (319); Jul/Aug-16 (321); Sep-16 (322).

⁵⁰ *TDN* (tendencies of Business) is a magazine published by AECOC, a Spanish association that aims to bring efficiency to the commercial relations between producers and distribution. See <https://www.aecoc.es/revistas/tdn-tendencias-de-negocio>. Publication dates: Apr-15 (19); Sep-15 (20); Oct-15 (21); Jun-16 (22); Oct-16 (23); Dec-16 (24).

⁵¹ “Triangulation traditionally refers to a process whereby two or more methods of data collection or sources of data are used to *examine* the same phenomenon, with the objective of getting as close to the ‘truth’ of the object of study as possible” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 285, my italics).

constituents of strategic duration were used as nodes based on the real-life examples provided by practitioners who undertake strategizing. Despite the elusiveness and complexity of the concept of duration, none of the participants found the questions either too theoretical or unsuitable to illustrate a lived or ongoing strategizing situation. As the interviews on duration continued, the framework that ended up crystallized in Figure 5, was being strengthened. On reflection, this was such an interwoven process of *framework–interviews–framework* that it is difficult to separate cause and effect – curiously, or maybe not, this is exactly as happens in duration (see sections 2.4 and 4.2).

All of the processes of the administration and analysis of the interviews were conducted in a “systematic, rigorous and well documented way” (Symon et al., 2016, p. 9). All data was secured, by archiving all audio recordings and all PDFs extracted from NVivo registered content, and by verifying its dependability/trustworthiness. Any possible confirmation that “the findings flow from the data” (p. 9) was collected and stored to certify/guarantee the conformity of the conclusions gathered from the interviews.

The quality of this research can be assured by all the procedures having been correctly put in place. And since the nodes/codes were based on an all-embracing grounded literature (Chapter 2), *transferability* is possible, although understood within the bounds of qualitative research, in the sense that “the findings can be applied to another situation that is sufficiently similar” (Symon et al., 2016, p. 9); thus allowing the constitution of management uniformities or “a *modestly generalizing* social science of management”⁵² (Whittington & Mayer, 2002, p. 4, my italics).

⁵² Coincident with the referred to middle-range or “middle ground” theory (Gilgun, 2015, loc. 4) or middle-range theory: “one that is neither so abstract that it cannot be empirically tested, nor so concrete that it has little scope and significance” (Hammersley, 2003, p. 172).

4. Research Findings

The interviews provide empirical insights that “examine *how* [by which activities] a particular strategy emerges” (Chia & MacKay, 2007, p. 220) rather than “*what* strategic decisions are taken” (p. 220) and, as informed by Bergson’s framework, provide special attention to i) *strategic intuition* and ii) *strategic duration*.

Quotes from the interviews have been selected deliberately to illustrate a broader analysis. They give voice to participants, namely through illustrative examples extracted from their answers, since sometimes “managers were *urged* [by their own need of clarification] to use stories to help make their case” (Freedman, 2013, p. 564, my italics). Considering that the data presented constitutes self-reporting of what participants do, or what they say they do during strategizing, a contextualized and critical view will accompany the analysis and discussion of the interviews, which may lead to a reinterpretation of the answers.

Analysis of the interviews is separated into two major sections. The strategic intuition section examines the importance of intuition during strategizing, bringing to light the managerial activities that might be linked to this Bergsonian faculty and its adjacent concepts, among which intelligence/analysis is particularly relevant.

In the strategic duration section, emphasis will be put on activities that illustrate and which may also substantiate the constitutive elements of this Bergsonian concept, as presented in Chapter 2, the literature review, while keeping the strategy formation “dance going” (Ackermann, 2001, p. 447).

Before moving on to the research findings, it is important to reflect on some of the limitations arising from the elected methods that were evident during the interview process itself, namely regarding i) a possible rhetoric of *methodical science*, related to ii) the presence of *fancy* and *epic* postures in the language used by managers, as noted in section 3.2, and iii) the partial inability of the triple interviews to capture duration.

Regarding the possibility of what the researcher calls the rhetoric of *methodical science*, it should be noted that ...

When asked to explain their behaviour, managers either are at a loss of words or will make up an explanation that may be fictitious, perhaps not intentionally, but only in the spirit of trying to satisfy the questioner. (Wagner, 2002, p. 50)

What this remark suggests is that something explained by the participants as a common and well thought-out strategic practice in their organization might after all turn out to be an answer created “on the spur of the moment” (Weick, 1998, p. 544) to satisfy the interviewer, despite its exactitude, ample adoption, underlying intentionality ... and so forth.

With regard to the presence of *fancy*, the researcher was aware that “leadership discourse is replete with suggestions of management as saviours of organizations tasked with the responsibility of ensuring survival” (Hay, 2014, p. 511). This tendency, particularly relevant when leaders are asked to talk about strategy, is reinforced by a discourse of “application of expertise and *rational analysis* to provide control over organisational activity and ultimately the realisation of organisational goals” (Hay, 2014, p. 510, my italics), acting as “‘captains of industry’ keeping their organizations stable and set on a steady course” (Freedman, 2013, p. 571).

In this regard, one interviewee, Corwin – considered a successful CEO who had steered a process that involved the M&A, turnaround, and business development of a number of banks –, while explaining how attached to rationality he is and how he tried to master all the transformational processes undertaken in the bank(s) he managed, demonstrated during his interview a fascination for *systematizing everything* (Jennings & Haughton, 2015), as well as being *methodical and disciplined* (Spence, 2009), and seemingly could not avoid persistent reiteration of an idea of order and organization:

“The first thing I did was to put things in order. I am an engineer, a civil engineer, and the first thing I did was to put things in order; I sorted out the transformation, sorted it out by business unit ... I put someone I trusted in the Financial Department and asked him to analyse all the areas in a well-ordered manner; I am very tidy ... In the Financial Department [I chose] someone I trusted – a controller – to pilot and measure the transformation of all areas of the bank ... Resources (including people and IT) and management control, I made a [plan, like] forceps to help me to control parametrically, in a quantified manner, the transformation ... I then started to sort out, to organize each area in a coordinated way, because everything should be coordinated ... I appointed a strategic consultant that took charge of this, led by another engineer to bring order and to control the implementation ... We must bear in mind that I

am very tidy, I am an engineer ... Because if there is disorder in an organization ... Banks go bankrupt due to disorder in commercial, retail, risks, credit recovery, finances, systems ... I wanted everything well-ordered at the same time.” (Corwin)

The example of Corwin highlights the predominance of Bergsonian intelligence, translated in this case as “*engineering*”, “*order*”, “*analysis*”, “*financial department*”, “*controlling*”, “*pilot*”, “*measure*”, “*forceps*”, “*quantified*”, “*coordination*”.... Apart from the interviewee’s conviction of being in total control of the situation, this illustration of a rational mind as captured in the discourse of Corwin, alerted the researcher to the difficulties that might be experienced when trying to capture intuition, a concept that it is not usually linked to rationality, understood in its analytical/intelligent sense.

Said otherwise, it was not only that the researcher had to be aware of a possible “grandiose managerial discourse” (Hay, 2014, p. 511), but that he additionally had to be prepared to cope with a potential shyness to acknowledge, or to confess to the importance of intuition taken as non-intelligence. Nevertheless, this shyness could not preclude that during some interviews words like “paranoia” and “crazy” ended up enriching the detailed description of deliberated and controlled rational behaviours, showing that supposed rational/scientific interviewees are after all human beings as well!

Finally, regarding the **triple interviews**, the first limitation detected was related to their capacity to capture the wholeness of the strategizing process, since the analysis was centred on some lines of implementation deriving from previous decisions; i.e. that the emphasis was put predominantly on execution, according to the interviewee’s discourse, and less on previous decisions that had led them to adopt the view of execution they were being asked about following those decisions. Naturally, this limitation could also be seen to present a very pertinent context when it came to capturing how much decisional fine-tuning or decisional change still persists during the execution process. For instance, as referenced below, Mark clearly stated that a new shareholder for a company under his supervision was Chinese, something that surely could not have been anticipated at an early stage of the strategizing process, but which would impact on the commercial strategy of that company: an airline that would open new routes to China.

Nevertheless, this focus on execution, although coherent with the posture that is discussed in section 2.1.1, could not provide the discussion that would take into account information about strategic activities and decisions that give rise to planning the intended objectives, and for which some of the conceptual constituents of duration (presented in Figure 5 of section 2.4) are relevant.

Additionally, and from another perspective, nothing could prevent interviewees “[giving] voice to certain ideas while silencing others” (Hay, 2014, p. 510), submitting to scrutiny a narrative that, consciously or unconsciously, was selected by memory, by degree of confidentiality, or by other factors that the researcher could not control.

A supplementary limitation, this time more apparent than real, of the triple interviews concerned a perceived “woolliness” that might appear while trying to measure the degree of accomplishment of a certain strategy. In fact, bearing in mind that one of the objectives of the triple interviews was to analyse the deliberated part of the *strategic intent* that would persist in actual strategy (see section 2.1.1), this *measure* of intentionality would be impossible if on one hand i) strategy is seen as an *endless* activity or, on the other hand, ii) strategy is considered as *unfailing*, either because objectives are conceptually immutable or, from the opposite perspective, are moving targets.

Strategy seen as an endless activity, “always a work in progress” (Carter et al., 2008, p. 94), was noted by one of the interviewees:

“In strategy there is no final phase, it is a dynamic activity.” (Miles, Interview 2)

But, if strategy has “no final phase”, then a *measure* of strategic achievement is impossible, since the hypothetical straight line that defines intent and result is infinite. What is more, it is difficult to create a correspondence between chronological delay and “delay” in duration, since, for instance, the answer about the impact of strategic thickness/quality (see section 2.2.1) of, say, a delay of two months, apart from a very discrete situation such as the launch of a new product, which has a specific date on which to happen or not, would always be very subjective.

Moreover, with regard to the impossibility of a deliberated strategy failing during a sequence of interviews, if this deliberated strategy is ultimately connected to strategic objectives and, by definition, these are seen as immutable, as Mark initially considered ...

“Strategic objectives endure; the way to implement them, the implementation calendar, the entities with whom we implement, these I can change ... Nevertheless, strategic objectives endure.” (Mark, Interview 2)

... then, in that case, no matter what happens to the elements that lead to these objectives, – the “calendar, entities with whom we implement” – strategy will not suffer mutations since, according to this questionable view, strategic objectives are immovable and so is strategy.

Finally, still in the domain of infallibility and in the opposite direction of the aforementioned immutability of objectives, if strategy is seen as a continuous adaptation of strategic objectives – a continuous adjustment of the target depending on the probability that the arrows already let loose will reach it –, then strategic failure would only occur if the strategist is incompetent in the sense that they are incapable of adapting the objectives. This idea is expressed by Miles – an engineer and CEO of a Utility company, responsible for a strategy of business development in another country to that where his headquarters enjoys a favourable positioning as an incumbent – in the following terms:

“By definition, a strategy is long-term ... If you start to see that you are moving away from a certain direction or objective, typically what you do is to revise the objective ... You do not recognize that the former was wrong, but we define a new orientation. I think it is unusual that someone says, ‘I had this strategy and, reaching the end of a period, I recognize that I had failed.’ If this happens, you are implicitly saying ‘I gave up’... And then, either you quit or they will fire you ...” (Miles, Interview 2)

According to Miles, a strategist *cannot give up* on finding new directions to existing initiatives that *moved away* from a certain direction, implying that potentially there are no failed strategies but, instead, failed strategists – something that would hardly be assumed by any of the interviewees and thus precluding the possibility of measuring strategic failure.

The limitations of an endless or unfailing strategy are classified as “apparent” because, although the triple interviews were designed to capture the degree of managers’ control over strategizing – which is something very inappropriate to apply to an *endless* and *unfailing* activity, since logically they should never be out of control –, during conversations, participants ended up bringing to the discussion their incapacity to control all the variables

that may have an impact on strategizing, including an analogy with unpredictable weather conditions while navigating, while also talking about factors they cannot control and which may impact decisively on strategic results:

“There are some factors that I control; there are other factors that I do not control: I do not control the Brent [oil] price; I do not control the prices of the pool⁵³; I do not control completely the client’s response to a certain offer; I do not control the regulatory authority ... So, there are a number of external factors that may have an impact upon us but which I have no control over.” (Miles, Interview 2)

“What happens is that you play with more variables. This is like when you are navigating: you set a direction and have a weather forecast. You expect that things happen according to some assumptions. Then [when] things that you were not expecting happen: a storm, there is no wind ... you are confronted with new difficulties.” (Ferdinand, Interview 2)

These more-than-justified “confessions” about non-prophecy skills, about a lack of control, seem quite “strange” and incoherent with “a form of masculinity, which seeks to ‘master all’” (Hay, 2014, p. 510), and which is splendidly illustrated by a quote from Corwin:

“If you want to maintain tension, deadlines ... When the consultant told me ‘this is late’ ... I immediately (that night at 20:00, 21:00, or 22:00) called those responsible for the delays and the consultant, to my office ... The delay could never exceed one month; never, not under any circumstances ... But, when I started to talk, I did not start off by scolding ... First, I asked: why it was late; then, what was happening; why was the work one month late; what could I do to help them? ... And then I would say: here you have it [the decision/resources to solve the problem]. If the delay persisted, I would say: you are still late, I gave you this [extension], what is happening? This is the second warning; I will not give you a third one ... I do not want friends around here; I want people who control the implementation [including consultants] ... I could not allow anything to be delayed; I have a commitment to the stakeholders, we have deadlines to respect. First, I listen to why it was delayed; secondly, what they need; and thirdly, at third warning ... fired! You have to be implacable, implacable ... [The executive] Jack Welch used to be called ‘Neutron Jack’ [for having dismissed a lot of people] ... I was very inspired by Jack Welch ...” (Corwin)

Corwin, inspired by the personality of Jack Welsh – who among other books published *Winning* in 2005 –, uses words like “*tension*”, “*deadlines*”, “*immediately*” (no matter what time), “*to my office*”, “*not under any circumstances*”, “*scolding*”, “*this is the second warning, I will not give you a third one*”, “*I do not want friends around here*”, “*control*”, “*commitment*”, “*fired!*”, “*implacable, implacable*”, or “*Neutron Jack*”, to express what an implacable executor he was, no matter what the circumstances, “taking aggressive action against all inefficiencies and so extracting the last ounce of shareholder value from a business” (Freedman, 2013, p. 571). This does not mean that Corwin was not a successful

⁵³ Instrument for the interchange of power among the utilities companies.

strategist, because indeed he and his team proved to be very capable of achieving difficult strategic objectives. What it means is that Corwin, as well as other managers when interviewed, might be keen to avoid any evidence of the unmanageability of his management. Miles, this time against the epic and rational views about managers, ends up assuming that, somehow, these discourses of *total control* are rather rhetorical after all:

"I have no doubt that [in the manager's mind] what works well is deliberated and what goes wrong is an exogenous factor." (Miles, Interview 2)

As back-up to Miles' and Ferdinand's "confessions" of experiences of a lack of control, it could be said that their attitudes are more compatible with the type of leader that is open to changing ideas while strategizing, as noted in section 2.4 of the literature review. Mark, who in a former quote expressed the quasi-immutability of strategic objectives – a posture that might be closer to a stubborn attitude typical of the saviour-warrior –, ended up recognizing that, under certain circumstances, he had to be flexible:

"To do strategic planning is not to write the plan in stone, in that it would never change forever and ever, no. I am open to revisiting my three- to five-year strategic options, not on a monthly basis, not on a bi-weekly basis, but if I have to look at my strategic plan on an annual basis, to check if I need to put it in line with reality, I will do it. ... What I need is a long-term direction ... Nevertheless, I have to have the capacity, the humility even, to look at the reality and to understand that, to a certain extent, my capacity to change the reality has certain limitations, that I did not conceive well a certain strategic objective; I have to have the humility to change this strategic objective." (Mark, Interview 2)

This idea of a moving plan is coherent with the Bergsonian idea of *élan vital* presented in section 2.2.3. What is more, Mark's ideas evolve in such a way during the interview – somehow gaining distance from the idea of a heroic leader – in that, despite his leadership status, he admits to considering it normal to abandon initial objectives if these were not sponsored by even more powerful entities:

"If I am not able to convince my stakeholders, my chairman, I have to have the capacity, the flexibility, to incorporate the input that these stakeholders brought me and, if necessary, to adjust my implementation proposal or my strategic plan; I adjust myself to the relevant stakeholders." (Mark, Interview 2)

In conclusion, strategic intuition and strategic duration, besides being quite elusive concepts, also need to be accessed in a very swampy and rhetorical context; one in relation to which a critical spirit must be both alert and determined in order to overcome limitations as they arise. Nevertheless, despite these restrictions, the richness of the conclusions brought by the interviews and the empirical illustrations of the conceptual frameworks should not be

downplayed because, “while interview data are subject to limitations, they do offer *important insights* which future, more intensive research can develop” (Hay, 2014, p. 513, my italics).

The following analysis will provide examples that have been deliberately selected in order to illustrate themes directly related to the literature review, and which were identified from wider analysis.

(4.1) Strategic intuition

The structure designed to analyse and present the results of the interviews addressing intuition – single interviews – was based on the following logic: begin by addressing the level of importance participants attribute to intuition when compared to Bergsonian intelligence – acknowledged as the most common mode of deliberated decision –, and the corresponding parallel with dwelling and building views of the world, respectively. After this incursion into the nature of the choices made while strategizing, focus will be directed to the seeming oppositional pairs, decision vs. execution and thought vs. action.

To frame the research findings, the pairs studied in different Literature Review sections were reunited in order to express the relationship that might have been uncovered between Strategy-as-Practice and Bergsonian theory, and also between building vs. dwelling and intelligence vs. intuition.

Naturally, in that intuition is a concept that is profoundly interwoven with duration, according to Bergson’s theory, some overlap between the perspectives analysed in this section and in the later study of duration cannot be avoided. It was this fact that prompted moving part of the interviewees’ quotes from the single interviews to section 4.2, as well as using some quotes from the triple interviews to illustrate ideas about intuition in the following sections.

(4.1.1) Intelligence vs. Intuition and Building vs. Dwelling

As anticipated, when asked about how they strategize, participants put close focus on the rational process that led to a certain market positioning; *a priori*, strategy was mostly linked to rational and deliberated choice rather than to a constructionist activity in which emergent and intuitive decisions played an important role. Nevertheless, as the interviews progressed, and especially when asked about the potential importance of intuition, some participants ended up crediting significant relevance to intuition, even though this concept, as already mentioned, appeared sometimes as a “substitute” for experience. Additionally the researcher more than once had to clarify that intuition was not to be confused with a gut feeling – a gut feeling, as seen in the literature review, being associated more with instinct. This clarification then led some participants to attempt implicitly to retract their scepticism towards intuition, sometimes, as mentioned, by renaming it “experience”.

Before analysing the interviews, a brief recapitulation of some of the concepts presented in the literature review will undoubtedly help to position the discussion.

In relation to the building vs. dwelling views of the world, the difference fell within the following terms: while the first view presupposes that “cognition and mental representation precede meaningful action” (Chia & Rasche, 2011, pp. 34–35, my italics); the second view assumes that “both the individual and society are viewed as mutually constitutive [...] [and] that individual agents [strategists] are so constituted by *everyday social practices* that they act and interact” (Chia & Rasche, 2011, p. 35, my italics).

Seen from a different and complementary angle, building is mostly linked with intelligence, considered by Bergson as the analytical, scientific, mode of understanding and interacting with the world; it is the attention of the spirit towards matter (Bergson, 2001g, p. 1319), constituting *mental representations*; while intuition, which according to Bergson ...

means above all consciousness, immediate consciousness, a vision [a direct vision of the spirit by the spirit] that is hardly distinguishable from the object seen, knowledge that is in contact with it [the object seen] and that even coincide[s] with it [the object seen]. (Bergson, 2001e, p. 1273)

... so that instead of taking a detached position in relation to the objects, these are used as a sort of ignition of insights.

In a very synthetic mode, Figure 4 displays the links between the pairs analysed in this section and in section 4.1.2. This representation has been dissected in detail in sections 2.1 and 2.3 of the literature review.

In the following lines, voice will be given to the participants, as stated, with their quotes being selected deliberately to illustrate a wider analysis.

Jonathan – From intelligence for formulating to intuition for executing

As noted, while reporting their views about what strategizing means, participants had a tendency to be attached to model-concepts, guided by and guiding rational and deliberated choice. The predominance of this view started to be illustrated by the report Jonathan gave: an engineer, he explained how he started to strategize even before being formally appointed to his job as CEO of an energy company, at a time when the organization was going through a major transformation process that would impact on its international positioning, HR, corporate culture, and other strategic domains. Jonathan had collected some essential elements relating to the company—these included organograms, holding Who’s Who information, along with annual reports, analysts’ reports, sectorial research, and mandatory information concerning the United States stock market, containing very detailed information. In addition, leveraging a study in which he had participated previously, Jonathan, with the support of a Harvard colleague, co-drafted a preliminary analysis:

“We drafted a[n Ansoff] matrix, with business [products] vs. geographies [markets], and for each of the quadrants, we analysed the following information (for a historical series of five years): (i) return of investment and free cash flow; (ii) a governance model, including at the shareholder level; and (iii) human resources (with some guesswork, because I did not know everyone), including management resources, allocated to each of the geographies ... in order to check [analytically] where [in which quadrant] value was created or destroyed.” (Jonathan)

This passage highlights the importance given to a detached building perspective, since Jonathan had not yet joined the company, but through this building perspective, using intelligent tools, such as an Ansoff matrix, and a financial sieve based on the return of capital employed, he could start to draft an idea about what to do in the different geographies and with what type of HR profiles. Jonathan’s activities, appealing to various methods/tools, embody the concept of practice presented in section 2.1.2. The level of conviction expressed during the interview about the validity of these *a priori* ideas was categorically associated

with the prestige of Harvard University, where he had recently studied, and the presumed quasi-infallibility of the theories taught at the university by some of the most reputed international professors:

“I believe and defend something that in Harvard they used to insist on a lot: bring me the hard data, instead of lip service ... Although I do not believe in an ultra-conceptualization of reality either. You have to have data, decide with those who are going to help you to implement, and then take action – a stage in which motivation and communication [which are not necessarily hard data] are crucial.” (Jonathan)

“Bring me the hard data”. Although Jonathan admitted that he did not believe in an ultra-conceptualization, an extreme building posture, he did believe in a decisional process that could be translated into data on which he would be able to rely. The following example is a good illustration of this conviction:

“We did a benchmark with Spanish companies and reached the conclusion that the company had 2,000 redundant people, approximately 30 per cent.” (Jonathan)

This account evidences the dictatorship of figures obtained through benchmarking in companies based in, or exploring views of, different countries/different markets, but which nevertheless would ascribe a solid conviction that 2,000 people needed to be dismissed. As section 4.2.2 will explain further, more than an analysis to follow faithfully, this benchmarking might work as a more or less rhetorical scheme of *reasoned justifications* for a certain course of action.

With the number of potential redundancies in mind, or *in mouth*, Jonathan started a process of communication and negotiation with the employees and their unions, leading him to the field of action, and exposing him to a less masterful, dwelling view of reality, capable of bringing him emergent intuitions (see section 2.3). Indeed, during one of his all-hands-on meetings held with employees, and after appealing to their sentiments and fears, stating that if the company remained in Portuguese hands – rather than in Spanish hands – people would be better treated and the dismissal process would be “well done”, reality struck for Jonathan while he was giving explanations and justifications, with the conviction that the execution of his unpopular measures had the green-light when a feared unionist got up and, with the choice between bad and less bad, corroborated the plan:

“And then there’s a guy who gets up and says: ‘If the man thinks that this has to be like this, then so be it, but let it be well done!’ From that moment on, I felt that change had begun.” (Jonathan)

In this short passage, Jonathan uses the word “felt” without reticence and, maybe for the first time, started openly to admit that strategizing was not so deliberated and rational after all. Indeed he was acting with the certain intent of selling a turnaround idea, but somehow this action brought more thought and conviction than he had expected. Had he not acted, probably this conviction of the green light to initiate execution of the turnaround would not have arisen (see section 2.3.1). What is more, at the end of the interview, Jonathan even admitted that he took decisions that were considered “borderline crazy”, leaving no doubt as to how he started to get rid of the stereotypical image of the rational strategic leader during our conversation:

“We made four sketches, after a first phase in which they [the company who produced and delivered the performance] talked with us and other people in the company, to detect their problems, and then four humorous sketches were made about these problems ... Everyone thought I was crazy.” (Jonathan)

In summary, this conversation began with Jonathan primarily assuming his status of an engineer who had recently studied at Harvard and, after dwelling for some time with the researcher, ended up as Jonathan capable of taking advantage of an opportune situation produced in the field of action, where he could leverage a momentary window of opportunity opened up by a worker; i.e. the idea that Jonathan had the freedom to execute his plan was grasped in symbiosis, in sympathy, with that moment, maybe while looking at the union worker and at the way he was acting.

Jarvis – Learning from the experiences of others

Another participant, Jarvis – also an engineer and former CEO of a bank undertaking a challenge of accelerated business development, including M&A operations – reacted to the question about the importance of intuition to strategizing exactly as one would expect from someone who leads a bank and where one assumes that in such organizations strict financial and accounting standards prevail:

“I think intuition is very (mmm) ... I think [strategy] is rather [dependent on] study and knowledge; I believe very little in feelings; that leads us to geniality ... I do not know, maybe some people think exactly the opposite ... I think it is effort, study, knowledge, and a certain tolerance to change – there were no reactionary people.” (Jarvis)

This quote, clearly oriented in the direction of a building position based on study, shows nevertheless a vocal hesitation “(mmm)” about the importance of intuition and also expresses openness to bringing the dwelling part to the scene, through praxis (see section 2.1.2), by

referring to a “tolerance to change” and “no reactionary people”, when one considers that change, and resistance to change, are usually experienced rather than thought of. What is more, when asked about the importance of consultants and, as Sturdy et al. (2016) note, their “traditional role [...] in bringing management ideas into client organisations” (p. 185), and especially the prominent “strategy consultants, such as McKinsey & Co. and Boston Consulting Group” (Whittington, 2006, p. 619), Jarvis gave an interesting answer:

“Consultants bring with them world experience (from other clients); then the bank’s managers develop the consultants’ ideas, working together with them. During execution, the consultants move into the background and managers assume the lead. Consultants will then resume their role, following up on execution, analyses, systematization, and evaluation of information; and then present reports/conclusions to the board.” (Jarvis)

This suggests that Jarvis, even when thinking about consultants – usually linked to other complementary building positions that include analysis, systematization, and evaluation –, i) seeks to extract from them “world experience” – something that, as seen in section 2.3.2, nurtures intuitions –, and, at the same time, ii) he emphasizes a dwelling view of strategizing, stating that, as a “rule”, as a practice (see section 2.1.2), managers assume the lead while executing, certainly as a way to foster experience and absorption of the consultant’s knowledge. To put this another way, Jarvis seems to believe in buildings built from dwelling – world experiences – and on dwellings, practices, anchored in buildings – consultants’ knowledge put into practice by managers. This attention to the role of experience, and to the dwelling view that underlies it, was, as a matter of fact, translated into quite a modest affirmation from someone who held so much power in such a large organization at the time Jarvis was CEO:

“People must pay attention to the experience of others.” (Jarvis)

To give substance to this statement, Jarvis admitted that he took the decision to change the branding of the bank after having had a conversation with a branch director during a field-of-action visit, something apparently contradictory with his statute of *studious engineer*:

“For a long time I kept Bank A with a board of directors and Bank B with another board of directors, and they were two different brands ... The merger of brands occurred when I visited the branches in the north of the country ... I used to have at my table people I did not know ... At some point, one of the directors told me the following: ‘Mr. Jarvis, last week Mr. X was here selling A; and, exactly in the same week, Mr. Y was here selling B to the same clients. Mr. Jarvis, you know that both Mr. X and Mr. Y belong to the board of directors of the umbrella company ... Please, Mr. Jarvis, stop this tomfoolery.’ At the time, a consultant was carrying out a study to decide what to do with the brands. When I returned to the bank, I

said: 'My friends, when someone from the field says this is tomfoolery, it means that we have to stop this and merge the brands'." (Jarvis)

What this illustration shows is that, maybe touched by the expression “stop this tomfoolery”, Jarvis did not wait for the conclusions of the study carried out by a highly-paid consultant but, instead, made a decision based on a “popular” insight captured while acting in the field. Maybe Jarvis relied more on intuition than he thought he did, or admitted to, when he stated – confounding intuition with “feeling”, and thus reinforcing the elusiveness of the phenomena under investigation – that study was more important than intuition. This subliminal belief in intuition is not a hypothesis to discard, particularly in light of a bold movement he confessed to having taken against a study that concluded: demand was too low for retail banking services and that he should not invest in it. In fact, innovating, he bet instead on cross-selling and demand-creation to prove the point; and the result he believed in turned out to be an unprecedented success, a case that showed that the given *analysis* itself was incorrect or, at least, incomplete. Nevertheless, the hesitation to admit the role of *feeling*, as stated, was expressed by an onomatopoeic “mmm”, which was there to signal formal reservations regarding non-rational- or non-study-based modes of strategizing.

Lowell – The building edge of an intervention and the frame of intelligence

Lowell, the CEO of a bank undergoing intervention, and which was facing a very difficult challenge of financial turnaround, revisited a situation similar to Jarvis’ – whereby he went against “*Vox Populi*” convictions by rejecting the results of a study and opting instead to follow his own experience. Disregarding the studies, Lowell and his management team opted to ignore the recommendations of consultants, investment banks, and even central authorities, regarding a potential fire sale⁵⁴ of a bank’s assets:

“Everybody [consultants, investment banks ...] considered that this fire sale was crucial, but the management was able to demonstrate that if they did sell, the bank would be less reliable and sustainable ... This conviction was based on the idea that it was not good to sell in an unfavourable position, since the asset had already been put up for sale one year before and the transaction did not succeed ... So trying to sell this asset again, when its return on investment and [strategic and financial]

⁵⁴ A fire sale is “a sale of goods or assets at a very low price, typically when the seller is facing bankruptcy.” See https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/fire_sale (accessed 23/04/2017).

position were not yet good, would cause capital destruction, which would be destructive for the bank's value.” (Lowell)

Asked about why the consultants had taken a different view, even though they had access to the same information, something that did not seem rational (see section 2.3.1), Lowell suggested that consultants prefer to cover their backs, tend to always play on the safe side or, as he mentions, they have a tendency to take the so-called “I warned you” position, thus discrediting some strategic decisions that do require some audacity:

“The consultants knew that there were a lot of people that were favourable to a fire sale ... and thus they wanted to cover their position ... Consultants prefer to say that is very difficult, because if we succeed it is ok [and if not they had warned you].” (Lowell)

In this case it is quite clear that different rationalities/intelligences could be at stake when agents face the same decision and have access to the same information – something that again anticipated the debate of section 4.2.2 on the role that schemes and politicking (analysed in section 2.4.2) play while strategizing: consultants prefer to play a safe game, in order to defend their reputation; while managers need to be more audacious if they want to assure the future of the bank and, by the same token, their future; for the consultants it was a professional decision and no more; for Lowell's management team, it was a critical decision that, if the correct decision had not been made, might have jeopardized the future of their bank and possibly their careers.

The story that Lowell narrates signals the need of a critical intuitive perspective when interacting with consultants and, as Whittington (2006) notes, “other advisors too, for example investment bankers, corporate lawyers and business school gurus” (p. 619). Despite this apparent “rebellion” against building frames, anchored on his own intuition, Lowell recognized that in a bank under intervention due to a state of financial emergency, the scope for a management decision was significantly reduced and the decisions had to be 80 per cent analytical and only 20 per cent intuitive:

“There was a group of [quantitative] constraints and [therefore] the [strategic] plan presented was to be concentrated particularly on cost reduction and [optimization of the] non-core loan portfolio. ... The long way to go in terms of the bank's strategy was about balancing the unbalanced: financial leverage, capital, impairments ... It was a cycle of survival and recovery ... In a state of emergency, strategy is 80 per cent analytical and 20 per cent intuitive.” (Lowell)

In this quote, the building position of a predefined strategic constraint is clear. Words and phrases like “quantitative”, “cost reduction”, “financial leverage”, “capital”, or “impairments” set the context for a significantly reduced dwelling space. In other words, within this financially restricted building space, dwelling would be so limited that intuitions coming from conversations among managers would be threatened *ab initio*.

This view of building as a constraint rather than a deliberated tool/practice, to fuel a deliberated and effective dwelling during which intuition might lead to the creation of the “truly new”, was somehow an idea that emerged from the interviews, with participants that called the researcher’s attention to the effects of potentially *suffocating buildings*. This idea is explored immediately below and then elsewhere while analysing Ferdinand’s frustration with the irrelevant position of his business unit amidst much more relevant countries belonging to the same multinational organization (see section 4.2.1).

Martina – The building of the headquarters

Martina, who is responsible for several offices/countries belonging to a multinational, also acknowledged the strategic restrictions brought about by a detached headquarters and the tyranny of finances, which is typical of any listed company:

“[Strategic] content, what we can sell, clearly comes from the global organization ... Strategic options need to be translated into figures ... I must first get approval from the finance department for the [strategic] model that I want to implement ... In fact, once the strategic exercise and where we are seeing the focus areas [the only degree of liberty allowed by the building position brought by the headquarters] is agreed with the executive committee, what we do, somehow, is to match this with the financial team to check it fits [with the figures].” (Martina)

The examples of Lowell and Martina effectively illustrate how building positions, coming from both shareholders and other stakeholders, together with their correspondent financial language to contextualize a strategy and measure its results, impact on the degree of liberty managers are allowed while strategizing, while dwelling and intuiting. As noted, this building is quite different from those constituted by Strategy-as-Practice practices presented in section 2.1.2. Here the building posture does not help to foster creative and visionary intuitions, but rather expert ones, based on expert intuition (see section 2.3.2), by which managers might need to improvise and be able to “work around” it, in order to get rid of a potentially *too-narrow* strategic space.

Melville, an economist who also works for an engineering multinational that was vying to find its competitive positioning in Portugal, was able to overcome a similar restricted strategic space and reduce the domination of the building in favour of the dwelling. This was partially due to the peripheral position of the country he manages – Portugal, being both too geographically remote and too small in the context of a big multinational, characterized by a “distanced view of the challenges that the [local] organization face[s]” (Painter-Morland & Deslandes, 2014, p. 854) –, a feature that, while being potentially adverse (as in the case of Ferdinand mentioned above) was transformed into an advantage by Melville with regard to strategic autonomy:

“I took the (local) strategy in hand for the next ten years.” (Melville)

In order to “*take hold of the future in a very pragmatic way*”, Melville placed his bet on simplicity, clarity, and engagement (measured by follow-up), without losing sight of “what we are” (in order to avoid non-implementable idyllic strategies):

“I was focused on carrying out strategy, but following something cool I saw the other day and which [Albert] Einstein used to say: my way of solving matters has always been to simplify the complex ... Everything had to be simple and accessible. Why? So people can then implement. First of all, simplification, there had to be simplification: all [the participants in the strategic meetings] had only to propose three measures and two or three actions to execute ... Therefore, all very simple and very fast.” (Melville)

In this quote Melville repeats the idea of “simplicity” five times. Betting on simplification and on realism, he adopted a position closer to a dwelling view and, thus, a strategizing process closer to execution. Melville, an economist among engineers working in the engineering sector, practised a method that involved grouping five more experienced and older people with five youthful ones and asking them to share simple intuitive resolutions, an attribute which Melville recognizes as crucial for implementation. In doing this, Melville, as stated, brought the decisional process closer to execution, already impregnating decisions with attributes that, typically, belong to the dwelling world of implementation – simple, intuitive, and communal. This idea, offered by Melville, that intuition – apart from bringing the “truly new” and of having the capacity to digest huge amounts of information – also carries decision closer to execution, reinforced the researcher’s view of the strengths of simplicity while also

helping him to create an additional category, later looked into more thoroughly in the literature, about the merits of intuition to strategizing:

“There were the older ones (who might have a tendency to boycott the youngsters) and the young high-potentials (who were likely to be the bosses within ten years). I formed five groups of ten people – with five older/experts and five younger/future bosses – for each of the five divisions, and asked them to develop a three- to four-page presentation about what the division will look like in ten years, based on SWOT analysis. Additionally, I selected three horizontal topics – innovation, engineering, and service –, to be developed by three groups of specialists/experts. Then all the groups got together over one day, looked for cross-synergies and committed to paper two to three initiatives (implementation of actions) with five objectives each (for eight groups) It was fast work, based more on intuition [experienced specialists conjugated with motivated and risk-taking, high-potential youngsters] than on deep [and abstract] analysis.” (Melville)

With this intertwined and practical method, Melville obtained around a hundred objectives to be followed over the coming years, with a degree-of-completion target of about 80 per cent in the first three to four years. What is interesting about Melville’s method is that even though it is very practical and has some intelligence, like the SWOT analysis, not to mention the method itself, it was used to good effect in order to foster intuitive solutions. By bringing together the more senior and experienced staff with the young risk-takers in the same working groups, Melville was able to fuel a specific and purposeful relationalism (see section 2.1.2), which possibly, maybe evidently, was most suitable in order to generate operative innovative ideas.

This complementary interaction between intelligence and intuition represents a return to the idea of “intertuition” (see section 2.2.2), as it provides the pathway to creating a methodical-intelligent impulsion for intuition, by stimulating collective problem-solving with the help of strategic tools. A similar scenario happens with Idelle ...

Idelle – Different buildings for different dwellings

Idelle, an engineer managing a small but innovative and very efficient bank, illustrated the idea of dwelling in different buildings mentioned in section 2.2.2 quite well, when she talked about the added value brought by i) on one hand, international benchmarks and ii) on the other, consultants. In fact, on the one hand, she might have put in place a self-evaluation method to build the context with regard to IT productivity, regardless of the validity and applicability of the benchmark to the case in hand:

“We had a lot of developers, and for each area of programming fortunately there were benchmarks ... there were exams that could be taken ... and these tests had already been taken by hundreds of thousands of people, both in the USA and in Europe, and this allowed us ... to define the average level of our programmers when compared to the best international scores and to reach the conclusion that ... we were around 10–20 per cent below those standards of productivity ... and this was instrumental to convincing people that a change was needed ...” (Idelle)

And on the other hand, in terms of business and strategy, she used a consultant-based approach to create, through different hats, many buildings to foster innovative dwellings...

“I use my own methods [frameworks] ... For instance, the hat method ... Someone comes to broach a topic and then we do a brainstorming session ... and then, idea by idea, scenario by scenario, we start to discuss it ... I demarked the way people act by giving them a hat with a different colour so that each one could perform a different character ... one playing devil’s advocate – the character that is always against and can only see the problems –; the one that is emotional and only sees the positive side of solutions; the analytical one that just sees numbers ... For initial scenarios I may appeal to external consultants, which are very good to spark initial ideas that later require densification by those with substantial sectorial experience.” (Idelle)

In the first of the two presented frameworks, Idelle created self-awareness among the programmers by making them aware of their margin for progression in terms of productivity, which, surely, would have had an impact on the way they approached their daily routines delimiting, for instance, their amount of free time. Naturally, it was not clear if the benchmark itself was suitable to create a reference to each of the employees or, alternatively, if it was imposed by another type of building position that was anchored in rather more dogmatic hierarchical positions.

Throughout the second framework, that based on the approach of consultant workshops, which is more circumstantial, Idelle fosters a demarked field by intuiting while dwelling in brainstorming and decision-making meetings. Particularly interesting in this second method, as noted, is the use of the different hats, which in themselves also create sub-buildings and corresponding sub-dwellings during an already building-dwelling situation.

In the context of “intertuition”, consultants, be they external or internal – prove right those who think “that consultancy is becoming internalised” (Sturdy et al., 2016, p. 201) –, already seen as particularly important “to help *instil enterprise, manage change* and reduce hierarchical boundaries” (p. 185, my italics). But consultants must also be considered as particularly important in, as mentioned, in helping managers create several buildings for

several dwellings; and by which managers are expected to reflect on matters inside a specific strategic *referential* (e.g. Porter's (1979) Five Forces, BCG matrix, etc.), based on tools to "support *collective knowledge* production and learning" (Vaara & Whittington, 2012, p. 297, my italics), and other strategic practices that were presented in section 2.1.2.

Collier – Intelligence and culture as frames of intuition

A paradigmatic example of this referential function of consultants was given by Collier. An economist, acting as an external consultant for ABC, Collier created the strategy that he would help to implement, after being recruited as the CEO of a large construction company that was facing a challenge of overseas business development. This case illustrates quite well the presumed separation between deciding and executing, since Collier was initially contracted to build the plan, which only afterwards was he requested to help execute as the CEO of the company he had joined.

But this strategic plan was not the sole building vision that he would take into account to lead a transformation process that led to a significant internationalization of ABC. In fact, he attributed crucial importance to the history of the company, and particularly "*the founder's history*", to define a strategy that could be absorbed collectively, and around which cohesion could be created:

"When I was given the challenge of joining ABC ... the first thing I did was to read its founder's life history. This was a very important decision for having in mind what is crucial to developing a strategy within a big group: to know its origins, its history, its culture, in order to develop a strategy that might be absorbed by the people in the company. I have a conviction that the strongest feature of companies that, although listed, are family-owned, what gives them cohesion, is their founder's history." (Collier)

The importance ascribed by Collier to the building created by corporate culture, like a Bergsonian memory (see section 2.2.1), is in line with a view that recognizes the "embedded cultural and historical practices that shape the practices available for strategists to draw upon and also constitute the possibilities for being a strategist" (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 83). This quote also brings to the fore Peter Drucker's aphorism which affirms the supremacy of culture over strategy, quoted in Coffman and Sorensen (2013): "Culture eats strategy for lunch" (loc. 85–88) and is coherent with Chia & Mackay's (2007) idea that "the causal efficacy of actions [although causality, as seen in section 2.4, is somehow incoherent with the

concept of duration] is attributed to historically and culturally shaped internalized propensities and dispositions rather than to individual choices” (p. 232).

In this context, Collier develops his view further:

“Intuition for a group with more than sixty years of history, with great experience in the many locations in which [the company] operates ... I have always been guided by listening to the older and more experienced people who have in-depth knowledge, but also know well both the activities and regions in which we operate. ... I think intuition is very important; intuition and concrete knowledge, as well as knowledge of every stage of life of these regions and correspondent results.” (Collier)

In this passage, note that Collier not only directly recognizes the importance of intuition, but also acknowledges its connection with organizational memory and culture, as seen in section 2.2.1. What is more, Collier not only recognizes the importance of a *building culture*, but also the importance of *building analysis to centre* intuitive thinking. Consequently, he states that:

“Before the deep conversations with the company founder, to capture his intuition about markets or strategy, I started to study, in detail, the market’s economic context, tax and political systems, and other crucial topics, sometimes with the help of local consultants.” (Collier)

To look at this from another angle, although Collier was not supporting the concept of “intertuition” *per se* (since almost certainly he did not know this concept), he readily admitted that “*the meetings were both formal [intelligence] and informal [intuition]*”; and he was able to recognize that prior to having conversations with his boss and company-founder, he should focus the conversations in order to capture and generate intuitions, making use of previous analysis and study. It is this building, this structure, created before the conversations with the founder that explains the use of the adjective “deep”:

“I used to have conversations with the main shareholder [and founder] of the company; profound conversations from a strategic and territorial point of view, since he was in the business for many years. ... These meetings were both formal and informal at the same time: I used to closely study the matters where I needed some insight [from the founder], but then meetings were informal and usually one-to-one, not in a group. For instance, to come to a decision to enter market X we used to have a [criteria] table in order to study the country concerned, including tax, political systems, and so on. These matters I would study with consultants, so that when I went for the meetings I knew how I should orient them in order that [the founder’s] intuition could match the matters about which I needed clarification. That is to say, I did not go as an open book because this would represent a loss of time, an endless meeting. It was to avoid this that I used to prepare myself so well for these meetings... To take full advantage of the founder’s intuition and so as not to mix intuition with generic conversations that one can have about no matter what.” (Collier)

This perspective, where the roles of intuition and analysis – normally used to test intuitions –, and the correspondent sequence, seem to be reversed – since initially Collier prepared the analytical grids and then he used them to converse with the company’s founder –, points to the importance of “intertuition” (see section 2.2.2), such as:

Analysis is essentially *selection*. Our mind concentrates on those aspects of things that are *practically important*, and discard the others. (Kolakowski, 2001, p. 25, my italics)

At this stage, the more critical reader could bring the perspective that Collier, while talking with the company-founder, was looking for zones of selling or consensus, similar to those presented respectively in sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2, regarding duration, rather than sources of intuitions. While this might be so, it does not however preclude the practicality that a building analytical view can bring *focus* to intuition in the generation of operating solutions:

Life demands that we acknowledge things in their connection with our own *needs*. To live is to act. To live is to accept nothing more in things (in reality) except what is *useful*. (Bergson, 2001c, p. 459, my italics)

This focus of intuition on the “useful” through use of analytical grids, so long as it does not create a strategically stifling straitjacket, ascribes practicality to intuition, thus preventing inconsequent *strategic randomness* produced by too much artistry or too many artistic minds.

Martina and Mark – A strategic plan to avoid free dwelling and improvisation

Martina’s contribution is appropriate to bring to a conclusion this analysis of the interactions between the interrelated pairs, building vs. dwelling and intelligence vs. intuition. She stressed the importance of the strategic plan – *building plan* – which she saw as crucial in order to prevent managers acting as “free electrons”, the neighbour of strategic randomness, reinforcing the “strongly purposive terminology of goals, plans, and objectives to the more ephemeral language of dreams, wishes, desires, anxieties, hopes, fears, and aspirations” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 984):

“When the time to execute comes ... I know perfectly well the difficulties that we have while executing [dwelling] due to the pressures of short-term [results] ... The moment you leave people to act as ‘free electrons’, inadvertently, it is very easy for people to focus on the day-to-day ... Which is why I put strong emphasis on strategic [plan] follow-up ... because, otherwise, people would go in the wrong direction.”
(Martina)

This quote from Martina is a warning about dwelling without building, something that relates to Mark's comments and which, in turn, also relates to the concept of improvisation presented in section 2.2.3:

"I will be improvising, focused on the urgent and fine-tuning here and there, when I am convinced that what I had considered really important has altered in such a way that the [planned] strategic objective is not there at all." (Mark, Interview 2)

Nevertheless, neither Martina nor Mark gave any indication during their interviews that they would, on the contrary, be likely to become imprisoned in cultures that are too immature to recognize the bounds of planning and the corresponding dictatorship of assumptions, or that advocate a merely quantitative, formalized or deterministic view of the world (Lenz & Lyles, 1985).

In summary, it can be said that intuition, either directly, or through accumulation/application of experience, is widely recognized as an important element while strategizing. Jonathan and Jarvis, both engineers, and hence potentially prone to favour a scientific and quantitative view of the world rather than an intuitive and subjective one, gave good examples of how their incursions into the field of action brought them important insights, prompting them to pursue or change a certain strategic initiative. Both cases illustrate an evolution—from more analytical or intelligent tools for strategizing to action-based and intuitive ones, although this trajectory was not calculated. On the calculated side of the use of intuition, for which "intertuition" has been mentioned, Melville, Idelle, and Collier gave good examples of how they combine rationality and intuition, explaining their methods to generate strategic ideas. Finally, it was recognized as a "fact of life" that managers have to strategize, to dwell, within different types of building, be they more creative – as in the methods referenced for "intertuition" – or, on the other hand, be they more restrictive, as in the case of the intervention for Lowell, or for a headquarters of a listed company for Martina, or, but only partially, be they for plans, as in the cases of both Martina and Mark.

All in all, although marked by the limitations identified in the introduction of this chapter, the interviews have contributed to consolidating views that advocate the important role "intuition plays in strategic decision making, [considered] a process that demands a delicate balance between rational analysis and intuitive judgment" (Sinclair et al., 2009, p. 393). Additionally,

apart from having examples that go in the direction of Heidegger's view that "building is not merely a means and a way towards dwelling – to build is in itself already to dwell" (Heidegger, 2001, p. 144), another idea surfaced: dwelling takes place in different buildings or, to borrow a biblical expression, in a *house of many mansions*. This helps in understanding that the construction of these mansions, these complementary (sub)-buildings, comes under the responsibility of managers while strategizing, by choosing the right frames for intuition, by "intertuition"; and this presents a new aspect to the choice in theories and brings something new to the Strategy-as-Practice corpus. It is also worth mentioning that these buildings cannot be asphyxiating in the sense that, instead of promoting dwelling, the more stuffy and stiffer the boundaries to dwelling become, and the closer to the point of artificiality they move, the more laughable they are (see section 2.2.2).

(4.1.2) Thought vs. Action and Decision vs. Execution

Once again the literature review is instrumental in helping to position the topics under analysis with regard to the thinking vs. analysis pair. The most important idea in this regard, repeated several times throughout this work, is that one must act like a man of thought and think like a man of action (Bergson, 2014, p. 461). The importance of being a man of action for thinking is "like walking [action], where one puts one foot in front of the other to advance, the natural movement of the spirit needs an idea for the other ideas to progress" (Jankélévitch, 2008, p. 266):

Action prompts discovery, which generates new action, which leads to new discoveries, which leads to better action, and then discovery, etc. (Coffman & Sorensen, 2013, loc. 3553)

On the other hand, regarding the pair, decision vs. execution, Mintzberg acknowledges that:

the dichotomy between strategy formulation [decision] and strategy implementation [execution] is a false one under certain conditions, because it ignores the [practical] *learning* that must often follow the conception of intended strategy. (Mintzberg, 1978, p. 247, my italics)

As this brief recapitulation shows, not only are the pairs thinking vs. acting and decision vs. execution not opposites after all, but they act as a requisite for thinking as well, for thinking intuitively; because thinking intuitively is to think in duration, which departs from

movement/action (Bergson, 2001e, p. 1275). Some of these “movements” or actions undertaken by managers, as for instance in regularly talking with clients or reading market reports/attending market events, both of which may generate intuitions, are presented in the form of a word cloud in Figure 3 (see section 1.4.2). This illustration was the result, as mentioned, of an open question asked in former quantitative research: “In less than ten words, please name (up to) three possible sources of intuition in a business context?”

In the remainder of this section, and, moreover, in the rest of Chapter 4 as specified, voice has been given to the interviewees by offering excerpts from their interviews. The objective is to elucidate from a much larger analysis some of their views that unfortunately, due to space restrictions and focus on intuition and duration, cannot be presented in full in this text.

Experience (action) as intuitive thinking and accumulated knowledge

In line with the literature review (see section 2.3.2), Jonathan considers experience a neighbouring concept of intuition:

“I would replace the word intuition for an [idea of] accumulated experience that is put into practice ... Let me give you an example: something very important in the banking sector is risk analysis ... My company [in the energy sector] used to have zero tolerance to risk ... My former experience [in the banking sector, which does not assume zero risk] made me define certain areas for which risks might be assumed.”
(Jonathan)

Interestingly, Jonathan seems to recognize the double meaning of the word “experience⁵⁵”, seeing it on one hand as a kind of living action (see section 2.3.1) coming from former jobs in other sectors, and on the other, as knowledge ready to be put into practice in new situations. In his example, Jonathan innovated by taking patterns of risk used in banking, which were more permissive, and adapting them to a much more risk-averse sector – energy and utilities – thus instilling a cultural change towards more entrepreneurship. Maybe conditioned by one of the most relevant rules of finance which states that higher risks must be taken in order to achieve higher returns, Jonathan took an intuitive decision that he hoped would be coherent with his strategy for increasing the company’s profits. It is quite clear here how fuzzy the

⁵⁵ Experience is simultaneously *action*, i.e. “practical [in-action] contact with and observation of facts or events”; and *knowledge*, “the knowledge or skill acquired by a period of practical experience of something, especially that gained in a particular profession.” See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/experience> (accessed 1/10/2016).

barriers between thinking and acting are, for Jonathan's idea was clearly generated by his former actions and experiences, and probably influenced by financial theory and thought. This mode of acting embodies the concept of creative intuition as presented in section 2.3.2.

In the case of Ivy, she explicitly acknowledged that when she wants to disrupt strategically, she prefers not to use people from her own sector; she denies the corresponding experience of her own sector. In this case, surprisingly, the experience of Ivy's own sector does not act as a source of creating intuition, but rather it acts as a *blocker*, framed by mechanical memories of itself (see section 2.2.1):

"When I looked strategically at the digital revolution, I thought: this does not need to be sorted out by changing a process here and a process there; one needs to look to the whole journey of the client and understand how this will change all the processes in a comprehensive manner. Then, I recruited someone to be the client's journey-process owner, responsible for working together with them in all areas, to establish standards of what to do, and the correspondent implications for IT, and so on. An important thing: when we talk about disruption, I do not like people coming from my sector. I recruited someone from another sector; this person has retail experience and comes with the retail sector and client-orientation mindset ... Very different from what happens in our sector; when we want disruption we cannot count on people from our sector; otherwise they will not disrupt everything, but rather start to think like we are already thinking." (Ivy, Interview 2)

Apart, from the innovation of applying formerly captured patterns to new realities (see section 2.3.2, on creative intuition), Ivy's quote recalls that experience has two "faces" when taken as expert intuition: it can permit managers to respond faster to the challenges of the business ecosystem but can also limit the out-of-the-box-thinking for a specific reality. To put this another way, sectorial experience might act as a constraint to strategic disruption in the correspondent sector, rather than acting as an intuitive source of the "truly new"; this was the reason that led Ivy to recruit some very experienced personnel ... from another sector.

Recognizing the importance of experience(s)/occurrences to foster companies' thinking and encourage better action in the future, Bond – the CEO of a telecommunications company involved in M&A and business development processes – built a knowledge base with the help of three highly reputed engineers. This knowledge base exploited former dwelling-in-a-building experience and could be accessed by any newcomer, but it did not require a personal passing-on of that particular knowledge/experience in order for the newcomer to know how to act/think:

“There was much written: notes, models, reports, procedures, processes ... Almost all processes were written down. What is more, I created a department to audit processes into which I put three engineers, who were close to retirement, three great telecommunications engineers who had neither the rhythm nor the dynamism to face our challenges. ... I called them and said: I need respected auditors; people who have seen difficult cases in the past, and can make recommendations to improve our processes ... And they agreed to do it and we improved the processes a lot. To give you an example ... We had the territory divided into geographical areas and at some point we introduced an optical fibre network and their redundancies were not of great number ... One day something happened during maintenance work where an optical fibre was cut, and the incident took twenty-four hours to solve – something that was completely unacceptable. They [the auditors] audited the situation and concluded that the incident occurred on the border between two regions, and that nobody felt responsible for that area. Before a decision was made about who was responsible for the area in which the problem took place, several hours passed ... And therefore the process of improvement was to create an overlap between regions, so that in the worst case scenario, two maintenance teams appeared for the same area.” (Bond)

This quote, apart from illustrating how Bond decided to frame/build accumulated experience, exemplifies the need to experience specific situations in order to enter into intuitive sympathy (see section 2.2.1) with a certain type of problem that would probably otherwise go unnoticed. Take the point where “nobody felt responsible for” a certain incident; it shows the practical need to evolve in a certain strategic direction, based on a lesson learnt in the field of action (see section 2.3.1). On the other hand, were it not for the auditors, the acts that took place in the field would not have been analysed and, later, transformed into accessible knowledge. Once again, it is difficult to isolate the contributions, neither of the workers’ behaviour nor the auditors’ thinking, since without the action of the former, the future knowledge-creation by the latter might not have been possible. As stated, the quote also illustrates the method by which practical experience captured while/from dwelling is converted into intelligence/a tool through writing; and this constitutes an elucidative example of a framed accumulation of experience – a praxis (livingness) that originated a practice (method) for future praxis (see section 2.1.2), which also illustrates an intuition-to-intelligence perspective of “intertuition” and, as referred to in the literature review, is in accordance with Herepath’s (2014) view by which strategists can reproduce or construct new structures/practices.

Execution as the substance of decision (and of strategy)

In the case of Bond, it is also execution – usually considered a consequence of decision – that is difficult to separate from decision since, in his case – contrary to the common sequence – execution was considered an essential requisite to give substance to strategy:

“The question is: whether assembling telephones in twenty-four hours is a strategic problem or an operational problem? It is a strategic decision in terms of the [corporate] image and the path that the company had to follow [client orientation]: the client does not have to wait – this was the image underlying one of the strategic aims.” (Bond)

Taking “operational” as a neighbouring concept of execution, it was very difficult for Bond to conceive a client-centred strategy if, due to one of its components, the client would have complained. Miles’ experience goes in a similar direction:

“Strategy is one per cent decision and ninety-nine per cent execution. ... Sometimes there are very similar strategic directions among companies, but how they are executed makes all the difference. Strategy without execution is nothing.” (Miles, Interview 3)

Miles puts much greater emphasis and importance on execution than on decision and, going even further, clearly links the concept of strategy to execution rather than to decision. In a similar way, Melville orientates towards the “*no matter what*” form of implementation in a context where he believes “*there is no strategic perfection*” – i.e. such as for a strategy that *a priori* will assure 100% success no matter what; Jonathan states that “*it is better to execute and hit 80 per cent than do nothing*”; and, likewise, Corwin recalled that:

“The macro is the sum of the micros ... if you do not understand this you cannot do anything, you remain a theorist, a philosopher ... and a dreamer, a generalist, a politician, none of which are helpful for our work ... when what we need are doers, specialists that understand our business.” (Corwin)

In this quote, Corwin uses the word “*micro*” as a substitute for execution, to defend the importance of acting – he then uses the word “*doers*” – and holds up experienced people, considered by him as “*specialists that understand our business*”, to give substance and density to a thinking that otherwise would remain as elusive as the thinking of “a dreamer, a generalist, a politician” – all of whom have characteristics not commonly associated with the character of a CEO and are more or less in the antipodes of the quantitative mind of an engineer. In short, Corwin also elects action as an essential condition to meaningful strategic thinking.

Bringing the field of action closer to decision

While it is more or less obvious that conversations might foster intuitive thinking, not all of the companies involve operational people in strategizing, thus wasting an opportunity to enrich strategic thinking and formulation. This is not the case for two of the women

interviewed: Ivy and Martina. Ivy needs no “sages” to counsel her on strategy. Instead, being the person responsible for strategy within the C-Suite (executive board of directors), she asks operational people to share with her their experiences captured in the field of action:

“I have operational people in the field, multidisciplinary teams ... Here, I do not have a group of sages thinking about strategy; I carry out strategy with a group of people who are in the field; and on certain occasions I force them to leave the field and come to think strategically with me, including defining the priorities (which will then be validated by the C-suite).” (Ivy, Interview 2)

Naturally, she does not dismiss the intervention of her colleagues at C-Suite level, with their partial building position, in validating ideas brought from the field; but even so, she knows that the closer to execution decisions are, the higher their quality, and the greater the likelihood of their being potentially suitable in a successful execution derived from field-based thinking. The practice undertaken by Ivy and her operational team, though certainly not a prevailing method for companies in general, is coherent with Whittington’s (2006) opinion that “middle managers also engage in strategy work, not just through implementation, but through middle-top-down processes of agenda seeking, proposal selection and information filtering” (p. 619). Martina uses a similar practice, this time to address clients’ needs:

“I listen a lot to people that are close to the clients ... These people have the objectivity of the client’s specificity.” (Martina)

Interestingly, Martina, “surrendering some control to those closest to situations who had the best information to develop realistic strategies” (Freedman, 2013, p. 555), uses the word “objectivity” to refer to the nature of the knowledge possessed by her sales force, denoting that she is not looking for intuitive thinking generated by people in the field, but rather a dose of realism that can help her step into her customers’ shoes, and thus create an intuitive symbiosis with her object of analysis. Bond also clarified that, although intuitive thinking was not directly involved in his process of strategizing, it was indirectly there, after incorporation of ideas captured at conferences and other specific events organized by his innovation department – a department that is in the field of learning through experiences:

“What we had were, systematically, conferences and workshops organized by the Innovation Department ... And so I would say that if intuition has any role in strategy, it is the absorption of that knowledge, of these ideas that each of us capture and, afterwards, used during the process of strategy-creation. That is, intuition was not a direct element of the strategic process, although intuition was incorporated into it within the action of the Innovation Department.” (Bond)

In this quote, Bond uses the word “absorption” to refer to the fusion of experiences, coming both from actions undertaken by the innovation department as well as from his colleagues who participated in the strategizing process. This idea illustrates quite well a form of relationalism (see section 2.1.2) fostered by “intertuition” (see section 2.2.2), since there was a method/intelligence employed in order to create a convergence between a department for innovation and Bond’s strategists, so as to absorb innovative thinking, which in turn could produce intuitions. But for Bond – which is in agreement with Bennis & Nanus’ view that “*reasonable* failure should never be received with anger” [(Pfeffer & Sutton, 2013, loc. 3659, my italics), citing (Bennis & Nanus, 1997)] and with Hyman, for whom “*justifiable* mistakes and blunders should not be labelled ‘stupid’” (2002, p. 20, my italics) – it was important to register not only the good experiences, but also the errors. The errors, when justified, were seen as ignitions of learning and, for that reason, they were tolerated:

“We had one major rule: never blame your subordinates; each of us should assume our errors and be supportive of our subordinates. Every time we do not support those who make mistakes, and when the error is explained (and while undergoing aggressive change, several mistakes are made during the process), that is dramatic: the day after, nobody is willing to change anything in her/his conservative behaviour. Therefore, the rule was to be supportive ... Another rule was to tolerate all mistakes that could be explained; that is, I have made a decision, that decision had a set of grounds, and turned out to be wrong ... Either the grounds were wrong, or they were wrongly implemented, or something went wrong ... But, it was possible to explain the basis for the decision: what the grounds were and why they went wrong; i.e. the learning was almost automatic – we will not do it again. An inexplicable error was harder to accept.” (Bond)

In this quote, Bond states that “*learning [derived from justified errors] was almost automatic*”. Once again, just after a certain action, and this time also after its evaluation, learning could take place, further reinforcing the idea of thinking derived from action. However, Bond did not accept all errors as sources of learning; he accepted errors only if they were grounded; he was reluctant to accept without question the incorrectly implemented or unexpected errors, and certainly would reject “cases in which individuals make repeated mistakes – without being able to learn much from their experiences” (Ariely, 2009, loc. 124). All other errors, all other actions leading to these errors, if not unexpected/unthinkable, had to have had a thought behind them; i.e. only *thought-out actions*, which also include lessons

learnt from previous mistakes, were accepted, since these are the only ones suitable for developing *educated action* – to make the analogy with an educated guess.⁵⁶

The main outcomes taken from this section, which somehow anticipates the relevance of the analysis of duration, is an awareness of the interwoven nature of thinking and acting, and of decision and execution, once a dynamic view of the world like Bergson's is adopted. Action was always considered a crucial element for strategizing during the interviews, even though indirectly. Jonathan, Ivy, and Bond illustrated the importance of experience well (their own and others'), as a generator of intuitive insights to strategy formulation. All of them explained what were/are the actions that they undertake/captured in the field of operations, which help them to generate realistic – in the sense of a closer-to-market reality, or “objectivity” as Martina states – strategic decisions. Melville even went a step further when he explained a very simple and humanized method to make decisions subordinated to their suitability for execution. Miles remembered that “*strategy is ninety-nine per cent execution*” (Interview 3); and Corwin, as if following Wilkinson's (2015) recommendation to “pay attention to details and stay alert to anomalies” (loc. 1040), never gave up on micro activities to complement macro thinking. On the other hand, Bond, a defender of building on experience, mentioned the words *automatism* and *absorption* to characterize the fusion between action and thinking/knowledge that occurs in managers' minds after i) justified or thought-out errors and ii) experimental activities developed by his innovation department, respectively.

All in all, the fluidity of interaction and interpenetration between thinking/deciding and acting/executing exhibited by participants'/practitioners' responses, contrasted with the question underlying this work – *How can the formal gap between strategic decision and execution be reduced?* –, appears to make this question pointless. What is more, participants' views brought to light problems that may arise when concepts divide what is in practice indivisible (Sayer, 2000), a trap that is likely to occur with static views of reality ... and which the following section will try to resolve.

⁵⁶ “A guess based on knowledge and experience and therefore likely to be correct.” See <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/educated-guess> (accessed 9/4/2016).

(4.2) Strategic duration

Bergsonian duration is a concept even more elusive than intuition since, according to the French philosopher, “it is intuition that is able to access the durational whole of time, thus allowing creative responses to life that exceed the reach of representational [intelligent] schemas” (Lorraine, 2011, p. 10); and it is probably due to the difficulties of representation, as claimed, that it is less commonly treated in the literature. For this reason, the major objective of this section is to illustrate how this concept might be valuable to understanding the vicissitudes that happen while strategizing, in a sort of parallel activity that is more connected to strategic formation than to formulation, and which, even though the former comprises the latter, constitutes a “stream [duration] against which we cannot go” (Bergson, 2005, p. 505).

In order to overcome the near-impossibility of directly applying this so very philosophical concept to a so very practical activity, focus has been put on its conceptual constituents identified in section 2.4 of the literature review, which at first sight could represent a seeming incoherence within the limitations of schemas representing duration as outlined above, but as explained hereafter, might not be incompatible after all: *highlighting*, which consists of drawing management attention to a strategic issue, and *framing*, which consists of concentrating management attention on the strategic finality. These two concepts, and corresponding sub-concepts, depicted in the *Framework of Strategic Duration* (Figure 5, section 2.4) have helped guide the analysis presented in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2.

Nevertheless, as mentioned and as explained in the literature review, one of the features of duration is its non-divisibility and its non-causality, or as Schutz notes, “a continuous coming-to-be and passing-away of heterogeneous qualities” (Schutz, 1967, loc. 1513), which is certainly different from chronological time and from the divisibility of stages implied by the *Framework of Strategic Duration*. Naturally, the current research is not meant to be captured mainly by “engaged intuition” as Bergsonian purity would defend, “without beginnings or ends” ...

The flow of duration is without beginnings or ends, and is just constant movement in the middle. Freedom then is not only processual: it is a triumph of quality over quantity, duration over artifice. Rather than being apprehended by unreflective instinct, or the abstract operations of intellect, duration is known through engaged intuition. (Linstead, 2014, loc. 6205)

... but by intelligence, and its “abstract operations”, since it is supported by language as a tool, as well as by other tools that permit undertaking research and hopefully reaching reliable conclusions. Thus, by analysing duration through interviews, set around a conceptual framework that was divided into components, “we have grasped motion that is no longer motion, motion that has run its course, in short, not the motion itself, but merely the space traversed” (Schutz, 1967, loc. 1524).

Does this mean that it is impossible to analyse duration, a “temporally evolving phenomena” (Langley et al., 2013, p. 3); a fact that would make the work of the researcher useless? Schutz, notes the *artificiality* ...

In order to effect such an artificial division within duration, I should have to get outside the flow itself. [...] The ‘Now’ is a phase rather than a point, and therefore the different phases melt into one another along a continuum. (Schutz, 1967, loc. 1639)

... and that “each phase of experience melts into the next without any sharp boundaries as it is being lived through” (Schutz, 1967, loc. 1642); but [still]...

Each phase is distinct in its thusness, or quality, from the next insofar as it is held in the gaze of attention. [...] I turn my attention to my living experience, I am no longer taking up my position within the stream of pure duration, I am no longer simply living within that flow. The experiences are apprehended, distinguished, brought into relief, marked out from one another; the experiences which were constituted as phases within the flow of duration now become objects of attention as constituted experiences. (Schutz, 1967, loc. 1642–46)

In other words, the same attention that, as explained in section 2.4, was attached to the concepts of highlighting and framing a certain course of action during strategizing, are recognized by Schutz as elements that allow strategic leaders to get out of their “stream of experience” (Schutz, 1967, loc. 1513) while strategizing, in order to try to capture the dynamic elements of strategy formation without completely losing the notion of duration, which they have “to be part of”:

Reality is not stagnant, and hence leaders have to be capable to be part of, process and engage with the qualitative experience of duration. (Painter-Morland & Deslandes, 2014, p. 854)

It is easier to understand the concept of being attentive to the different components of strategic duration identified in section 2.4, as in for instance being attentive to the business environment that may impact on the company’s SWOT, if these stages are identified as

possible alternatives to a dispersion in day-to-day routines that, in all likelihood, would lead to improvisation rather than strategy, as seen in the preceding chapter. Taken from this perspective, attention is not a mere philosophical concept, but, instead, a neighbouring concept of *strategic focus*, considered by many authors (Goleman, 2013; Halvorson & Higgins, 2013; Wolff, 2010) as a key element of strategizing.

Having reached the conclusion that communicating duration intelligently was not a conceptual issue, since, as noted above, “I turn my attention to [...] [“communicable”] living experience, I am no longer taking up my position within the [“incommunicable”] stream of pure duration” (Schutz, 1967, loc. 1645), the researcher still needed to be coherent with Bergson, who despite acknowledging that “our intellect does undoubtedly grasp the real moments of real duration after they are past” (Bergson, 2005, p. 2233), still insisted that ...

It is no use trying to approach duration: we must install ourselves within it straight away. This is what the intellect generally refuses to do, accustomed as it is to think the moving by means of the unmovable. (Bergson, 2005, p. 3314)

It was due to the need to “install ourselves within” duration that led the researcher to try out the triple interview method, whereby he spoke with participants at three different times, separated by a three-month period. This possibly represents the first of the practical/conceptual conundrums the researcher faced: choosing three different chronological moments, quantitative times, to access “lived, or qualitative time—what Bergson called duration” (Helin et al., 2014, loc. 291). Additionally, as Bergson states ...

We place ourselves in duration in order to go from that duration to moments, instead of starting from moments in order to bind them again and to construct duration. (Bergson, 2005, p. 4012)

Consequently, this option to take different *chronological moments* for later “control” of strategic duration was very likely the origin of the already recognized impossibility of *measuring* the level of strategic progress between the first and second interviews, since, as analysed in the introduction of this chapter, for participants, strategy is either *endless* or *unfailing*. Moreover, since strategic formation should have been grasped intuitively while strategizing, alongside the interviews, something that was practically impossible, the utility of the interviews in certain moments was at risk *ab initio* – but this impossibility only became evident to the researcher after he had tried the triple-interview method; i.e. after he

acknowledged the impossibility of apprehending duration when he was in action *inside* the duration of interviewing.

Additionally, as if all the above challenges were not enough, duration goes further than the limits of a person; hence witnessing it would imply access to, for instance, the relationalism created between strategists, something that might escape from the interviewees. Here, it must be acknowledged that what philosophy, and specifically Bergson, offers to extend, and sometimes even permits, is the reader's comprehension of difficult phenomena that impacts upon strategizing, but ends up being too elusive to be captured in a practical context.

Additionally, if measuring the duration of a painting, knowing that, according to Helin et al. (2014), ...

Neither the painter nor the mountain act upon the world; both are implicated with one another, pulled along and mixed within the fluidity of fact (loc. 208) [...] [which] In the duration of this belonging, become with the event, the trace of which is the painting (loc. 246) [...] This is done as an intensive (passionate) process of receiving the situation so that one belongs to it, become with the event of 'painting it', and make this materialize on a canvas (loc. 252).

... it is already difficult, since the quality of it is different from the progression of it – not to mention the inseparability that exists between the painting and the painter, as retold above – it is not hard to imagine how complicated the task of accessing strategy formation is, being that strategy is not visible on a canvas. And even considering a certain degree of materialization in documents, achieved results, and so on –, in contrast to an image in a painting, it is not “physical”, and, what is more, depends on the narratives of strategists, i.e. on the narratives of the judge and judged. Therefore, to evaluate the complexity of grasping strategic duration, the simple description of what it means to grasp duration in a painting is already sufficient, especially if strategic management is assimilated to making art (Mintzberg, 1973; 1987), thus allowing the continuation of the painting analogy:

The painter is before his canvas, the colours are on the palette, the model is sitting – all this we see, and also we know the painter's style: do we foresee what will appear on the canvas? We possess the elements of the problem; we know in an abstract way, how it will be solved, for the portrait will surely resemble the model and will surely resemble also the artist; *but the concrete solution brings with it that unforeseeable nothing which is everything in a work of art.* (Bergson, 2005, p. 3777, my italics)

From this quote, what Bergson seems to offer to strategists is the idea that no matter what the vision or the plan – “the model” – and the fact that strategy most probably resembles the plan,

there will always be a “truly new” part in strategy, “that unforeseeable nothing”, that only duration and its creative power can explain. But if there is a part of strategy that is an “unforeseeable nothing”, how could the researcher be sure that the interviewees were capable of communicating such an elusive idea just by departing from their own flow of strategic duration?

All of these reasons help to explain why, during the second interviews, the researcher realized that he was not accessing duration in quite the way he had expected. On the other hand, enacting these interviews not only allowed ideas to emerge concerning problems associated with accessing duration, but also brought about an imperative for clarity that could overcome the vagueness that the second interviews presented:

The vague and variable hues of a phenomenon must be erased so that its constant features can be drawn. All precise knowledge leads to the annihilation of appearances [...] Reality is thus analysed by means of negations [of elusiveness]. Thinking involves disregarding certain experiences and willingly casting them into the shadow of nothingness. (Bachelard, 2000, loc. 679)

In fact, and from a positive point of view, leveraging a constructionist approach, throughout the triple interviews, the researcher grasped that even if it was almost impossible to acknowledge strategic duration in its purity, he could nevertheless identify some “stages”, as mentioned, which not only suggested that a further review of the literature was necessary to understand duration, but also helped to inspire, create, and complete the *Framework of Strategic Duration* (Figure 5, section 2.4). In other words, the triple interviews permitted the researcher to go beyond what participants were saying about strategizing. In their own duration, the triple interviews allowed ideas to be triggered which led to the identification of the six constituent elements of duration, based on the highlighting and then framing of strategic attention, and following Bachelard’s recommendation:

Were we to complete an analysis of an action which has duration, we would see that this analysis is expressed in separate ph[r]ases centred on instants of very precise singularity. (Bachelard, 2000, loc. 731)

But then, the researcher seemed to be confronted by yet another challenge, another issue to solve, identical to that which Bachelard had already “solved”. In fact, until this point of Bachelard’s analysis, and in this research, discontinuity has only been allowed for reasons of communication that permit duration to “be broken by what lies outside, by appearance, and by

language that claims to describe it. Discontinuities, fragmentation, and negation only appear to be devices which help exposition” (Bachelard, 2000, loc. 553). Nevertheless, Bachelard went a step further in discontinuity, stating that “we do not feel we have the right to impose a continuum when we always and everywhere observe discontinuity” (Bachelard, 2000, loc. 863):

... of Bergsonism we accept everything but continuity [...] We wish therefore to develop a discontinuous Bergsonism the need to arithmetise Bergsonian duration so as to give it more fluidity, more numbers, and also more accuracy in the correspondence the phenomena of thought exhibit between themselves and the quantum characteristics of reality. (Bachelard, 2000, loc. 559–64)

From the functional standpoint that we shall adopt, it will be seen that there is nothing more normal or more necessary than going to the limit and establishing the relaxation of function, the repose of function, the non-functioning of function, since function must obviously often stop function. (Bachelard, 2000, loc. 570)

Bachelard’s argument, especially the idea about connecting philosophy and strategic reality, was convincing enough to make the researcher accept a “relaxation” of continuity in analysing duration, due to the practicality of orchestrating a connection between duration and “the quantum characteristics of reality”. A reality that indeed “shows us a succession that is plainly heterogeneous, clearly marked by occurrences of newness and surprise and by breaks, cut too by voids” (Bachelard, 2000, loc. 883), as strategic action suggests and anticipates very well.

Might this “relaxation” mean that the researcher is being contradictory with his Bergsonian thesis, “for deny[ing] continuity is to reject Bergsonism” (Bachelard, 2000, loc. 883)? In reply, the answer would be No, for by *relaxing* continuity, the researcher is only making some concessions to intelligence, in favour of practicality – and Bergson would not deny this instrumental use of intelligence. That is to say, paradoxically, the researcher is building an instrumental bridge to assure continuity between philosophy and the possibility of using its concepts in organizational research. This is only after having struggled to assure continuity between an intuitive sense of duration and intelligent communicability.

Once this problem of a potential paradox of dividing something that is continuous *by nature* was resolved, analysis – a term that Bergson associates with intelligence – of the interviews turned to situations in which the constituents of duration were directly or indirectly brought to

the participants' narratives. Naturally, being that these constituents began to be framed when the second interviews took place, it was inevitable that their utilization as a conceptual framework of duration could be used *ab initio* only for the third interviews (or the second and the last, for two of the interviewees), although duration's constituents could be used afterwards as nodes for the second interviews.

With this framework in mind, the researcher also revisited some of the single interviews, to identify parts that might fit in with the problematic brought by the six constituents (stages). This was not a difficult task, since thinking intuitively is to think in duration (Bergson, 2001e, p. 1275); and in the interviews used to analyse intuition while strategizing, i.e. while in the course of action, managers undoubtedly denoted that they had lived through the stages (constituents) of duration.

(4.2.1) Fostering Strategic Attention – Highlighting

As seen in Chapter 2 (2.4), the salient elements of the *Framework of Strategic Duration* (Figure 5) are composed of three stages: *labelling*, *momentum*, and *selling*. These were the concepts used to explore how strategic duration is (re)initiated through strategic attention.

Labelling (strategic issue)

It was consensually agreed among interviewees that an examination of the business environment in interaction/conversation with correspondent stakeholders and particularly through a SWOT analysis, were the main triggers in detecting and labelling some idea/issue as *strategic*.

Ivy is an engineer and CEO of a leading healthcare company. The company faces the challenges of any new entrants to the market, operating in a digitized world, with very well-informed and demanding customers (that are no longer traditional “patients”). When managing amidst a high degree of uncertainty, therefore, sharing traits of Simpson et al. (2002), she and her team could serenely “wait until the insights come, resources become

available [...] [while] observing and listening” (p. 1211), but this seems not to be her strategy. As she explained, her ultimate strategic role as manager follows that of an S-Curve:⁵⁷

“Ten years ago, I was an attacker; I started from scratch and attacked the status quo of the incumbents and I had nothing to lose ... You know the S-Curve, right? Now I am the incumbent and feel that the disruption we are observing in the market is threatening my status quo ... And this disruption is not yet obvious to my organization ... people are still situated in their comfort zone and thus it is not obvious for the company that the market is being disrupted by a group of people that, as I was some years ago, have nothing to lose ... And I am permanently managing this S-Curve ... And this implies in the long-run that in order to manage this dilemma effectively and to manage the shareholders well ... basically, my job is to manage these transitions ... That is to say, I am the incumbent, but a digital revolution is already ongoing [in my market] ... For instance, how can I combine incumbency and keep being an attacker without damaging my traditional business ... How shall I manage these transitions? This is the innovator’s dilemma.” (Ivy, Interview 2)

As she affirms, the role she assumes is one of adaptation along the route of an attacker-incumbent, which is a reminder of the concept of *élan vital*, presented in section 2.2.1. Ivy is being responsible for taking the company out of its comfort zone, while not jeopardizing its traditional positioning.

In a quote about intuition and its sources presented in section 4.1.2, Ivy also mentions that operational personnel in the field of action are the strategic probes she uses to analyse part of the SWOT, a posture that illustrates how lower organizational levels may be involved in strategy formation at its earliest stages. In this respect, Ivy explained that:

“The higher the immersion in the SWOT on the part of different organizational levels [and corresponding conversations], the lower the possibility that a strategy might be wrong”. (Ivy, Interview 2)

Ivy’s behaviour illustrates what has already been said in section 2.4.1 concerning selective managerial attention where emerging opportunities or threats may arise. Submergence in the SWOT is something that happens to managers who have their “radar” switched on; to use a word associated with instinct, referred to in section 2.2.3. Nevertheless, not all issues deserve the same attention from these (figuratively speaking) “radars”; in fact, a “strategic” *rubber-*

⁵⁷ An S-Curve is “A type of curve that shows the growth of a variable in terms of another variable, often expressed as units of time. For example, an S curve of the growth of company sales for a new product would show a rapid, exponential increase in sales for a period of time, followed by a tapering or levelling off. The tapering occurs when the population of new customers declines. At this point growth is slow or negligible, and is sustained by existing customers who continue to buy the product.” See <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/S-curve.html> (accessed 23/5/2017).

stamp is recommended for strategists who want to avoid the “operational” becoming submerged within the vicissitudes of the everyday life of the company.

Mark, a senior official responsible for his country’s strategic planning, offers a practical view of how he marks the difference between “strategic” and “non-strategic” labels:

“I label something as ‘strategic’, primarily with my boss ... By the way, in August we had a conversation specifically about the strategic processes on which we would be working later on. ... Naturally, I also discuss what is ‘strategic’ with my direct reports and my senior advisors. ‘Strategic’ is the impact I foresee in my organization and those who my organization serves ... The financial dimension, the implementation timetable [which may be extended for several years], the social, economic, and territorial impacts of certain processes, are always very important elements [to consider something as ‘strategic’] ... It may be an impact that I consider real or something that is just a perceived impact for certain stakeholders, including the media ... Strategic processes are those that transform my organization or the ecosystems it impacts.” (Mark, Interview 3)

In this quote, Mark refers to a conversation that took place in August, during the summer, maybe at a time when the distance from the urgencies and pressures of everyday life allowed intuitions to surge. Naturally, a conversation with Mark’s boss, as well as with his team and advisors, was probably not focused on labelling. Nevertheless, the awareness that some “ceremony” should take place, in order to focus on certain topics instead of others, is not always a practice carried out by strategists. In a complementary view, Miles makes the distinction between i) a formal labelling, usually more ceremonially “*approved at executive committee level*” (Interview 3), and ii) the less formal labelling that is ascribed to strategic initiatives that derive from the formal/ceremonial, and for which “*the degrees of liberty and variability are much higher*” (Interview 3). For these, and following Ivy’s idea of an S-Curve, Miles suggested that when one of the initiatives is saturated – he referred, for instance, to “*capturing new clients, when the number of potential clients is limited by a certain infrastructure*” (Interview 3) –it naturally invites new strategic labelling to which resources are redirected.

Mark also recalls another fact of utmost importance in order to illustrate the novelty brought about by dynamic realities apprehended in duration. He underlines that execution of a certain strategic choice may lead to origination of new strategic labels, which would never have come to the surface had they not been preceded by the former: this idea goes back to the constitutive power of duration as “change as such” presented in section 2.4, since it is the strategic

flow/movement that Mark entered into, which dictated the emergence of a potentially unforeseen strategic opportunity. In this regard, Mark gave the example of a decision to sell part of the capital to a shareholder from a certain country, anticipating that it might open up new markets in that country:

“There has been a consolidation on the approach to a new shareholder, a Chinese airline company that will start to operate between our country and China to complement our commercial offer.” (Mark, Interview 2)

Mark’s observation is a good illustration of how throughout duration, as noted, the execution of a certain strategic initiative, in this case to open the company’s capital to new shareholders, can impact the labelling of an additional strategic initiative: complementing the airline’s commercial offer with new flight destinations based in the country of origin of one of the new shareholders.

Asked during the single interviews about what could trigger change/what triggers a new strategic label, participants denoted a wide range of causes that are worth listing here to further clarify the concept of labelling used to foster attention towards the company’s SWOT:

“When organic growth is not enough, it is time for acquisitions ... Innovation was a permanent preoccupation” ... (Jarvis)

“If we were not attentive to the market, competitors might take our space ... Clients first” ... (Bond)

“Internationalization strategy was seen as a way of avoiding dependence be that of a country, a person, a product, or whatever” ... (Collier)

“We paid close attention to industry best practices ... We began strategic adaptations to retaliate against a perceived attack/threat, in order to survive” ... (Warren)

In summary, labelling could be triggered by a need for *growth*, especially when companies are listed on the stock market, a claim that might lead to M&A for several reasons: e.g. when organic growth is not enough; through a policy of constant *innovation*, regardless of the level of maturity in the S-Curve; in response to *competitors’* movements or because of *client* need, naturally; by internationalization, to *avoid dependences* that might increase a company’s risk because of a shortage of alternatives; by observing *presumed best practices* or just... to

survive, if under attack from a competitor or a financial *shark*,⁵⁸ for instance. Again, maybe none of these reasons are capable of surprising an experienced strategist or a thoughtful academic in strategy; nonetheless, all of these might be suitable to catch a strategist by surprise if the labelling stage is disregarded in favour of short-term thinking and even “sinking”, or should *ab initio* management paralysis occur as defined in section 2.3.1.

Here a note is due regarding the use of expressions such as “best practice”,⁵⁹ which could also embrace the notion of “benchmarking”,⁶⁰ a term already used by some of the participants. As affirmed in section 2.1.2, it is not an objective of this work to evaluate the aptness of practices to generate competitive/strategic advantage. The purpose here is to examine practices that some of the interviewees presume to be the “best”, but which in different contexts may in fact turn out to be the “worst” practices, such as in failing organizations.

Momentum (issue priority)

Momentum, referred to earlier as the combination between urgency and feasibility of a certain strategic issue/decision and, as the name suggests, has the power to either i) delay a certain strategy, or even ii) prevent a certain labelling due to a lack of resources, both of which impact on duration’s intensity and endurance, respectively.

With regard to this, Ferdinand – an engineer that leads the Spanish consulting business unit (BU) of a multinational and that struggles to achieve growth – offers a very didactic and sharp example of how a peripheral and immaterial dimension of a BU/country – when compared with that of the whole Group to which it belongs – can lead to a sort of endemic lack of attention and thus to a potentially thinner strategic duration:

“We do not have too much importance for the Group. The Group is just interested in a sign on the map that shows we are present in Spain ... It is not a criticism ... When you have a business unit that does not make a lot of money, that, for the Group, is nothing: either we lose money or make money [since the

⁵⁸ A shark, considered “a person who unscrupulously exploits or swindles others”. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/shark> (accessed 27/5/2017).

⁵⁹ Best practices in the sense of “Commercial or professional procedures that are accepted or prescribed as being correct or most effective”. See https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/best_practice (accessed 1/10/2016).

⁶⁰ A benchmark is “a standard or point of reference against which things may be compared”. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/benchmark> (accessed 4/6/2017).

turnover is so small] there is no relevant impact ... When you have this situation, when you become a sort of 'colony' – or a 'system malfunction' –, which somehow is what we are, then the time dedicated to you is not real in terms of time, it is a political time ... What we do [what the Group allows us to do] is not enough for all the ambition the Group has. So, what happens? Probably we are anchored in an attitude of 'best effort' rather than for achieving our goals. That is to say, we do what we can, we reach the limit of what we can do, structurally, and that is it ... [Additionally] we are very difficult to manage for a Group that has a much better market positioning ... Then, when you put all of this together, it happens that they have to treat you in a singular way, like a 'problem child' ... [But then ...] My boss does not have time [since he has a lot of countries in his scope of responsibility] and when [finally] he can dedicate some time, usually it is no longer opportune ... This is the difficulty of multinationals ... And when you have very centralized multinationals, it might happen that your boss supports you, tells you 'you are right, we must do as you have suggested' ... But, my boss has a boss, with whom you speak less or you speak very little, or speak nothing at all ... and the boss of my boss has a boss to whom you do not have access ... Then, when a decision-making process reaches the top [if it reaches at all], to the boss of the boss of my boss's table ... probably they are going to say that 'this is not a priority' [and you lose momentum] ..."
(Ferdinand, Interview 2)

Ferdinand, contrary to Melville's explanation in section 4.1.1 where he affirms "*I took the (local) strategy in hand for the next ten years*", lives with a sort of implosive situation that results from a combination of a lack of attention due to irrelevance, local market complexities and specificities, and high-up centralization of the decision-making process. On one hand his BU is not important; but, on the other, it is important enough to justify that a significant portion of strategic decisions have to be taken at the highest levels at headquarters. This incoherence seems to not favour strategic momentum – which, as seen in section 2.4.1, combines both urgency and feasibility – since feasibility, notably to approve a different human resources policy, is dependent on a decision from higher up where provoking a sense of urgency at these upper hierarchical levels is difficult to achieve for a small BU:

"Sometimes, an initial agreement regarding a certain label is destroyed afterwards [by the shareholder] due to a strong discrepancy regarding the sense of urgency or feasibility ... Hierarchy can prevent an opportune response to changes to the SWOT due to different degrees of management attention and communication noise, which may arise as the hierarchy moves away from the field of action."
(Ferdinand, Interview 3)

Ferdinand's strategic frustration is revealed when he affirms that "*we do what we can, but what we do is not sufficient to create a strategic disruption*" (Interview 2). Miles reinforces Ferdinand's reasons for being uncomfortable about any change in his current strategic frame, and possibly sceptical too, by classifying management attention as "*being the scarcest resource, along with management time*" (Interview 3).

Ferdinand adds another cyclical restriction to this structural strategic restriction: the annual budget, which “*limits the actions taken by management for the next twelve-month period*” (Interview 2) – a view shared by both Mark and Miles.

Mark adds a different facet of potential drawbacks to this strategic inefficiency, which have their origins in politicking:

“When matters that may affect the resources available are being negotiated ... When a growing sense of urgency leads to a re-prioritization and re-allocation of resources ... When politicking with stakeholders who demand concessions.” (Mark, Interview 3)

From Mark’s perspective, these cases can affect either the sense of urgency or feasibility and, in turn, this could affect the labelling. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) offer a very sharp view of what *concessions* might mean, remembering that execution can entail additional deliberation:

Sometimes even judicious execution, however, entails tragic loss, as when the fulfilment of a duty or realization of a particular vision of the good requires the sacrifice of an equally compelling duty or good. (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 1000)

From a more optimistic angle, Ramsey – a jurist that became one of the most experienced CEOs in his country, and by the time he was interviewed was managing a complex M&A between two state-owned companies – notes the following:

“When certain strategic initiatives are getting better results than foreseen, this unexpected success creates the space to reduce the sense of urgency ascribed to other initiatives.” (Ramsey, Interview 2)

Looking at this in another way, Ramsey points out the possibility that an unexpected success might offer management a certain period of time to “catch their breath”, so to speak, especially if, as he notes later, the environment is rather more political than it is private: here a thicker duration on a certain strategic initiative permits thinner durations on other aspects.

Warren, the CEO of a small bank, talking about hindering momentum, bets strongly on feasibility by clearly defining what they will and will not invest time and resources in:

“*Let’s do this, let’s do these things, let’s not do those; what are we going to do and what are we not going to do? Sometimes it is very important, and not always obvious, to say what you should not do ... and state it very clearly to people. For instance, I used to say to people: we are not the company’s hospital; we are not real estate experts ... It is important to assume that we do not know anything about certain areas; if we enter into areas we have not mastered, it is easier to make mistakes.*” (Warren)

This quote expresses very well how strategizing is not always about coming up with luminous intuitive ideas on how to create a new product/service or how to reposition an older product/service in traditional or new markets; there is also a kind of selective competency in strategy, which although less romantic, is potentially equally effective: being able to “say no” to certain strategic options, thus fostering momentum structurally and not just circumstantially.

Another pause for comment is due here, since *momentum* is linked to urgency and urgency is connected to chronological time. This is not in fact a paradox in relation to the qualitative or pure concept of time that underlies duration; for just as a craftsman cannot let the clay dry while moulding it, or a blacksmith cannot let the iron cool down as he works it, or in the opposing direction, a painter will have to let portions of his painting dry before continuing work, undoubtedly, chronological time might well have an impact on the strategic thickness of duration.

Selling (winning sponsorship)

The selling of a certain issue/idea as a strategy – which Miles recommends should be done “*through a high-level document*” (Interview 3), something that does not overrule the additional possibilities of conversations occurring in meeting rooms, workplace corridors, or even in a sunny spot during holidays – occurs each time a strategist tries to sell their “*conviction*” (Ramsey, Interview 2), or vision, to key decision-makers. Ramsey offered a very interesting view about the moment selling might take place, whether at the very beginning, or later while already executing/deciding, according to the level of attention shareholders give to their company:

“In my opinion, the public administration [state owned companies] always works with a strategy that is grounded, sometimes almost exclusively, on the will of management; a strategy that ends up being the conviction of management. In contrast, in private companies strategy is a central element for the relationship between shareholders and management. This creates two different situations: i) in the private you have a much more negotiated [ex ante] and quantified strategy, because this sets the logic for incentives, bonuses, objectives; ii) in the public you end up being a crucial element of the strategic context, since negotiations usually occur at a later time [while strategizing], and contribute to defining a restraining context that prevents discussions without limits and instability of objectives, while bringing focus to discussions.” (Ramsey, Interview 2)

The message that Ramsey conveys here is that when he is faced with distant shareholders for which the company's strategy is not a central element, but from whom the objectives and management's incentives derive, it is he, in his role as CEO, that must undertake the role of permanent selling in order to define a context of action. In a political context, where a company might be instrumental in reaching certain political promises, it is the management team that must create an environment for building normative and strategic references and within which the dwelling can happen in a more focused and autonomous way. What is new here is that, given the instability that political directions might introduce, Ramsey seems to be more interested in selling an area where he can operate with certain "constancy" than he is with a strategic idea *per se*:

"A simple redrawing of priorities from the shareholder could affect the labelling of certain issues motivated by a re-analysis of a company's environment in light of new criteria." (Ramsey, Interview 2)

Here, Ramsey implies that a lot of selling has to be done among shareholders and not just the hierarchy, the latter which may change their labelling of a certain topic to "strategic" in accordance with a change in their priorities. In such cases however, selling is not confined to matters of selling ideas/labels, but also embraces selling momentums, schemes, and consensus, which if not reached effectively, could destabilize both the labelling process and the strategic objectives, even when the SWOT as such remains stable. Naturally, according to this extended conception of selling in order to execute something better, instead of just selling ideas, sponsorship is particularly important to create momentum. And naturally this process also includes removing barriers that, in turn, in order to re-sell to other strategic actors too, must successively capture their attention and commitment.

Idelle, for whom "the output of leadership is action", offers a good example of the importance of obtaining sponsorship from her reporting line as well as from other stakeholders, both during decision making and execution:

"During the initial stages, we have to guarantee that all reservations regarding the support of certain strategic initiatives are eliminated ... We have to convey a sense of urgency ... You have to share your concerns with the team, you have to justify to your team [the reason for a certain strategic initiative] ... You have, in a certain way, to prove it [right], so the team can be aware [of the importance of the strategic initiative] and from that moment on, [allows you] to obtain their commitment ... During execution of the action plan ... Because the output of leadership is action ... Usually, what I do are systematic meetings with an extended project-management team ... Extended team and cyclical meetings ... We create a change-management plan which has to give a satisfactory answer to the

following goals: make it essential, make it ready, make it happen, make it stick ... To do all of this, I am personally involved, I cannot delegate this activity ... We do bi-weekly meetings and sometimes weekly meetings for more important projects ... I have to convey the message about the importance of things, ensuring that each actor is doing what he is supposed to do, and that all people are still cohesive.”
(Idelle)

Idelle focuses her efforts on eliminating reservations by sharing her concerns and explaining the reasons for a certain strategic decision to create the necessary sense of urgency, and she does this through systematic meetings with her extended management team. Moreover, in her efforts to gain team sponsorship, Idelle identifies some frontrunners that will be the next level of sellers within the company:

“You have to identify your frontrunners with whom you have to build direct bridges, that get behind the organization and, instead, focus on the project [the strategic initiative], to energize them [selling] and to assure that they will energize the others.” (Idelle)

Jonathan calls this downward selling infiltration “*to extend the oil stain*”. Mark, for whom “*internal and external communication with stakeholders are key pillars for successful strategizing [including the positive impacts of politicking]*”, puts forward a view that is also shared by Miles, who remarks that: “*selling the idea/issue must be done with the scheme [the next stage in strategic duration] in mind*”.

In summary, it can be said that *highlighting* fulfils the task of taking managers out of their dwelling praxis and directing their strategic attention to potential or actual changes in their SWOT. This instillation of strategic attention is initially carried out in the first moments through a labelling activity that combines issue *detection*, specifically through *real time foresight* as seen in section 2.1.2, and then by classifying issues as “strategic”. With regard to detection, Ivy explained how she uses the practice of following an S-Curve to manage the subtle equilibrium between being an attacker and an incumbent; while other participants listed what the triggers for strategic attention were. Regarding the classification of what is “strategic”, it is important not to allow managers to dive into a trivial and strategically inconsequential operational dwelling. As Mark pointed out, financial and calendar *magnitude*, together with the extent of the impact on the organization itself and its business ecosystem, could be suitable proxies to classify something as “strategic”. While dwelling towards this building label, strategists must be capable of evaluating the degree of *urgency* and *feasibility* that will determine – regardless of the potential of a certain issue to be considered as

“strategic” – whether there is sufficient momentum to consider something to be “strategic” as such. With regard to momentum, Ferdinand provided a very comprehensive explanation as to how the perceived irrelevancy of a certain BU/country, in the context of a big multinational, can hinder momentum. Here, it would seem that a lack of attention prevents highlighting from occurring, forming a vicious spiral where duration tapers down to a point; i.e. where strategic attention through momentum does not occur for lack of shareholder(s) attention, strategic quality is jeopardized, which in turn contributes to maintaining the irrelevancy of the BU/country. Against this state of play is the activity of selling: something that is worth noting in this regard is that this marketing activity, in addition to senior management, was extended and sometimes even emphasized by interviewees to other stakeholders, including shareholders, external entities, and the team that is supposed to initiate strategy formulation and formation. Initially it might seem that highlighting is associated more with decision-making than with execution. Nonetheless, considering the degree of execution that was perceived in the activities that interviewees said they developed during this duration *phase*, *highlighting* is definitely something that is apprehended in action/execution, while “sensing the ‘span’ or ‘bloc’ [body] of [a new strategic] becoming” (Helin et al., 2014, loc. 337).

(4.2.2) Holding Strategic Attention – Framing

As concluded in Chapter 2 (2.4), the framing part of the *Framework of Strategic Duration* (Figure 5) is composed of three stages: *scheme*, *politicking*, and *consensus*. These were the key concepts used to explore how strategic duration is retained or strengthened through strategic attention.

Scheme (preliminary frame)

The scheme stage is where strategic vision turns into an actionable plan that is sustained by:

[A] core ‘idea’ of financial profit or returns on investment [...] [and] to the ‘idea’ of competitive advantage and for fuelling growth or market expansion, and so on and so forth, which a discourse of strategy encompasses. (Samra-Fredericks, 2005, p. 810)

The “capitalist ethos” (Samra-Fredericks, 2005, p. 810) aside – strengthened by some of the argumentative *signatures* presented in the literature review concerning duration – it is notable that actionable planning will most certainly give rise to a distribution of initiatives among certain managers more than others. This therefore suggests that the scheme will have an impact both economically and politically, possibly shifting resources and managers’ prominence, respectively. These impacts and their causes will be at the centre of the politicking phase, which will drive strategic duration to a subsequent stage in which, as seen, a certain frame will be enacted that has become the predominant one.

Making use of one of the eight signatures identified in section 2.4.2 – exemplars – Ivy, as seen, defends the appointment of *champions*, in line with Idelle’s *frontrunners*, to constitute positive references, or examples, to be followed.

From an opposite position, Idelle defends the example as a sort of negative scheme, relevant while politicking, for those who might consider acting as barriers to change against management:

“Resistance to change and barriers become manifest and associated with legal reasons, because it is too expensive, or because there is no time, or we lack something ... Someone [during implementation] who did not alert you to the possibility that they were going to fail ... we have to make it a symbolic case so that no one else makes the same mistake; people have to know that if someone fails to meet a deadline, either by resistance to change or because they give no warning, does not escalate ... Everyone else has to realize that this cannot occur ... We have to make this an example ...” (Idelle)

Although not explicit, one must assume that statements such as, “make it a symbolic case”, and “to make this an example” mean to be fired, which is in line with Corwin’s quote presented in the introduction to this chapter, where he illustrates what is meant by an image of an implacable doer, and shows his admiration for “Neutron Jack” (Jack Welsh). These situations demonstrate what “exemplars” and “metaphors” may mean, in the context of the eight signatures for a scheme: being fired as a symbol, an “exemplar”, of what might happen to those that create barriers to change, and “metaphors”, since Jack Welsh was called “Neutron Jack” because of his reputation for firing people; a pseudonym that might reinforce what is most probably his “own identity perception that his role was to play the ‘tough guy’” (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 87). Other signatures might be presented as referents, such as catchphrases; i.e. that quoted by Bond – “*clients first*” – might offer a certain referential

behaviour to be either followed or avoided both during formulation and implementation of a certain strategy, ascribing an identifiable and communicable duration to it: like a painting that differs from another, both of which have different signatures.

Ferdinand, embodying one of the possible appeals of a principal referred to in section 2.4.2, exemplifies how a low-cost scheme, what Jarvis calls a “*culture of defeat*”, could undermine a transformational process based on a plan to achieve high quality, even when dormant; i.e., even if not explicitly assumed:

“You try to upgrade the company’s and the service’s image and there is no budget for that ... You try to develop positions for talent and there is no talent nor talented management ... The main objective is to reduce costs ... You are in a company that has a low-cost vision and that bets on internal efficiency rather than on what foments value creation in all of its facets ... You have to fight for it.” (Ferdinand, Interview 3)

Ferdinand illustrates quite well the power that a certain oppositional signature, a certain oppositional scheme, can have over a duration, based on different strategic options: it definitely asphyxiates its thickness. It is like having the wrong building for the intended dwelling; in the case of Ferdinand, he was battling with too small and basic a building for a much more ambitious intended dwelling, based on the distinctive capacities of “people possessing natural aptitude or skill”⁶¹, but who, for this same reason, are too expensive to fit a cost-based strategy.

Naturally, apart from those coming from the eight signatures, there are much more concrete and measurable schemes, which base their existence on already materialized plans or specific projects. As Ramsey notes:

“When a certain strategy involves the materialization of an investment programme or some other strategic initiative that might be transformed into a concrete project, then the scheme is equivalent to the plan that is governing the respective project.” (Ramsey, Interview 2)

According to Ramsey’s quote, the measure for strategic success, for an identifiable duration thickness, blends with the degree of completion of the project and any corresponding concrete indicators: e.g. # completed buildings; # available functionalities for certain software; #

⁶¹ “Talent” refers to “people possessing natural aptitude or skill”. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/talent> (accessed 4/6/2017).

people who have left the company; or # stores in which the new product is available ... and so forth.

Lastly, Ferdinand remembers that “*politicking could be oriented by personal projects/leadership*” (Interview 3), coherent with the company’s objective SWOT – in this regard, Ivy recognizes that “*every leader should have a project people believe in*” (Interview 2) – even though shareholders might not be completely aligned with it. In this case, it is interesting to acknowledge that dissension between the personal and the organizational strategic view may be a promoter of a winning strategy if the personal framework finally wins. It is also worth mentioning, as Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) note, that practitioners may have their own schemas of action/praxis, since “the personal outcomes of strategy praxis for an individual may be job enrichment, feelings of power and purpose, capacity for influence, and personal advancement” (p. 87); aims which may not necessarily coincide with organizational objectives.

In a broader sense, a scheme represents a sort of *electoral program* that will help strategists to reach a consensus around strategic priorities. But before this scheme becomes “the” reference frame, an “election” must first take place, throughout and after politicking.

Politicking (for the predominant frame)

The most relevant politicking actions identified by interviewees while strategizing related to resistance to change. Corwin refers to people who resist change as “*defective gears’ ... that might break the entire machine*”. This concern with actions that might block change links directly to actions that block duration, taking into consideration, as Simpson (2014) remarks, the “distinctive conceptualization of duration in terms of continuity and *change* rather than the mere elapsing of time” (loc. 7651, my italics).

Idelle was quoted above to illustrate the scheme stage and had already expressed great concern with those who fight against change. Here, she charges back in that direction:

“Yeah ... Resistance to change ... It is always huge ... The best reference, the resistance-to-change handbook, is to watch a couple of episodes of Yes Prime Minister ... It is always difficult ... People raise barriers ... either because it is not legal, or it is expensive, or there is not enough time, or no matter what ... The CFO usually resists a bit ... During formulation phases, more virtual, resistance is always more

difficult to identify ... Turning to execution, there is something that I do not support, and sometimes comes from higher ranks in the organization: we are in a meeting, and then when we leave some people start to talk about doing something that is [already] slightly different from what was agreed during the meeting ... This puts me out of my mind! ... Because a week later things ... This entitles someone to ... Either we are all grown up and professional, or not ... People have to talk and raise all the questions during the meetings in which the decisions are taken. Once this phase is closed, only if there are supervening facts are people allowed to do things not exactly as agreed ... And then we have to escalate and talk ... Then, there are also those people who come with a lot of excuses for not doing what was agreed and, when we analyse the situation, after all, we come to the conclusion that they did not have the level of commitment necessary to execute what was agreed.” (Idelle)

Idelle begins by stating that resistance to change, which can be considered as a sort of counter-duration, is “always huge”. But what really infuriates Idelle is not the amount of resistance but the surreptitious acting. First, people start by not openly saying they are against something – they just do “slightly different things”; secondly, people do not say that they are not going to execute something – they just “come with a lot of excuses” to justify the indefensible: their lack of motivation to do what has been defined. These disguised forms of counter-duration, or certain contours of duration not in line with the agreed direction, might not be noticed by a strategist who, in good faith, but probably out of innocence, has not dedicated significant amounts of time to try to overcome something that *ab initio* did not deserve consideration.

Regarding more transparent and open ways of going against a certain scheme, Mark, a manager and also a politician identified what, according to him, were the main arguments that are customarily used against a certain strategic initiative:

“When someone wants to go against a strategic initiative, risk is always a critical question. The risk foreseen within the context underlying a certain decision; or because decisions were not well grounded ... I would say that clearly there are two levels ... i) The actual risk is different from the one foreseen while making the decision, like launching a new investment project that begins to show signs that things are not as good as predicted and you are missing the shot ... ii) You made a decision without having all the relevant information to make the right decision. This can happen quite a lot; that is to say, you can be confronted with the fact that you took a decision for which you were not prepared or when you did not have all the information and, in that sense, you might have missed the shot, you might have taken the wrong road ... Sometimes you do not have all the relevant information; sometimes you do not carry out the right analysis of the information you have in front of you ... Then you can also be confronted by people that want to stop your decision because they have different priorities or because their priorities have changed; someone with a different normative dimension and then different priorities ... [You have also those who ask for additional studies.] For instance, the municipal councils, main stakeholders of the project, that had to give their approval, end up asking for additional studies, for technical confirmation ...

These studies are already ongoing, but we depend on their results, and thus we have to wait until the end of the year” (Mark, Interview 3)

While explaining the common counterarguments, Mark identifies a type of political behaviour: an active type, based on the merit of a certain decision; and a passive type, explained at the end of the quote and based on asking for an intermediate study – which could involve an intermediate activity, decision, authorization, or whatever – but on which the possibility of strategy formation depends, and which slows down qualitative strategic time or duration.

To counter these strategic obstructions, Miles suggests that:

“Sometimes the acquisition of the shares of an equity partner works as ‘a fix’ that permits reaching strategic consensus.” (Miles, Interview 2)

Miles almost declares that it is faster to *buy* peace than it is to continue in never-ending negotiations that might jeopardise momentum. This practical spirit is again revealed by Miles when he uses a military metaphor to express the need to set troops marching in the same direction to initiate and execute strategic breakthroughs:

“You have all the troops in line and suddenly you ask them to change direction slightly ... Naturally depending on the training they have had, some of them start to march in the new direction, but others do not, and continue in the wrong direction ... And basically, what we have to do is to go after them and turn them to march in the same direction.” (Miles, Interview 3)

Both quotes from Miles illustrate quite well the need to stop politicking and to align in a certain strategic direction, framed by a predominant building that will guide dwelling in the intended direction. Otherwise, if strategists’ time is not dedicated to fixing these unstable buildings, strategic intention will very likely tend to be plagued by strategic randomness or strategic anarchy which, as Bachelard notes, must be also avoided:

[...] While accepting contrary activities, [strategic duration] must refuse a jumbled miscellany of activities. (Bachelard, 2000, loc. 877)

In other words, even if dialectics is recommended – or unavoidable, since, as Lawrence et al. (2009) state, “the formation of projects is always an interactive, culturally embedded process by which social actors *negotiate their paths* toward the future” (p. 47, my italics) – in order to

generate a (highly likely) more effective collective intelligence through relationalism (see section 2.1.2), this *instability* must at some point somehow be *organized* by consensus.

Consensus (unidirectional efforts)

Having analysed the need for a stable building/frame that enables duration's thickness, this need for a communal strategic direction might be fulfilled during the consensus stage. In fact, consensus implies a combination of real understanding and commitment. Having mentioned the difficulties that may arise when different people involved in strategy formation have a variety of alternative attention focuses, including the operational day-to-day, Ferdinand bounced back to note that:

"If strategic consensus is merely on paper and not demonstrated by prioritization, then strategic action will tend to be interrupted." (Ferdinand, Interview 3)

The implications of Ferdinand's message might be expressed in the following terms: either consensus is truly sought and achieved or, in the event that it had not been sought or cannot be reached, it can be even more damaging. In fact, while in the first case strategists know that there is a problem to solve if a certain strategic direction and duration are to be successfully formed, in the second case false-consensus will act as an invisible enemy.

Ivy introduced a positive side to all of this, however, by revealing the half-dozen principles she uses in order to maximize the probability of consensus:

"i) agreement on the methods [and criteria] used; ii) to involve operational people-in-the-field and the C-Suite from the outset; iii) to have an enlightening framework, which will facilitate consensus for smaller strategic loops or initiatives; iv) a readjustment of the strategic roadmap if required to accommodate synchronization among different initiatives as necessary; v) constant regard as CEO as to how to canalize egos in the best strategic direction; and vi) a well-oiled executive committee." (Ivy, Interview 2)

Ivy raises some very interesting points: i) implying that ground-rules based on methods (which might include criteria), must be laid out before the start of strategic formation and formulation; ii) expressing the importance of being close to the field; iii) talking about an inspiring vision...; iv) ... later fine-tuned during execution; v) emphasizing the role of the CEO as an attentive coach; and vi) showing pride in having a "well-oiled" executive committee:

"I have a well-oiled executive committee. Things are agreed on the spot, since everyone is seeing the impact that things have on each other ... Well, this is an executive committee well-oiled We use to be a start-up and we have become used to working together after sixteen years ... We do not even need to talk... We look at each other and we know what the other is thinking ... It is an executive committee that has worked together for sixteen years, which is something very uncommon ..." (Ivy, Interview 2)

Miles, too, mentioned that it was crucial to have "*mutual trust among people involved in strategy formation*" (Interview 3). Nevertheless, both Ivy and Miles could be forgetting that, as noted in section 2.4.2, consensus might sometimes not be as good as imagined or perceived, especially during the formulation of strategy since, as Bachelard affirms:

"There can no longer be any doubt that dialectic and not continuity is the fundamental schema [...]. In other words, the contradictory interplay of functions is a functional necessity." (Bachelard, 2000, loc. 877, my italics)

In fact, the need for dialectics was maybe what inspired Ivy to recruit someone from a different sector when she wanted to move on with a disruptive digital strategy, as presented in section 4.1.2.

Coherent with the idea that consensus might not be something to pursue blindly, when trying to demonstrate the importance of consensus, Mark made a point that raised an apparent discursive incoherence while distinguishing strategic failure from operational failure, once a consensus is reached:

"If the required resources – human, financial, etc. – as well as the consensus of the relevant stakeholders have been obtained but the strategy still does not move forward, then the problem is no longer strategic but operational: the problem is due to a dimension of operationalization, including correspondent planning and controlling, affecting the capacity to execute, the capacity to do [and this requires additional action]." (Mark, Interview 3)

When Mark says that "*the problem is no longer strategic*", this is somehow contradictory with the already-noted position he held when he described reviewing his strategic direction/plan should he be confronted with new facts that would definitely prevent achievement of initial objectives, or represent an insurmountable change in the position of stakeholders; i.e. even when consensus is reached, the strategy that is about to be or that is being followed, could still prove no longer to be the *right* one if supervening acts or facts show otherwise. What Mark's question probably alerts us to is that consensus might be just circumstantial, even though not being so circumstantial that we should fall into Ferdinand's trap of false-consensus.

Warren seems not to share this opinion about a potentially ephemeral consensus. Once more he demonstrates his practical spirit by calling out the need to have the right resources to execute (including collective commitment), something he had already expressed regarding momentum. Warren also used the expression “*to have everyone on board*” in other parts of his narrative, which he revealed was peremptory, saying that if consensus to pursue a certain strategic direction cannot be reached, he would prefer to abandon it as a strategic option and thus stop a strategic initiative immediately:

“When one of the key people in the process was not in agreement, we stopped the process; we did not want to go against the tide. There were a lot of people involved in the execution; and the decision had to be adapted to our standards. For instance, we had already analysed an opportunity for which IT was extremely important; so for us that [required complexity] did not fit.” (Warren)

From the quote, however, it can be deduced that what might stop a certain strategic idea is not only a problem of consensus but, as mentioned, also a question of momentum related to the structural as well as to the circumstantial potential lack of resources. Nevertheless, even if this is the case, Warren shows that he is prone to sticking to building/structural positions, albeit not stubbornly, rather than just dwelling swinging in the wind.

While *highlighting* was considered a critical claim for strategic attention, capable of removing managers from inconsequent dwellings and of engaging them in a certain strategic direction and duration, *framing*, as the name suggests, is connected more to the choice of a certain building that ascribes a specific driving force to duration. *Framing*, as noted, is developed in dialectics, i.e. it reflects a dialectic conception of duration (Bachelard, 2000, loc. 130) coupled with various political activities in an ongoing dance, brought to block or foster schemes of reference that will be considered as the building within which strategic dwelling occurs. Consensus was seen as a key element to create common collective duration, as long as it does not jeopardize dialectics and it focuses on its two main objectives: creating a shared *understanding* of strategic vision/objectives and commitment towards their execution, be they for global strategic change or, in the case of shorter cycles, for strategic initiatives. The framing part of duration helps managers to acknowledge that the supposed chasm between decision and execution corresponds to strategizing “without a well-ordered dialectic, without rhythm, [without which] life and thought cannot be stable and secure” (Bachelard, 2000, loc. 161). This is something quite different from the immobilization of a plan followed by a more

or less disordered/more or less individualist effort to abide by it. *Framing* creates strategic thickness and also creates tension, in the sense of a certain stiffness brought about by the building it creates which, nonetheless, would not be as rigid or artificial so as to create Bergsonian laughter or social punishment for artificiality, as presented in section 2.2.2.

(4.2.3) Relationship between highlighting and framing

Taken all together it could be said that *highlighting* relates more, although naturally not wholly, to decisional-dwelling, and *framing* more to executional-building, despite the fact that interactivity between the different stages is a common feature of strategizing – interactivity that, as implied several times in this project, avoids a classical view of execution *after* decision.

Each stage involves a dynamic of its own. Living, and dynamically incarnate, each implies a deep-diving exercise of certain duration as a necessary condition for feeding strategy formation. In other words, strategic duration, in all its different facets, is unavoidable while strategizing. In fact, nobody labels an issue as strategic without entering into its very dynamism, as explained above; nobody determines the sense of urgency and feasibility that justifies the choice of momentum without entering into this very dynamism; nobody can intend to hit the target, that is, to implement a certain strategic initiative without understanding it and showing commitment towards it; and so forth ...

The behaviours/actions presented above that happened or did not happen, affecting strategic duration while strategizing, are definitely not something that a strategist defines in their office, like someone writing a book in their mind. Instead, strategizing implies a conversational non-stop movement/continuous execution/persistent duration, in living time. It cannot be repeated often enough that an image of strategy formation, composed of multiple duration cycles and interactions and iterations from *labelling* to *consensus*, might replace the broken-line concept of a decision being followed with a more-or-less faithful execution after an almost mystic formal gap.

At this stage, and taking into consideration that some of the illustrated activities and behaviours, for the analysis of both intuition and duration, might be considered obvious by a well-informed manager or academic, some clarification is due, not least because “we can be blind to the obvious, and we are also blind to our blindness” (Kahneman, 2011, p. 24); i.e. the obvious might not be always perceived or grasped.

By means of a chess game analogy, the researcher will try to illustrate the different levels of obviousness based on the difference between detached moves vs. enchainned moves in duration. In fact, the movement of a bishop or a pawn in a chess game may seem quite obvious once learned, and this is noticeable particularly when watching children play chess. However, the struggle of a chess game is not about the movement of its pieces as seen discretely, move by move. Rather, the difficulty of a chess game is seen instead in the duration, in the sequence of calculated moves that lead to the victory. What is more, chess players are frequently referred to as “calculating” in the sense that the good players, the strategic players, are capable of anticipating and memorizing long combinations of possible attacks and defences. What at first sight seemed obvious is, on the contrary, in reach of only a very few, especially if time enters into play by measuring the delay between moves.

Contrary to this context of *calculus*, managers’ moves are sometimes comparable to “childish chess play” because if not *tensioned* in duration, i.e. if managers are not paying attention to the *coming-to-be and passing-away* of its flaw, their actions are *disengaged* and *dispersed*. But is it childish or, instead, is it a fact of social life that managers must simply learn to cope with? Consider, for instance, managers who accept the order to start a turnaround without the clear and formal support of their shareholder(s); when it was flagged up that a degree of management paralysis persisted despite its obvious impact on market positioning; a strategic conversation was held with the wrong people; and so forth ... Are these obvious mistakes? If so, why do they persist? One line of investigation could draw on the Strategy-as-Practice literature and particularly the area concerned with the difference between practices and praxis examined in section 2.1.2, as well as with practitioners’ preparation, interests, and motivation. As Whittington (2006) well exemplifies by describing the potential reasons for a failed “strategy process workshop”:

First, there is the group of senior managers involved in the workshop. Apart from the chief executive, these were not board members, yet it was repeatedly affirmed that it was the board that made the

decisions in the organization [...]. The workshop may have simply engaged the wrong practitioners. (Whittington, 2006, p. 623)

In fact, apart from the effect of duration itself, in the social sciences and particularly in management – where, for instance, politicking may assume a crucial role –, the obvious is sometimes misleading. This remark, if not anticipated, would probably tolerate notions such as *evident strategic practices*, considered as *obvious* answers/solutions to certain strategic issues; that is, clearly assuming consequentialism, and thus being incoherent with what has already been explained about potential competitive advantage in section 2.1.2, and about presumed best practices in section 4.2.1.

Additionally, the literature is not always in agreement, even for topics where common sense would say no major disagreement should be foreseen. Take the stage of consensus described in the framing part of the conceptual framework of duration; as Dooley et al. (2000) point out:

[Even though] One of the accepted beliefs among strategic management researchers is that strategic decision consensus among decision-makers facilitates decision implementation speed and implementation success [...] Contrary to our expectations, however, decision commitment serves to slow implementation speed. (p. 1237)

One of the reasons put forward by Dooley and his co-authors for this not-so-obvious-conclusion has to do with another apparently obvious idea that “it takes [a] long [time] to do something well [hallmark of more committed teams] [...] rather than [to] ‘just do’” (2000, p. 1251).

Watts, in a clear allusion to the non-deterministic facet of the social sciences, notices that “we’re actually much better planning the flight of an interplanetary rocket than we are managing the economy, merging two corporations, or even predicting how many copies of a book will sell” (Watts, 2011, loc. 130):

‘Situations’ involving corporations, cultures, markets, nation-states, and global institutions exhibit a very different kind of complexity from everyday situations. And under these circumstances, common sense [neighbour of the obvious] turns out to suffer from a number of errors that systematically mislead us; [...] ‘things we didn’t know at the time’ but which seem obvious in hindsight [in retrospection]. (Watts, 2011, loc. 139–43)

With these remarks regarding the common-sense mistakes made about the obvious, this section finishes as it started by alerting readers to “the pressure for managers to ‘get it right’”

(Hay, 2014, p. 516) in the context of duration, considered the close relative of intuition, the latter supposed to be opposed to rationality. But does this prompt managers to acknowledge their human condition make them any lesser *strategists*, in the sense of being able to direct effort towards a desired future? That does not seem to be the case. If managers are considered as agents and agency is defined as ...

A temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a *capacity* to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a *capacity* to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment). (Lawrence et al., 2009, p. 47, my italics)

... then it is not so difficult to understand that i) not only is the *capacity* of agents/managers mentioned twice, which means they must have the ability to imagine future possibilities and go after them, taking into account the possibilities of the current momentum, but also that ii) duration, considered an unstoppable flow that spirals and dissolves the past, present, and future in a dialectic of strategy formation, which follows a stepped-continuum of forward and backward movements that intuitive managers are capable of transforming into an ongoing dance. And this view, brought by duration, is somewhat distant from the *heroic and unfailing machine-manager* that seems to always get it right.

5. Conclusions

This chapter provides a summarized view of the research, making explicit both i) its key contributions, centred in the complementarity of both building and dwelling world views and the importance of Bergsonian intuition and duration for strategizing, and ii) its contributions for practice and academia, while also pointing towards some areas for future research.

(5.1) Key Contributions

This section begins by analysing the legitimacy of the strategic question underlying this work – *How can the formal gap between strategic decision and execution be reduced?* – acknowledging that the assumption of the existence of a supposed gap might still be controversial even after reaching the conclusions that will be explained in this chapter.

After this digression, this section will answer the strategic question as such, following the research questions (RQ) presented in Chapter 3 – the methodology and methods –, to understand:

- RQ1 – How do the usually-considered “opposite” **pairs** – building vs. dwelling, intelligence vs. intuition, thought vs. action, and decision vs. execution – combine while strategizing?
- RQ2 – What is the importance of **intuition** to strategizing and how is this revealed?
- RQ3 – How does strategy formation evolve over a certain period of time, through specific stages, along which a specific **duration** is produced?

Consequently, the key contributions of this project will be organized around i) the pairs, presented in section 1.2 and Figure 4 of Chapter 2, which served as the basis for analysing the literature review on Strategy-as-Practice and on intuition; ii) intuition, both in its Bergsonian sense and from more recent perspectives; and iii) duration, the application of which to strategy could be considered the most innovative outcome of the current research, both in relation to Bergson and in the development of the *Framework of Strategic Duration* presented in Figure 5 of section 2.4.

(5.1.1) Questioning the strategic question

The more radical, argumentative, reader might say that the strategic question is a false problem because there is no such *gap* between strategic decision and execution, and thus it does not require an answer. Moreover, they might even ironically compare the question to one presented by Bachelard (2000), in which he uses the word “tormented” to express the state of mind in which individuals find themselves facing a supposed vacuum: “Let us look briefly at the psychology of a scientific mind tormented by the idea of vacuum, of void and emptiness” (2000, loc. 597).

To prevent the possibility of neutralizing the strategic question, the word “formal”, used in the sense of *academic* or *ceremonial*, was added, *ab initio*, to make the notion of a *formal gap* an allowable misconception about the existence of this chasm, different to that experienced in practice, and thus to make the question and corresponding answer possible.

Naturally, this same argumentative reader could insist that, from reading the passages in which voice has been given to the interviewees, it is difficult to conclude that less academic or ceremonial practitioners also discard the idea of a gap, because the embedded idea that implementation follows decision is still predominant in most of their narratives.

Although this is a strong argument, an acknowledgement that could raise the pertinent question as to why such experienced CEOs continue to nurture such a potentially misleading conception regarding the meaning of corporate strategy, a counter-argument, based exactly on the differences between dwelling and building, might well be used here. In fact, it was noted above that the notion of a gap may not correspond to what managers *experience* while strategizing/dwelling. But this is quite different from what managers *answer/narrate*, when asked about something that they have to put into words while thinking about a structured answer. This structure, building, is exactly what could make them fall into a possible misconception about the gap, since their academic scheme concerning strategy most probably cultivated the idea of a rational model as taught in schools.

It is from this position that the researcher considers a question that assumes the existence of a gap as valid, considering both i) that the term “formal” ascribes it in an academic and ceremonial sense and ii) that it is most probably embedded in the academic language game that the interviewees used to narrate their practises while participating in an academic project. This second point, concerning the interviewees, was actually one of the reasons why the researcher refrained from developing an explicit critical analysis around the implicit gap underlying the participants’ answers: as the researcher made explicit at the start of the interviews, although the research was exactly about this gap, it was not envisaged that interviewees would be focused on denying the gap or even considered it would be appropriate to make such a remark.

Admitting to the existence of a formal gap, either *formal* or implicitly *narrated* as such, there is no option but to answer the question concerning how to reduce it.

(5.1.2) Answering the strategic question

As noted, answering the strategic question by way of the three research questions presented in Chapter 3 implied a focus on i) the dynamics among building and dwelling pairs, addressing research question 1; ii) the threefold benefits of intuition for strategizing, addressing research question 2; and iii) the thickness of strategic duration, addressing research question 3.

The dynamics among building (architectural) and dwelling (practical) pairs, addressing research question 1

What had begun as a vision of complementarity among the building (architectural) and dwelling (practical) pairs, earlier represented in Figure 4, Chapter 2, during the CEO interviews, started to give rise to a more dynamic and interdependent view among i) thought, intelligence, and decision, and ii) action, intuition, and execution, represented in Figure 6:

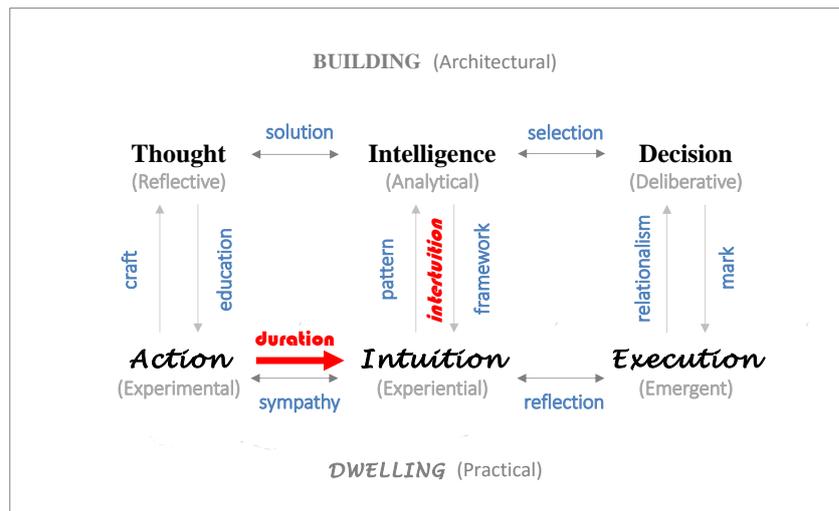


Figure 6 – Dynamics and interdependency among building and dwelling pairs

The way in which this dynamism and interdependency occurs may be explained as follows ...

Intuition is immanently *experiential*, in the sense that it is from experience that strategists collect the different *patterns* that will be engraved in their pictorial and mechanical memories; which, consequently, will be advantageous to digest the huge amounts of information that will be used in *analytical* thought. In turn, by “intertuition”, **intelligence** provides the *frameworks* that will permit the generation of effective intuitions, since ideas do not come from a vacuum.

The relationship between intelligence and intuition, in part, reproduces the interactions between the building and dwelling views of strategizing. Indeed, both pairs end up being used to analyse the first set of interviews around intuition, and in particular research question 1 (see Chapter 3), following the insights collected during the literature review. In fact, the relationship between these pairs is not that surprising, since for Strategy-as-Practice building is associated with practices in the sense of the tools they provide for/while strategizing (see section 2.1.2), which is a function that Bergson defends specifically for intelligence (see section 2.2.2). On the other hand, praxis and intuition both have in common the affinity with execution and action that are depicted in Figure 6 (see sections 2.1.2, 2.2.1, and 2.3). The interweaving between intelligence and intuition that, through analogy with building and dwelling, in part, form the dynamics between the concepts at the top and bottom of Figure 6,

embody the meaning of “intertuition”: and this is exactly why this neologism was created as a symbol for this project. What “intertuition” brings as novelty is the reunifying of concepts that, according to a Bergsonian perspective, only intelligence has analytically separated and which in this reassembling originates a new concept of a more industrialized and effective strategic intuition (see sections 1.2, 2.2.2, and 4.1.1).

From the research findings, different illustrative examples help to understand the interactions between intelligence vs. intuition and the related concepts building vs. dwelling, thus highlighting some of the conclusions presented so far. The titles of these illustrative examples, presented in detail in section 4.1.1, are somewhat elucidative of the practical substance of these pairs:

- *Jonathan – From intelligence for formulating to intuition for executing;*
- *Jarvis – Learning from the experience of others;*
- *Lowell – The building edge of an intervention and the frame of intelligence;*
- *Martina – The building of the headquarters;*
- *Melville – A model to foster the intuitive and to come closer to execution of solutions;*
- *Idelle – Different buildings for different dwellings;*
- *Collier – Intelligence and culture as frames of intuition;*
- *Martina and Mark – A strategic plan to avoid free dwelling and improvisation.*

Returning to an explanation of Figure 6, it can be acknowledged that, aside from the use of intelligence as a tool, which supposedly ascribes effectiveness to intuition, through *reflection*, intuition is also activated and nourished during **execution**. While executing, i.e. while pursuing a *mark*/a vision, which results from a *deliberative* strategic **decision**, strategists come across *emergent* strategic facts. These will lead, in turn, through *relationalism*, i.e. by interacting with other internal and external practitioners, to occasionally “mindless” and improvised new decisions. These decisions will be thoughtful, subject to a *selection* process, giving rise to new marks for strategic direction, which may include corrective action.

The illustrative examples mentioned above also incorporated the notion that a mark, which could range from a broad strategic vision to a detailed strategic initiative, but derived from a deliberated decision, was needed to ascribe univocal direction to teams in the field; a conclusion that had already flourished from the literature review (see section 2.1.1).

Notwithstanding, participants implicitly recognized the importance of the field of action (e.g. see the cases of Jonathan and Jarvis mentioned above) to emergent strategy, through relationalism, i.e. by interaction with other people who are directly or indirectly involved in the strategizing, or pre-strategizing process (i.e. before the creation of a “strategic” label), (see sections 2.1.1, 2.4.1, 4.1, and 4.2.1). The illustrative examples provided by interviewees regarding the interactions between the thought vs. action and decision vs. execution pairs are grouped into the following fragments of section 4.1.2:

- *Experience (action) as intuitive thinking and accumulated knowledge;*
- *Execution as the substance of decision (and strategy);*
- *Bringing the field of action closer to execution.*

The role of action should naturally be emphasized, in order to complete the explanation of Figure 6 and thus the Bergsonian interactions between intelligence and intuition. In fact, it is in **action**, strategizing, although even only by *experimental* or trial-and-error actions, that practitioners *sympathize*/enter into contact with, elements of the practical field that will generate intuitions, and in so doing, progressively, in duration, *craft* their **thoughts**, allowing them to leverage their *hands*-on posture while exposed to micro-activities. In turn, through a *reflective*/meditative posture that synthesizes and interacts with *solutions* generated in the academic or practical world, i.e. appealing to, and developing *education*, managers will undertake actions that hopefully take into consideration the precedent takeaways and contribute to future learning. The interaction between thought and action, primordial to the philosophical theories of Bergson, was explained in detail in the literature review (see section 2.3.1) and was always embedded in the interview answers, although the dynamic mechanisms between both had never been explicitly assumed by participants.

Figure 6 also expresses one of the most important contributions of this project, by putting Action as the first element (reading from right to left in the Dwelling zone) of the view of strategizing underlying this project: one that, according to Bergsonian theory, says that thinking intuitively is to think in duration, which departs from a notion of movement/action (Bergson, 2001e, p. 1275). The importance of both intuition and duration for strategizing are synthesized hereafter.

Figure 6 depicts three direct connections with intuition – intelligence, execution, and action – that synthesize the types of benefits potentially brought to the concept of strategy by this key concept of Bergsonian theory. These benefits were already noted in section 2.3 and can be summarized as follows:

- *Fast digestion of huge amounts of information* – linked to intelligence;
- *Humanize decision making, bringing it close to execution* – linked to execution;
- *Foster creative and “truly new” strategies* – linked to action and duration.

Section 2.2.1 explained that in a world marked by Volatility-Uncertainty-Complexity-Ambiguity (VUCA), time-consuming, rational approaches must be complemented with a more practical and intuitive decision-making mode that, by taking an educated trial-and-error stance (see also section 2.3.2), could combat management paralysis by analysis (see also section 2.2.3). In this context, as some interviewees noted (e.g. Melville and Collier) patterns of intuition must be used to **digest** and condense large chunks of information in a preliminary information analysis that will be subject to a more rational, although timely, treatment of information later on.

One important contribution of intuition, in the sense of practical thought, is the fact that implementation would be easier to undertake if the decision-making method were already close to practice/execution. This impact was noted by Melville, when he was describing his method to define quick action plans, presented in section 4.1.1. That was why, he said, he asked more experienced people to work together with more junior executives who showed promise career-wise. This note motivated a further addition to the literature review on the **humanization** of decisions brought by intuition, and specifically to the discovery of the work of Sinclair et al. (2009).

Lastly, one of the most frequently referenced benefits of intuition throughout this work is its capacity to create the “**truly new**”, capable of surprising clients and competitors and thus to create a potential competitive strategy/advantage. As already noted, the “truly new” is referenced to Dane and Pratt (2009, p. 10). However, notwithstanding, Bergson had already noted the *radical new* (2001e, p. 1276) and *absolutely new* (2005, p. 206) to mark the

difference between the capacity of intuition on the one hand and intelligence on the other, considering that the latter, according to the philosopher, simply rearranges pre-existent elements (Bergson, 2001g, p. 1275). One of the best illustrations of what the creation of the “truly new” means while strategizing is patent in one of Ivy’s comments, where she refers to the recruitment of a person from a sector in which consumer experience was much closer to the Digital era than she considered was typical of the healthcare sector these days.

Naturally, Bergson is clear when he affirms that this capacity to create the “truly new” is something that is propelled by intuition. According to Bergson, this means invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new (Bergson, 2005, p. 206), thus making an almost inseparable combination of the two concepts of intuition and duration.

The thickness of strategic duration, addressing research question 3

Considering the importance of action to intuition and to strategy, as mentioned above, it was inevitable that duration, which as stated, departs from movement (action) and is the propeller of intuition, has become the most important concept of this project.

As explained extensively in several parts throughout this work, duration *measures* qualitative time rather than chronologically the days, hours, minutes, or other units of time. The image of the painter painting a canvas, explained in purposefully long quotes in section 4.2, in which part of both the object painted and the painter him/herself becomes part of a picture, which has been qualitatively formed along a certain “duration of this belonging, [...] the trace of which is the painting” (Helin et al., 2014, loc. 246), is a good analogy to explain what strategic duration could mean – *a trace* – and what the strategist (the painter) does while strategizing: “tracing a line” (Colombo, 2009, p. 262).

In the analogy with the painter, they, who has a real or imaginary vision of what to paint, will most probably not ask themselves if the final canvas corresponds to that vision, especially because it would be difficult to see how much of the vision is in the canvas and how much the creation of the painting formed the virtual vision. Notwithstanding, the acute arguer might ask: ‘And what if the painter is a portraitist?’ Even so, “the portrait will surely resemble the model and will surely resemble also the artist; *but the concrete solution brings with it that*

unforeseeable nothing which is everything in a work of art” (Bergson, 2005, p. 3777, my italics). In fact, in any work of art, the “unforeseeable nothing”, i.e. what cannot be predicted and rationally explained, seems to be the *sine qua non* condition in order for it to be considered art at all.

In this context, if a painter, or specifically a portraitist, should try to measure the gap between their vision/model and the final canvas, would this make sense? No, because what makes a painting a work of art is exactly the “unforeseeable nothing”. Similarly, would it make sense, therefore, if strategists tried to measure the gap between their initial vision and their final strategy? Probably not, because what makes a strategist is their “*receptive capacity* so [they] can abide with *the world*, belong to it or stay with it, and direct the forces of the event in an intensive process of becoming that creates by differentiating the quality of *the new*” (Helin et al., 2014, loc. 251–55, my italics), this being “the new”, the “unforeseeable nothing” of strategy, in respect to which the strategy must activate and maintain its “receptive capacity” while “being-in-the-world” (Blattner, 2006; Dreyfus, 1991; Heidegger, 2014).

In this work strategic duration has been visualized as a line and strategizing seen as tracing a line, the thickness of which represents strategic quality since the time of duration is qualitative. On the other hand, the strategist’s “receptive capacity” has been linked to strategic attention, this being the effort the manager has to exert in order to transform thought into action, seen throughout in the Bergsonian formula *action = thought + effort* (see section 2.3.1). In section 2.4 and further in section 4.2, the way managers foster attention (highlighting) and keep it (framing) was explained in depth.

Considering these assumptions, it is time now to explain how the thickness of strategic duration can be measured, and how this image might replace the prevailing one, which represents strategic achievement as something that occurs after the *black hole* that follows strategic decision-making.

In fact it was during the interviews that the idea of duration as a line being traced began to take practical shape. Picture the line’s thickness and length associated with strategic intensity and endurance—the intensity/quality/progression of strategy over a certain, imagined, time period, as though someone had actually had a certain chronological time to trace the longest

and thickest line possible. This *geometry* is something continuously taking shape along the different constituents/stages of the *Framework of Strategic Duration* (Figure 5, section 2.4). Should one of the six elements of the hexagon represented in Figure 5 be *smaller*, i.e. partially, or even totally disregarded, and what if strategic duration were to become thinner? This image is represented in Figure 7 (below) by a geometric cross-sectional⁶² view of the “interior” of duration:

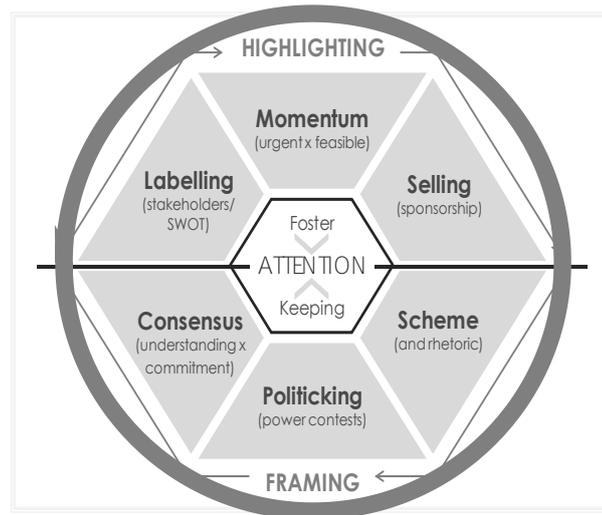


Figure 7 – Geometric representation of a cross-sectional view of strategic duration

According to this figure, duration could be compared with the interior of a bone, the thickness of which would determine the strength of strategic formation is. Nevertheless, given the contradictory idea of a bone’s rigidity, when compared with strategizing, it is preferable to imagine the interior of a *spiral*,⁶³ which also more closely represents the forward and backward movement of the pen, the steps between stages, as mentioned in section 4.2. Having this geometrical image in mind, a very brief explanation is due to illustrate how, in a case of a lack of strategic attention some of the constituents of duration might be partially or completely disregarded, and how this would create strategic thinness or fragility.

⁶² Cross-sectional in the sense of “Exposed by making a straight cut through a solid form, especially at right angles to an axis” see <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/cross-sectional> (accessed 10/6/2017).

⁶³ The spiral is defined as a “winding in a continuous and gradually widening (or tightening) curve, either around a central point on a flat plane or about an axis so as to form a cone.” See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/spiral> (accessed 4/12/2016).

When a strategist does not pay attention to the company's SWOT and does not **label** any issues/opportunities as “strategic”, they risk plunging self, team, and organization into an erratic dwelling that transforms strategy into improvisation; this is typical of a company trapped in institutional navel-gazing. This is opposed to the other type of company managed by “‘real time foresight’, i.e. the discovery of opportunities and threats still in the making and the translation of this discovery to action at the right time” (Cunha et al., 2012, p. 267). In the opposite direction, if something that is not “strategic” is labelled as if it were, then managers, submerged in non-essential operational activities, run the risk of losing their chronological time together with a destruction of their qualitative strategic time. During interviews on duration, all the participants recognized the *label* as crucial for strategizing. Deserving of emphasis in this regard are the passages where Ivy – whose formal role, besides being the CEO, is being head of strategy – explains how she manages her company's S-curve, and Mark's explanation of the basis by which he would label something as “strategic” (see section 4.2.1).

Failing to pay attention to **momentum** is similar to disregarding either feasibility or urgency, both even, with regard to a virtual or actual strategic issue; i.e. a strategic issue might be discovered in the business ecosystem, but the strategist still needs to evaluate whether there is the right momentum to move forward with the formation of a particular strategy or strategic initiative in order to deal with it. With regard to feasibility, Warren – showing permanent cost/benefit reasoning – offers a quite elucidative illustration of what could be called structural feasibility (see section 4.2.1). He states that he prefers to precisely delimit the kind of market segments or strategic positioning that will be out of bounds to his bank, which he bases on internal analysis of a lack of resources, to match what is required, in order to potentially be competitive on entering these segments, or to adopt a certain market positioning. Concerning urgency, Ferdinand – who did not refrain from showing a certain strategic resignation to the peripheral position of the Business Unit he manages – offered a remarkable example about what it means to be “non-relevant” for a big multinational. He illustrates this with a negative correlation between the sense of urgency in the field and the (lack of) urgency registered at the highest levels of a decisional pyramid, thus hindering momentum. At the other end of the scale, almost all interviewees conveyed “a culture with a strong sense of urgency” (Spence, 2009, loc. 114), particularly when, according to them,

execution had begun; this follows Kotter's (2008) idea that managers should "behave with urgency every day" (p. 97). This perspective seems unsurprising, considering that, as Davis et al. (2010) note, "research shows a hard link between speed and business results" (p. 9). What is more, a lack of a sense of urgency might even lead to *management paralysis* (see sections 2.3.1 and 4.2.3), which is exactly contrary to movement/action and thus duration.

The **selling** stage, leveraged, according to participants, by frequent moments of communication, proved to be crucial, and not only in order to obtain senior management and other internal and external stakeholders' sponsorship. This could be seen as a quite obvious conclusion were it not for the fact that many participants, experienced CEOs, recalled the importance of paying attention to those "details" that sometimes might be disregarded. For instance, Ramsey, the only interviewee whose academic studies were in law, gave the example of the need to be constantly selling not only ideas while dwelling, but to also be building strategic spaces; this is especially important for companies such as the state-owned ones, he said, where the shareholder is *distant*. And Idelle emphasized the need to sell strategic initiatives to the team, thus she advocated not just selling to her boss and stakeholders, but also using what she called frontrunners as marketers/ambassadors for execution (see section 4.2.1). Returning to the assertion that the need for selling/sponsorship might be considered obvious, even in spite of a potential disregard for certain details, the researcher has not judged it as being so obvious: take into account the heroic rational postures illustrated in the introduction to Chapter 4, where the over-confident potential to discard any type of *comfort* offered by others, suggests an attitude that later on can often lead to unexpected blockages that compromise strategic duration. Additionally, Mark, who offered important insights into "a global 'nexus' of practices" (Jarzabkowski et al., 2015, p. vi), noted that the selling stage should also include correct and comprehensive identification of relevant stakeholders, that vary according to the matters being discussed – correspondence that is not always evident.

Entering into the frame of strategic attention, it is worth mentioning what Miles, who always exhibited a very reasoned posture, noted: that when a strategist is in the selling phase, they should already have a **scheme** in mind. A scheme is a preliminary frame, a preliminary strategic building that needs to be discussed, and, later, consensually accepted. A scheme may take the form of i) a strategic vision, plan, initiative, or project, according to the level of

strategic detail, or ii) other elements that might be raised as referents, which were exemplified by the eight signatures presented in section 2.4.2. Assuming use of a vision/plan to provide strategic direction is one of the most common features of strategy theory, with the greatest emphasis given to the referents/schemes that can be active during strategy formation (various buildings for various dwellings). Idelle, symbolizing the posture of a tough manager, noted the possibility of someone being fired if they systematically raised barriers to change; and she described how this action might constitute an example (a referent) to others. Ferdinand, whose narrative exposed various aspects of strategic blockage brought about by adverse-buildings, mentioned how the reminiscence of a low-cost culture (first referent) could block strategic duration for a new positioning that privileges quality. Not having these frames of where to go and why in mind, appealing both to the positive and the “not-to-do” referents, most certainly hinders the “intensive (passionate) process of receiving the situation so that one belongs to it” (Helin et al., 2014, loc. 252), similar to what would happen with a painter who did not have a vision/model before them, and who might thus thin down duration.

Nevertheless, this project, although noting the importance of building effective and useful dwellings, has never suggested that there can be any advantage in a rigid/immutable plan. This artificiality, according to Bergson, could become laughable (see section 2.2.2). Indeed, Mark – who from his position as a politician illustrated very well the vicissitudes of the politicking constituent of duration – acknowledges his willingness to change direction should maintaining it be no longer feasible, especially due to a change of priorities from critical stakeholders (see the introduction to Chapter 4). That is to say, a scheme, a frame, is not fixed: It strives by **politicking** and its underlying dialectics, as seen, constitute one of the major features of duration (see section 4.2.), a sort of *spiralled-ping-pong* mode of progressing. Politicking has a lot to do with conversation and its potentiality to create emergent strategies (see sections 2.1.1 and 2.3.2) or to test intuitive decisions, namely by playing devil’s advocate. But some of the interviewees also highlight a supposedly shadier facet, that of an active resistance to change. Idelle, a participant that supplied very interesting examples about barriers to change, mentions the “slightly different” actions in contrast to what was agreed, which are sometimes difficult to detect; and Miles, who revealed a particular focus on execution, using a military metaphor, talked about troops that begin to march in different directions. It was also implicit in every interview that, specifically so as not

to hinder momentum, there is a time at which discussions must stop and consensus must be reunited, specifically to accomplish defined targets in a timely manner.

Consensus around dominant strategic frames/building, when considered within the context of politicking – i.e. not rejecting creative dialectics – generates unidirectional efforts based on “the shared understanding of *strategic priorities* among managers at the top, middle, and/or operating levels of the organization” (Kellermanns et al., 2005, p. 721, my italics). This stage, if prior considerations are taken into account, is critical for duration’s thickness because it reunites individual durations around a common purposeful strategic direction. Among interviewees, consensus was considered vital for strategizing, including as Mark noted, with external stakeholders of the company. It represents a sort of *stability pact*, which is obviously different from an immobility pact, during which an intersection of common willingness culminates in joint efforts, and thus, according to the formula *action = thought + effort*, concludes in joint action. Ivy, one of the participants whose profile from her interview most closely matches the image of a *doer*, explained her principles to foster consensus, but emphasized that the complicity among the various members of her executive committee was the most important guarantee of achieving it. For another participant, Warren, who denoted a very *right-to-the-point* style of management, consensus was of such importance to strategizing that if this constituent of strategic duration was not guaranteed among management and shareholders, he preferred not to move forward with the envisaged strategic option (see section 4.2.2).

All in all, it is important to retain the belief that strategic duration demands equilibrium of forces among its different constituents. As the cross-sectional circle of Figure 7 tries to illustrate geometrically, an excess of one constituent can neither endanger nor compensate for the normal development of another. For instance, *endless* politicking, leading to management paralysis, will most probably hinder momentum. This explains why strategic activity implies a certain tension, in the sense that all the constituents could be in play at the same time, with momentary different intensities, and thus require a comprehensive attention that presents substantial differences in regard to an alternative single-mindedness on purposeful model development.

Additionally, the reader probably grasped the link between the framing stages – scheme, politicking, and consensus – and a predominance in defending a certain frame/building while dwelling. This should take the reader back to Figure 6, and to the importance of “intertuition” as the bridge between the building and dwelling world views. That is why both duration and intuition are emphasized in that Figure.

It is exactly this view of *comprehensive attention* to the different constituents of duration and the link to the dynamic between building and dwelling pairs that may be seen as the major contributions of this project. This will be addressed hereafter.

(5.2) Contributions of this project and further areas for research

A project at doctoral level must bring both i) a “practical or applied impact for a particular user-group or community, or for practitioners or policy makers” and ii) a “theoretical impact through increasing our understanding of a particular issue or creating new understandings” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 290). In consideration of this, the following two sections introduce the potential impact of this work for managers/practitioners and academia.

(5.2.1) Practical contributions

Apart from being shy or ill-informed about “intuitive competence” (Richards, 2004, loc. 1148), managers’ ideas about strategy seem to be blocked. Where managers learn, where they go to be inspired, covers a range that varies from i) a positioning school based on models to ii) heuristics and “best sellers” of authors purporting to be *Gurus*. This perspective erroneously excludes the contributions of the discipline of Strategy-as-Practice that, in a comprehensive mode, is capable of shedding light “inside the black box of the firm” (Nelson, 1991, p. 65) and on how managers strategize.

The current work, while illuminating the dynamic combination between apparently opposite elements belonging to the architectural as well as practical views of strategizing, changes the focus on managers as rational heroes, to offer a more humanized approach that sees managers

as professionals who have to deal with the “complexities of the lived experiences” (Hay, 2014, p. 509) while strategizing.

In this context, leveraging the Bergsonian concepts of intuition and duration, while not relieving intelligence – by “intertuition” – it is hoped that the current work will bring some comfort to managers: they are allowed to make mistakes, so long as these are made through educated action. Bergson himself would not deny managers themselves the right to laugh at the excesses of artificiality, the models, plans, rules ... and so forth, which some might intend to impose on them while strategizing.

Here an analogy can be used to explain further this idea that discards the view of the plan-gap-implementation way of doing strategy. The IT industry in the here and now happens to privilege *agile* development, by which smaller and faster cycles of software development, executed in an incremental and iterative way, replace traditional complete planning, followed by big-bang code development and deployment. The *agile manifesto*, chasing better methods of software development, values ...

individuals and interactions over process and tools; working software over comprehensive documentation; customer collaboration over contract negotiation; responding to change over following a plan. (Mancuso, 2015, pp. 12–13, my italics)

What is more, as Westerman et al. (2014) state, “regardless of industry or geography, businesses will become much more digitized in the future” (p. 5); i.e. today’s business ecosystem is immersed in the digital era, the defiance towards which is vividly illustrated by the following image offered by Dawson et al. (2016):

In July 2015, during the championship round of the World Surf League’s J-Bay Open, in South Africa, a great white shark attacked Australian surfing star Mick Fanning. Right before the attack, Fanning said later, he had the eerie feeling [instinct] that ‘something was behind me.’ [...] Just two years earlier, off the coast of Nazaré, Portugal, Brazilian surfer Carlos Burle rode what, unofficially, at least, ranks as the largest wave in history. [...] These days, something of a mix of the fear of sharks and the thrill of big-wave surfing [dwelling] pervades the executive suites we visit, when the conversation turns to the threats and opportunities arising from digitization. (pp. 1–2)

This era is characterized by the importance of social networks, mobility/accessibility (potentiated by the proliferation of mobile devices), massive generation and analysis of data,

big data, cloud platforms, the internet of things (IoT), and 3D printing – which “includes technology outside a company’s control” (Raskino & Waller, 2015, p. 6).

Ten years ago Tomlinson (2007) arrived at this dynamic view of constantly being in action, rather than being caught in a mistaken discrete separation between moments of decision followed by moments of execution, acknowledging that an increasing “culture of instantaneity” (loc. 1908), so typical of actuality and its digital footstep, was provoking the “‘closure of the gap’ that had historically separated now from later, here from elsewhere, desire from satisfaction” (loc. 1911). In this context:

Strategy and execution are closely integrated and influenced by each other. This means that strategy is constantly being challenged and could likely change during execution. (Short & Soejarto, 2016, p. 5)

Bearing in mind that strategists are not expected to behave as model rational heroes, capable of surfing any digital wave that appears in these turbulent times, this work offers a comprehensive study to elucidate managers on how to be purposeful in action which, completing the analogy of actually surfing on troubled waters, is comparable to Bergsonian swimming (see section 2.2.1).

(5.2.2) Theoretical contributions and future research

The author’s ambition to offer an all-inclusive perspective on how to apply Bergsonian theory to strategizing, as Figure 1 of the Introduction might suggest, was somewhat restrained due to space limitations and the need to explain in detail the very elusive concepts of intuition and duration. Consequently, some aspects of the Bergsonian framework applied to strategy, such as leadership and culture, were virtually left out.

Additionally, the author has taken the bold and challenging step of applying philosophical ideas to concrete practice, i.e. choosing to reunite popularly considered opposite world views. In some sense, what Bergsonian ideas do is sensitize managers and academia to certain issues, summarized in section 5.1, that they might not have considered in other approaches: it may help them see things differently.

However, in order to have application, philosophical ideas still need to be translated into substantive management theory, which is what the author has partially attempted to do here. So, recognizing the challenges involved in exploring intuition and especially duration, this study points to ideas that others might take up.

In this context, continuing to investigate the application of duration to organizational theory and particularly to strategy, also leveraging its connections with leadership and culture, as this study has touched upon, could constitute recommendations for future areas of research.

All in all, despite the challenges of applying the work of Bergson to strategy, this project has proved illuminating in showing the importance to corporate strategy of action and duration. In this regard, the observation of French scriptwriter and film director, Michel Audiard's (1920–85) comes to mind: “A seated intellectual will go less far than a walking [in action] idiot.” In turn, his French compatriot, Bergson, probably would not have rejected the following formulation: *either strategy is educated action or it is nothing at all.*

APPENDIX 1 – Participant Information and Consent Form (1 interview)

Participant Information and Consent Form

The current study is interested in exploring views on **how to reduce the formal gap between strategic decision and execution**. It is hoped that a better understanding of these issue can inform progresses on the creation and implementation of business strategy and consequently on market competitiveness for companies acting in an increasingly fast changing and complex environment.

The research is led by Paulo Morgado at Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University, who will lead the interviews, and supervised by Dr Alistair Mutch and Dr Amanda Hay.

Participation in the study

The study involves senior executives responsible for the strategy process. You are being asked to take part in an interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. You will be asked a number of questions which explore your experiences in strategic decision and implementation processes/activities. With your permission, your responses will be recorded.

During the interview, you may indicate that you prefer not to answer any particular question(s) put to you, and you will not be required to give a reason for this. Upon completion of the interview you are free to ask any questions you may have about the interview or the research in general. Following the interview, you may request to see a summary of the interview. We hope you would find the interview interesting and will take satisfaction from helping to develop knowledge in this important area.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You will have the right to withdraw from the study or to withdraw the data following your participation up to the point at which the data has been analysed in preparation for writing up, without giving any reason for doing so.

If you wish to withdraw you should contact the researcher and ask for your data to be withdrawn from the study.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Due to the nature of the research, extracts from interviews will be used in the reporting of research findings. To protect anonymity, organisations, names, specific job titles, or any information which may reveal your identity will be changed.

Only the researcher and any entity that could be used to convert, in strict confidentiality, the interview in text files, will have access to recordings and transcripts which will be kept securely. All recordings will be destroyed after the publication of the research.

Your participation is much appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns before, during or after your participation in this research my contact details are:

paulo.morgado@capgemini.com (telephone: + 34 699 100 100)

Agreement to consent (please tick each element)

- I have read and understood the purpose of this research and my part in it;
- I give my permission for the interview to be recorded, on the understanding the recording will be destroyed at the end of the research;
- I understand I can ask questions as needed and understand I can contact the researcher at any time about any queries/ concerns I have;
- I have the right to withdraw my data at any point during or immediately after my involvement in the interviews, and all materials will be destroyed;
- I voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

Signature of participant _____ Date ___/___/_____

Name of participant _____

I certify I have presented the above information to the participant

Signature of researcher _____ Date ___/___/_____

APPENDIX 2 – Participant Information and Consent Form (3 interviews)

Participant Information and Consent Form

The current study is interested in exploring views on **how to reduce the formal gap between strategic decision and execution**. It is hoped that a better understanding of these issue can inform progresses on the creation and implementation of business strategy and consequently on market competitiveness for companies acting in an increasingly fast changing and complex environment.

The research is led by Paulo Morgado at Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University, who will lead the interviews, and supervised by Dr Alistair Mutch and Dr Amanda Hay.

Participation in the study

The study involves a series of three interviews over the course of the strategy process with senior executives responsible for this process. You are being asked to take part in three interviews of approximately 60 minutes each, spaced at roughly two-monthly intervals (to be arranged at your convenience). You will be asked a number of questions which explore your experiences in strategic decision and implementation processes/activities. With your permission, your responses will be recorded.

During the interview, you may indicate that you prefer not to answer any particular question(s) put to you, and you will not be required to give a reason for this. Upon completion of the interview you are free to ask any questions you may have about the interview or the research in general. Following the interview, you may request to see a summary of the interview. We hope you would find the interview interesting and will take satisfaction from helping to develop knowledge in this important area.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You will have the right to withdraw from the study or to withdraw the data following your participation up to the point at which the data has been analysed in preparation for writing up, without giving any reason for doing so.

Since you have accepted to participate in three interviews that will take place during 2016, you may withdraw from the study at any time, provided that it occurs before the deadline referred in the previous paragraph. In case you decide to withdraw from the study before the conclusion of the three interviews, upon request from the researcher, you may allow or preclude the use of the interview(s) in which you had already participated.

If you wish to withdraw you should contact the researcher and ask for your data to be withdrawn from the study.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Due to the nature of the research, extracts from interviews will be used in the reporting of research findings. To protect anonymity, organisations, names, specific job titles, or any information which may reveal your identity will be changed.

Only the researcher and any entity that could be used to convert, in strict confidentiality, the interview in text files, will have access to recordings and transcripts which will be kept securely. All recordings will be destroyed after the publication of the research.

Your participation is much appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns before, during or after your participation in this research my contact details are:

paulo.morgado@capgemini.com (telephone: + 34 699 100 100)

Agreement to consent (please tick each element)

- I have read and understood the purpose of this research and my part in it;
- I give my permission for the interview to be recorded, on the understanding the recording will be destroyed at the end of the research;
- I understand I can ask questions as needed and understand I can contact the researcher at any time about any queries/ concerns I have;
- I have the right to withdraw my data at any point during or immediately after my involvement in any of the interviews, and all materials will be destroyed;
- I voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

Signature of participant _____ Date __/__/____

Name of participant _____

I certify I have presented the above information to the participant

Signature of researcher _____ Date __/__/____

APPENDIX 3 – List of Qualitative Interviews Performed

Qualitative Interviews (single and triple)

Name	Position	When...	Sector	Single	Triple	Strategic Issue				Interview...			
						M&A	BUD	MTN	TAR	PRV	...Date	...Mode	...Length
Jarvis	CEO	1985-2005	Banking	1		•	•				17-03-2016	in person	00:54:14
Warren	CEO	Current	Banking	1			•				21-03-2016	in person	01:02:51
Collier	CEO	2008-2013	Construction	1		•	•				21-03-2016	in person	00:59:44
Bond	CEO	1992-1996	Telecom	1		•	•		•		21-03-2016	in person	01:05:12
Meville	CEO	Current	Energy & Engineering	1		•	•	•			22-03-2016	in person	00:58:36
Jonathan	CEO	2003-2006	Energy & Utilities	1		•	•		•		22-03-2016	in person	01:32:49
Lowell	CEO	Current	Banking	1					•		04-04-2016	video	01:06:12
Corwin	CEO	1994-1999	Banking	1		•	•		•		11-04-2016	in person	00:53:23
Idelle	CEO	Current	Banking	1			•				11-04-2016	video	01:02:24
Martina	CEO	Current	IT and Consultancy	1		•	•	•			25-04-2016	in person	00:54:57
Ramsey	CEO	Current	Infrastructures		2	•	•				08-04-2016	video	00:51:46
Ferdinand	CEO	Current	IT and Consultancy		3		•	•			28-07-2016	in person	01:01:16
Ivy	CEO	Current	Healthcare		2		•				06-04-2016	in person	00:57:24
Miles	CEO	Current	Energy & Utilities		3		•				13-07-2016	in person	01:00:18
Mark	CEO	Current	Government		3		•				04-10-2016	in person	01:01:04
											21-03-2016	in person	01:02:19
											30-09-2016	phone	01:13:00
											22-04-2016	video	01:02:19
											28-07-2016	in person	01:18:09
											13-10-2016	phone	01:04:55
											23-03-2016	in person	01:00:07
											29-07-2016	in person	01:03:54
											06-10-2016	phone	01:04:37
				Total (# Interviews):		10	13						
				Total (hh:mm:ss):								24:11:28	

Note: M&A-Merger & Acquisitions; BUD-Business Development; MTN-Multinational; TAR-Turnaround; PRV-Privatization

APPENDIX 4 – Examples of questions for single interviews

[STRATEGIZING] Let us start by talking about the strategic activities in which you were involved, what kind of activities were you doing, what kind of conversations did you have with people, with whom, what tools did you use, and so forth. How did you build your strategy? • I am more interested in the activity itself rather than the decisions made. The activity you developed with the team. For instance, who defined the vision? And the strategic plan? • How was that plan designed? With whom? Did you, or did you not, have external help? Did you use consultants? What was their role? What added value did consultants bring? • When it was said that M.V. was a brilliant guy; how did his brilliance help you in defining the strategy of the Bank? • After the strategic plan, how did that translate into an action plan? • What level of dependence or independence did you have from the international decisions coming from headquarters? • What other strategic activities did or do you have during the year? • You say you have a set of people who help you manage it. How many people are there? What profiles do these people have? • How do you involve your team to get to the strategic ideas? Do you assign them specific roles, or do you concentrate on the critical decisions yourself?

[INTUITION] Changing to the subject of intuition and decision making, do you always have time to make an analysis, or not? Tell me a little bit about your own, now more personal, process of decision-making. Do you think there is space for intuition, in the sense of practical intelligence based on your experience? • In your opinion, does intuition play a part in decision-making? Do you have any examples that you could give me of how that has worked? • Was this intuition born from conversations you had had? Were these conversations provoked by you? Did they follow any rituals? • You said that your executive committee members have different and complementary roles to yours; what was the result of this? • You also mentioned that in these meetings, albeit non-hierarchical, only people with a certain level of knowledge and a great deal of experience participated in them, so this should be something that was used in some way; what role do you think played, or not, in those moments? • So where did innovation come in? • Was it something that occurred naturally to you without analysis? Explain to me how you got to it. Was it the combination of different ideas from different people? • When you say deep, how were these conversations conducted? How was it during those conversations? So your preparation was always crucial? • On the one hand, we have a process that was conducted very analytically, with a coach that presented, and put the thinking through a sieve of strategic frameworks, such as analysis of SWOTs and so forth; but then what role did intuition play? • What you are saying is that the organization is always moving, always trying out new things, to see if they work? Is there anything you can attribute to the intuition you may have? Some experience, or for you, does intuition not count? • How does it come to you this intuition? • Do you remember the conversations? Did they cause a great evolution in terms of ideas? How or to what did you

accredit that evolution? • To what did you accredit the creation of that strategic definition? Do you remember any situation that derived from those conversations, that changed, not radically but significantly, your opinion about which path to take, whether to take the initial strategic vision, or not? What do you think it was? How did your intuition work; was it intuition in the sense of taking fast decisions without analysing all angles? • Who do you think, since the initial plan was defined, were the entities that made you change the idea you had deliberated initially; or which entities impacted on you even though you may have not changed your mind about your initial deliberation? • To what extent do you attribute these decisions to your experience, that is, to what extent were they taken intuitively, more intuitively than analytically, if there was any intuition in what was decided? • But did the consultants who supported the sale of the bank in that country have access to the same information you're mentioning? Did they interpret the information differently? • When you make a decision, you tell me that you listen to customers, and your own people with whom you also make a self-criticism, but when you have an idea, when you say "this is it"; where does that quick reaction come from? • So, to say that intuition is not something that comes "out of the blue", then intuition in this sense can be provoked; so how do you foster intuition? What part of the decision was made by analysis, and what part was more your intuition?

[INTELLIGENCE] Having analysed the role of intuition, now let me ask you about the role of analysis. • I assume, by analysis, a more rational decision-making process; what did that process consist of? How did you ground a rational decision? • What took you the time to come to that decision? What stopped you from achieving the strategic space that you were targeting? Why didn't you say, "Enough, we must change"? Why not solve it? Did you give yourself a maximum deadline for making decisions? Did you impose on yourself a set of decisions? Did you give yourself a maximum deadline for analysis? • Does everything have to be proven by analysis? • You had a great conviction that these things would work out and that this was where you must go. How did you come to this conviction? • But some things went wrong... or didn't they? • From the decisions put into practice some problems then arose that had to be solved; how did you handle that? So between not being sure of the right direction and not deciding until things were clearer, which of these two possible paths was taken most often? Was it to act? • When you say that there is a tolerance for error, what do you mean? What did you mean that you have a tolerance for explainable mistakes?

[EXECUTION] When you became CEO and tried to implement the plan, how did you kick-off implementation of the plan? • In which moments and with whom did you follow up your initial strategic vision? • Did you ask a consultant for help back then to pave the way? • What about when you had a different idea during implementation of what had already been strategically

defined, or if you saw that an idea was not fitting, was not working? What sources of information were emerging to add to what the team already had, to produce these adjustments? • During the executive committee meetings, how was the fine-tuning of the strategy carried out, what was presented, what were the contributions, and who was responsible for presenting the contributions? • But is there a moment there, where you understand that the strategic execution and your ideas and what you're delivering are becoming more and more distant from the initial plan due to a combination of factors? • And people are creating difficulties for you mainly because ...? • Do you feel your thoughts evolve during execution? In what way? What makes you adjust or change strategic direction? • Assuming the existence of this gap between strategic thinking and execution, there is something we have not mentioned: knowledge accumulated from experience; was this experience only in the mind of the people or did you have a system to tap in and accumulate it? • Did you feel that there was a spiral of knowledge-creation and so the more work, the more experience you'd had, the better you'd be as strategists? • How did you foster experience? Through gaining the most possible experiences, through hard work, rotation, international mobility? • What are the rituals, the routines to accumulate or retain knowledge within the organization? Is there anything written down? • Do you think you made the organization more focused in a given direction? • How do you manage communication within all of this? How do you manage communication with clients, with shareholders or with the market, and communication with the workers? • Tell me a bit about aversion to change? How does it manifest itself; that is, sometimes it doesn't manifest, but how is it identified and how is it overcome? • Who participates with you in the creation of that sense of urgency? How did you manage to maintain this climate of urgency and hard work in the long run? And were you not accused of micromanagement? Between what we think initially and what we do, you saw yourself doing something that had nothing to do with what you were thinking, what can you say about that? • And how did you manage this strategy adaptation? Was there a lot of trial-and-error?

APPENDIX 5 – Examples of questions for triple interviews

[STRATEGIC FOLLOW-UP APPROACH] What strategic activities are you planning to develop in the next three months and what outputs do you expect from these activities? • Internally, with whom do you expect to work more in these various strategic streams? That is, with whom in your internal structure do you expect to spend more time in the next three months? • Will you use any tool to systematize this work, with who do you hope to develop it, what kinds of sources and information, and so forth ...? • What could we establish as an implementation measure, i.e. when we talk again in July, how will we understand the degree of success? • What could be used as an intermediate milestone that we can control either in July or September? • So what could we put here as objectives for July, both sales and marketing? When we talk again in July, how will we understand the degree of success? • What do you think could go wrong? What do you think the risks might be? • What things could delay your initiatives considerably, and what things could completely ostracize the execution of what you intend to implement? • What are you going to do to minimize these risks of what could go wrong? • How did it evolve between our conversations? • So, having too many people involved in it, that could delay it? • And what you are saying is that you're later than you expected? • And then ... what were the signs that allowed you to begin to realize that things were starting to go wrong? Would you like to elaborate a bit on that? What happened? • But did you realize that this could happen or had you not thought about it? • Could you anticipate and predict this part of things? • Did you have to make some concessions to your initial plan to get approval, or not? • Is this delay likely to impact at all on the company itself or do you think it won't? • So a recoverable delay? • So was this partially achieved? • So, how do you see this project, more as partially accomplished or not accomplished? • We've mentioned some goals and some barriers that made its achievement difficult ... do you want to talk a bit more about how you plan to keep reducing these barriers; or is it one of those things you're going to have to learn to live with? • Can you conclude that your strategy was wrong? • And when will you get more of a picture of how things will go? Will there be more visibility when we talk again? • When do you think you can say: "my strategy failed"? So what you are saying is that there may be other versions of the plan until it's accepted? What do you attribute to being able to predict failure? And what is not predictable or able to be anticipated? And what impact do you think you will have on these priorities? • In retrospect, would you have done anything differently, or not?

[FRAMEWORK OF DURATION APPROACH] Let us imagine that there are two parts regarding the duration of strategic activity: one part we can call highlighting, which is where you can bring the order of the day, and there is another part that can be called framing, where your aim is keeping the organization focused, on what was decided as a strategic objective. Can you give me some examples of how you highlight and frame? • Starting with what I call the labelling, what activities and with whom are you going to identify and classify a topic as strategic? With whom and how do you label something as a strategic issue? • What did you recognize retrospectively as a strategic activity? From all the things you were busy dealing with, at what moments did you think "this is strategy"? • Although it is recognized that a certain topic is strategic, how do you determine when to put it on the agenda? • With whom do you carry out this priority-setting? Who ultimately determines what to put on your agenda? • Can you talk about urgency and feasibility, regarding the projects you have in mind? • Is your urgency down to having re-analysed your SWOT? • Can you tell me a little about the situations where you see yourself making the case for, selling, the need for attention to a certain strategic topic? • Who, what entities is it important to obtain sponsorship from? • Are there additional entities to get sponsorship from to ensure, in fact, that everyone is aware that this is something to move forward on? • And what arguments does your Minister give you? And how do you react to this? Do you accept it or continue to sell your point of view? • Do you believe that your interlocutor believes in this causality effect or most of the time does not? • So it's a phase where you end up having to make some concessions? • What are the most frequently appealed things that go against your initial arguments? That is, if we were to speak of counter-forces, what are these counter-forces based on to say that: "this is not a priority, I do not agree with it"? • That part about persuasion, which has a strategic element as well, how did you handle it? • You have the scheme, which can be materialized in a document, the politicking, which is around the execution of that scheme, and the consensus, which everyone has understood and around which everyone is absolutely committed. Can you tell me about these three parts, starting with what I call the reference scheme, or the reference system? • How do you manage the leadership that has to be there to pursue a particular vision, how does it start to become so exaggerated that it leads to the blindness of the leader? • Did you ever think that your persistence on the initial framework could suggest some strategic blindness? • How somehow do you balance what needs to be done between concentration and focus on what is planned while remaining open to new things? How do you achieve this balance? • As you are presenting things it seems that you are already more or less decided and it is just a matter of formalization, is this so, or is there still more negotiation in the middle? • What do you think can evolve in your thought in this more political component, of negotiation, what do you expect to happen? • Sometimes, on the political side, you have stakeholders with a high level of technical knowledge and specialization of the language used and

then you have public opinion, so they are two completely different worlds. What do you think can act as the rhetorical mechanisms to make you feel you were successful in the operation you undertook? • To what extent does this politicking, in the sense of seeking individual or group interest within the company, impact on the momentum, can it introduce or take a strategy off the agenda, delay things? Tell me a little about these impacts • Was there at any point during decision-making a lack of cohesion, did you feel at any time that there wasn't an agreement with a decision that was being made, and that it needed to change, be that with shareholders or the executive committee? • You said that the stakeholder's starting point was some way off the consensus. When you say that there was no consensus at board level, how did this manifestation of non-consensus occur? Who were the critical entities, what were the critical factors, and so forth, for consensus? • This part of the consensus, how do you see yourself managing it? • Are you saying this baptism of strategy ex post can function as an element of credibility in the sense that you had already achieved this, you had already thought about this? Is it a moment of the Manager's credibility? • Have these three interviews made you think of things that never crossed your mind, I don't know, from a strategic point of view? Have I brought you a capacity to reflect on what you are doing as a strategy?

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