

# **Doctor of Business Administration**

## **USING STRATEGY TOOLS:**

An exploration of the selection, application, and outcomes of strategy  
tools among Kuwaiti non-profit executives

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## ABSTRACT

Critics of the traditional strategy schools of thought have called to approach strategy research from a different perspective (March 2006), pushing to address strategy with a 'social eye' as Whittington (1996; 2003) suggested. Orienting from a strategy-as-practice (S-as-P) perspective and utilizing the tools-in-use framework (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan,2015) as an analytical lens, this study explored how Kuwaiti practitioners used strategy tools in non-profit organizations. The focus on strategy tools guided the design and direction of the study, where the researcher examined how Kuwaiti practitioners use non-market strategy tools, specifically the AI3 model (Bach & Allen, 2010). This study employed an interpretive approach to observe how practitioners use the tool in their practical strategy work within their organizations. The researcher conducted three focus groups to understand how practitioners perceived and used strategy tools. She completed an additional session to observe how the practitioners interacted with the analytical tool in real-time.

This study supplements previous work on strategy-as-practice (S-as-P) and strategy tools through the following theoretical contributions. Firstly, it added to the body of knowledge on 1) the identity and the role of the strategy practitioner, 2) the activities and processes of doing strategy, and 3) the tools and techniques used to perform the work in different contexts (Whittington, 2013; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). Secondly, it added to the Nonmarket Strategy body of knowledge by practically introducing and applying the

concept within a unique business environment such as Kuwait. Lastly, it delineated issues that determined the effectiveness of strategy tools and explored how practitioners utilized them. When developing tools, the practical way of using strategic instruments and the needs of its practitioners are not always considered (Stenfors et al., 2004).

These contributions to the body of knowledge also led to some practical implications. Firstly, it analysed how Kuwaiti executives perceived and conducted strategy work in general and how they perceived and conducted non-market strategy work within their respective organizations. Finally, the concept of how tool developers can create better fitting tools that consider the various ways and reasons for their use by executives in different contexts such as Kuwait since Western thought and languages dominate strategy tool design (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015; Cabantous & Gond, 2011; Feldman & March 1981; Langley, 1989).

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Research Background and Progression

Strategic management theory and practice have gained legitimacy over the last thirty years (Shrivastava, 1986). Throughout its evolution, a plethora of concepts, frameworks, themes, and paradigms came to be, and through this diversity emerged an unintended consequence where the definition, perception, and practice of strategy depended on which school of thought a researcher or a practitioner prescribed to (Elfring & Volberda, 2001). As the world becomes more complex and volatile, voices in the strategy realm continue to argue that concepts and tools that once were the core elements of strategy literature are currently insufficient and need reconsideration and re-evaluation. Researchers and practitioners believe they are using strategy concepts and tools uniformly and assume they are working with identical mental frames and models (Chaffee, 1985). However, earlier suggestions of non-conformance and variance have existed in the literature for a long time.

Furthermore, strategy work is multidimensional and situational, which varies across actors, organizations, and industries (Hambrick, 1983). These variances form the primary rationale behind this study's progression over the years. The study built on various frames of thought and research questions, and the focus shifted as the investigation progressed. The results of the initial critical literature review (document 2), qualitative analysis (document 3), and



quantitative analysis (document 4) gave rise to the issues the researcher attempted to address in this study.

## 1.2 Building on Previous Documents

This study began with a critical review of frames and framing practices of strategy in Kuwaiti non-profit organizations to understand how Kuwaiti practitioners generally perceived and framed strategic processes and actions (Al-Hasawi, 2015). During this study's early stages, the questions leaned towards how practitioners generally 'perceived' strategy and strategic issues within their respective contexts. A critical literature review was then conducted to establish the boundaries of the framing theory and whether its use will materialize the appropriate response to the research questions and be sustained throughout the study. The idea of frames and their analysis have been present across communications, managerial cognition, and strategic and organizational change (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). The ability of the framing concept to shift through multiple fields contributed to its popularity, which Entman (1993) referred to as a *fractured paradigm*. In addition, the literature highlighted variations in the way frames are defined, identified, and studied. Finally, the researcher undertook a qualitative analysis using structured interviews and content analysis techniques to explore how Kuwaiti executives perceived and communicated strategic issues within their organizations (Al-Hasawi, 2016). Executives were asked about their knowledge and perception of strategy and non-market strategy. The researcher's interest lies in understanding how non-profit organizations, whose primary focus is not economic, understand and conduct their strategy work. Doh et al. (2012)

defined non-market strategy as the social, political, legal, and cultural arrangements constraining or facilitating organizational activity. These arrangements may address the goal of making profits for any organization. However, they do not directly manage business operations as corporate strategy activities would.

By understanding the interplay between these factors and an organization's operations, decision-makers can appropriately respond to crucial influencers and actions within the social, political, cultural, and regulatory arenas (Lawton & Rijwani, 2015). Executives can also align their corporate strategies with their respective business environments' social and political factors. The qualitative interviews and content analysis results highlighted the gap between what the literature presents and what practitioners do to address non-market issues within their organizations.

The qualitative research focused on how practitioners defined the idea of non-market strategy. The researcher conducted interviews to determine how Kuwaiti practitioners frame strategy and non-market strategies. The emergent themes gave rise to the study questions. The first theme relates to the idea that external consultants and advisors primarily perform the work of strategy design and analysis under the guidance of senior executives of a company. Practitioners agree that senior management should conduct strategy work when they are responsible for setting corporate priorities. However, the execution of the strategy is determined and carried out by middle management and employees. Their role is usually limited only to implementation. They are not involved in practices related to strategic thought and design.

The second theme revolved around strategy processes. Strategy work is considered an extraneous event and is not generally included as a regular activity. It occurs every 3–5 years and is seldom reviewed annually. Strategic plans are assumed to be constant and stable and are rarely changed despite shifts in the external or internal environment of the company. This may result from incorporating any strategy changes that may require external consultancy firms' assistance, which means incurring additional costs. Changes may also sound counter-intuitive to companies if they want to harness the return on their investment.

The third theme has to do with the nature of strategy in general. To most Kuwaiti practitioners, 'strategic' is synonymous with 'importance' and 'power.' They apply the term to challenges, concepts, and situations to provide them with salience and significance. However, overusing this phrase clarified how the practicing community created a "cliché" effect. Negative responses and distaining expectations started around an organization's attempt to develop a strategy or engage in strategic initiatives. Practitioners believe that strategy processes are mainly theatrical manifestations to appease stakeholders and investors. These kinds of responses, particularly evoked by the internal and external partners of the organizations, were expressed as a lack of funding and engagement and bad publicity.

The fourth theme pertains to how practitioners deal with issues and matters generated by external forces, such as government behaviour, actions, public policy, or social norms. Managers demonstrated a lack of comprehension of what the word 'non-market strategy' truly entails and related it to corporate social responsibility. They showed an apparent void in practically addressing non-market components and challenges within their ecosystems.

The fifth and final theme discussed the absence of qualified strategy practitioners and the immense dependency on external consultants to carry out strategy work on their behalf. They discussed the lack of specialized strategy education and training and agreed that strategy knowledge is not appropriately transferred and retained. The interviewees also addressed the use and usefulness of strategy tools during strategy-making processes. They highlighted that their understanding of strategy tools comes from executive training or academic curriculum. The tools' selection and application may vary depending on who makes the decisions within the organization.

During training sessions, strategy tools are generally discussed but hardly used in practice is a view firmly held. In Kuwaiti private sector organizations, it seems to the author that strategy practice is all about planning and executing a strategy. Still, there is a genuine lack of awareness and dedication to the process.

However, to do so, executives must first analyse their market and non-market environments to identify the social, political, and regulatory factors that may impact their strategic directions. Unfortunately, Kuwaiti practitioners could not identify any concepts or tools to analyse their external non-market environment.

The results of the qualitative piece moved the direction of this research to explore non-market strategy practices in Kuwait through a social lens. An empirical study targeted 100 Kuwaiti executives through an online survey (Al-Hasawi, 2019). It was undertaken to understand how Kuwaiti executives materialize non-market strategy practices and address their organizations'

external challenges. This direction naturally lent itself to the S-as-P paradigm, which informed the design of the data collection instrument and, ultimately, the analysis of the data collected. The S-as-P research approach presents strategy work as a social activity that can be studied using various social research methods (Whittington, 2013). It addresses three core elements that aid in framing knowledge around strategy work: the practitioner (who is doing the work), the praxis (how the work is being done), and the practices (with what tools and techniques are the work being done) (Whittington, 2013; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). Therefore, this document will use the S-as-P paradigm as the theoretical framework. Orienting from a practice perspective provided a sense-making element to understand the interplay between strategy practitioners and the practices being utilized in the form of strategic tools.

The researcher quantitatively explored the identity<sup>1</sup> of strategy actors and their roles in non-market strategy work in Kuwait. Over 53.3% chose the board of directors' members as the actors responsible for strategy work in their organizations. Consultants and middle managers came next with 17.74%, respectively. Also, 51.6% of the participants disagreed with the statement that 'Kuwaiti practitioners are familiar with the concept of non-market strategy and understand its meaning.' There is a lack of familiarity and understanding of what it entails and how it can be operationalized practically in the work environment. A further theme emerged for targeted studies of non-market strategy knowledge and practices in different contexts. When asked if their organizations had a formal non-market strategy, 61.2% of respondents answered

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<sup>1</sup> Identity, in this context, refers to the title associated with the strategy practitioner (ex. CEO, consultant, middle manager, etc. ), and will not be the focus of this study.

'no.' However, 53% agreed that integrating corporate and non-market strategies will positively impact their competitiveness.

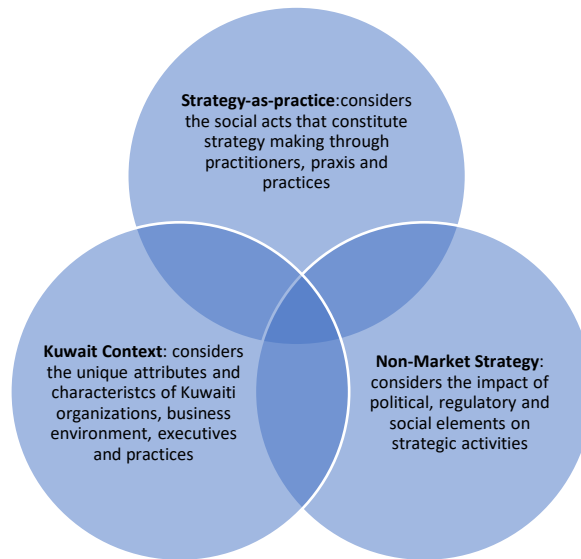
Corporate strategy work occurs in strategy workshops for Kuwaiti practitioners, as 40.3% of respondents answered. In Kuwait, the work of committees bestows legitimacy on the output and results of the work. However, the participants were unaware of the strategic design and analysis tools. They did not mention specific non-market tools, such as the AI3 framework or the I4 tool. The AI3 framework (Bach & Allen, 2010) was developed to address six critical questions related to an organization's non-market environment:

- 1- What is the issue?
- 2- Who are the actors?
- 3- What are their interests?
- 4- In which arena do the actors meet to deal with these issues?
- 5- Which information is available?
- 6- What assets do the actors have or need to prevail?

The results indicate that Kuwaiti practitioners are familiar with and use the most common strategy tools, such as SWOT and PESTEL (88% and 58%, respectively). However, when asked which tools they use to address their non-market environments, written responses indicated that PESTEL and SWOT were the tools of choice. While the findings suggest that there is still a gap in the understanding and practice of non-market strategy in awareness and practice, they also promote further examination of research issues that could draw on previous work undertaken and resolve these gaps in various contexts and environments.

The focus on strategy tools guides the design and direction of the rest of this document, where issues will be explored regarding how Kuwaiti practitioners are using non-market strategy tools, specifically the AI3 model (Bach & Allen, 2010). An interpretive approach will be undertaken to observe how practitioners use the tool in their practical strategy work within their organizations. This study will supplement previous work on S-as-P and strategy tools through the following theoretical contributions. Firstly, it will add to the body of knowledge on 1) the interaction between practitioners and practices in terms of tools 2) provides actual accounts of strategy tools are perceived and used by Kuwaiti practitioners. (Whittington, 2013; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). Secondly, it delineates issues determining the effectiveness of strategy tools. It explores how they are utilized among Kuwaiti practitioners since the practical way of using strategic instruments, and the practitioners' needs are not always considered (Stenfors et al., 2004). Third, it contributes to the theoretical understanding of non-market strategy and its effects on the strategy process within the Kuwaiti context.

These contributions to the body of knowledge also lead to practical implications: firstly, to analyse how Kuwaiti executives perceive and conduct strategy work; secondly, how they perceive and perform non-market strategy work within their respective organizations. Finally, how understanding the relationship between strategy as practice and nonmarket strategy within the Kuwaiti context can enhance how strategic analysis tools are used and potentially improve the strategic outcomes for their organizations. The figure below shows the interplay between the three key elements informing this study and enhancing its unique contribution to knowledge and practice:



Strategy as practice applies a social lens to understand the unique nuances of who is doing strategy work, how they are doing it, and with what tools. And since this study focuses on tool use, non-market strategy provides a novel model to assess practitioners' knowledge and practice of strategy tools, all within the specific context of Kuwait. The marriage of these three key concepts positions this study to deliver distinct contributions to knowledge and practice. It also guides the construction of the research questions that the author attempts to answer.

### 1.3 Study Research Questions

To structure the information and guide this study, the author will address the following research questions regarding strategy practices in Kuwait, driven by the results of previous documents and the current conceptual framework of the paper. The questions tie closely to the strategy-as-practice approach. So naturally, they lend themselves to non-market strategy to understand, using the AI3 analysis tool, how strategy practitioners perceive and conduct strategy



work within a business environment dominated by political, regulatory, and social volatility. This study's research questions are:

- 1- How do strategy practitioners in Kuwait perceive the use and usefulness of strategy tools?
- 2- How do they use these tools? And how useful are these tools in reality? Specifically in assessing their nonmarket environment in Kuwait.

The remainder of this document includes the following sections:

- A critical literature review of the current state of S-as-P as a research paradigm and the rationale on why S-as-P is a relevant lens for examining strategy work in different contexts, specifically Kuwait. The review will analyse strategy tools literature, focusing on their selection, application, and outcomes. Non-market strategy literature will be examined using a novel strategic analysis tool called the AI3 model. Introducing the analytical tools-in-use framework of (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015) will be used to structure the analysis of the findings.
- The research design section introduces the interpretive/constructivist research philosophy, the positions chosen for this study, and the justification for doing so. It also highlights the choice of the focus group and observation research methods, the rationale behind their use, and the ethical implications and limitations.

- The findings section introduces the interpretive and thematic summary of the focus groups and observations and addresses how they relate to the main research questions. It also includes additional emergent themes and data that ultimately impact the final analysis of this study.
- The document concludes with a synopsis of the contributions of this document to the S-as-P, strategy tools, and non-market strategy bodies of knowledge and the practical implications for researchers and practitioners. It also redirects attention to potential future areas that could expand and enhance the research agenda.

### 1.3.1 The Kuwait Context

Kuwait's history extends back to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when (Sunni) tribes from the Arabian Desert's central region came to the country. It flourished during Mubarak the Great (1896–1915), who solidified power by forging an unspoken alliance with merchants and averting Ottoman conquest with the support of the British. Kuwait was the first Gulf monarchy to gain independence from Britain on June 19, 1961, and it grew fast into a sophisticated state. The discovery of oil in the 1930s permanently transformed the city-political state's dynamics and significantly influenced an economy that had previously relied on goods commerce, pearling, and fishing (Stiftung, 2022).

Kuwait, although one of the world's wealthiest countries, is experiencing difficulties designing and implementing its national strategic plan for growth and transformation, referred to as Kuwait

Vision 2035. Kuwait established its first Vision 2035 in 2010 in response to rising employment challenges, labour market inefficiencies, growing budget deficits, private sector outcries, and global oil price instability. The previous Prime Minister, Nasser Al- Sabah, commissioned this plan, which Tony Blair Associates created. However, it drew considerable criticism for being costly and conducted by a foreign (external) consultant who did not fully grasp the Kuwaiti context. As a result, the plan failed to gain momentum in policymaking and was abandoned at the end of 2011 (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2017). Kuwait's planning efforts were trumped by a mix of unrealistic geopolitical and internal political and social challenges. Apparently, the government's strategizing approaches proved to be static and unproductive in identifying the underlying causes of such challenges. While the plan calls for an independent and diversified private sector and an empowered non-for-profit industry, significant progress in this regard has yet to be accomplished.

As a result of the government's lack of direction for the private sector, many Kuwaiti company owners have suspended or closed their operations (Economic Intelligence Unit, 2017). The setbacks in government planning translated into the inability of business owners and companies to develop realistic strategic plans to support their businesses' growth and sustainability. The Kuwaiti government chose to evaluate and amend Vision 2035 in 2017 after the announcement of 'Visions' by other GCC governments. The new plan, designed by the Supreme Council of Development and Planning, aims to reduce the government's participation in implementing Kuwait's development projects from 90% to 30–40% (Geronimo, 2017). Vision 2035 urges the private sector to lead diversification efforts toward a knowledge economy in

which economic growth is driven by technological innovation, research, and development, as well as the formation of internationally competitive high-value-added industries. However, Kuwait's unfavourable business climate reflects that rentier dynamics continue to permeate the political economy and promote the closed oligopoly, where traditional rent-seeking methods remain the only viable means of doing business (Trading Economics, 2019).

The most potent credential a private sector player may have in an oligopolistic political economy is membership in an elite merchant family that dominates the commercial landscape. Consequently, most new national SME start-ups and foreign enterprises are hesitant to invest in Kuwait since many renowned families control a significant percentage of the business. As a result, firms have been known to engage in corrupt tactics and under-the-table arrangements merely to conduct business (Merchant Elite, 2018).

This contextual introduction serves as a stage setter to understanding the author's choice of research focus. Although these challenges have existed for a long time, Kuwaiti strategy practitioners continue to minimize or exclude their effects from the strategic planning process within their businesses or organizations. Hence, the author desires to understand how executives practically navigate political, social, and regulatory elements when strategizing.

### 1.3.2 Author Background

Manal Al Hasawi is the founder and managing partner of Think Tank Strategy Consulting, a strategy consulting firm based in Kuwait that has specialized in advisory and learning of strategy, strategic foresight, and futures thinking and design since 2014. She is also the founding

partner of Exponential Events Group. In addition, she co-founded and managed United Legacy General Trading company since 2018, which specializes in importing and distributing organic health and wellness products. She is the Chairman of the Kuwait Society for Strategic Planning, a not-for-profit established in 2017. She has been advising government ministers on strategy development, implementation, and communication for change for 10+ years and served as a vital member of the national vision team under the leadership of the late Sheik Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the previous prime minister and first son of the Amir. She was also a member of the national strategy development team responsible for revising and articulating the national vision 2035. In addition, she is the local partner for international organizations such as The Futures School, Teach the Future, the Association of Strategic Planning, Trend-Watching AI, The association of professional and practical ethics, and Cascade strategy execution technology, to name a few. She was selected as one of the most inspirational persons in Kuwait by Those Who Inspire international organization and was also chosen as one of the 60 most influential female leaders by United Nations Women in 2018. In 2021, Manal Al Hasawi was featured in the Kuwait Country report promoted by BBC-macropolis as part of the top 10 strategy consulting industry leaders in Kuwait. Currently, she is the board of directors' strategy advisor at Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science, a private granting foundation headed by the Amir of Kuwait, Sheik Nawaf Al-Sabah, as well as the CEO's strategy advisor at Dhaman Assurance Company, the first public-private partnership project in the region to implement the Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) model in the healthcare sector. The author has led strategy development

and evaluation projects in government and private sectors and draws on this experience throughout this document.

## 2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

Strategy research focuses on how organizations design and implement strategies to enhance performance or obtain a favourable market position. The main themes are centred on strategy-making and the impact of strategic decisions on the organization. The traditional strategy perspectives promote the understanding that organizations and their evolution and growth can be rationally and systematically predicted (Nini, 2016; Farjoun, 2002; Hughes, 2006). Consequently, the focus of this traditional approach is the strategic planning process, emphasizing resource allocations and top-down communications of goals and targets (Nini, 2016).

Recently, critical calls have been made to approach strategy research from a different perspective (March, 2006). These calls push to address strategy with a 'social eye' as Whittington (1996; 2003) suggested. In his introduction of strategy as practice, Whittington (1996; 2013) urged researchers to consider the social acts that constitute strategy-making practices in organizations. He called for a shift in how research and practice inform each other and rely on each other to develop. This perspective on strategy research allows for an expanded research agenda on 'strategizing' as a social activity. Furthering his thoughts on strategy as practice, Whittington breaks down strategizing into three components: the practitioner, the actor doing the strategizing, the praxis (methods), and practices. This literature review identifies the work of

Richard Whittington and uses it as an anchor for the research approach of this document. The review critically and thematically assesses the development of the S-As-P research approach to set the stage to answer the research questions of this document.

The literature review is divided into three themes. The first theme summarises the recent thought on S-as-P as a research approach and focuses on how S-as-P, specifically the three Ps, have been approached by researchers. In particular, the idea that strategy theories and research may be understood and applied differently in the Kuwaiti context, therefore the practice turn has also taken a limited contextual perspective. The belief that significant and most relevant studies have been generated in a specific part of the world relates to the research questions: who is the strategy practitioner in Kuwait? How do they perform strategy work, and with what tools?

The second theme focuses on strategy tools as part of Whittington's (2013) 3Ps S-as-P. In this part of the literature review, a critical assessment of the studies of strategy tools' uses and usefulness is undertaken, thus addressing the question: Can we practically assess and identify how Kuwaiti practitioners use strategy tools in their strategy work? Will the results differ due to differences in national contexts, practitioner roles, backgrounds, tool types, and original design purposes?

The third theme provides an overview of non-market strategy and how political, regulatory, and social factors impact strategy work in Kuwait by using the AI3 model, which identifies and analyses the nonmarket environment of an organization. The covering of this



literature will support the author in answering the question: How do Kuwaiti practitioners use these tools to assess their nonmarket environment? And how useful are these tools in reality?

The chapter is concluded with an introduction of the analytical tools-in-use framework (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015), which is used to inform the design of the data collection instrument and the subsequent analysis of the results.

## 2.2 Strategy-as-Practice: a social lens for studying strategy-making

The practice phenomenon has evolved as a core social science concept to examine how social processes and organizations are aligned with frameworks, individual behaviour, and institutions (Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1984; Schatzki, 2002). There are many appeals to expand this concept to different fields of study, particularly strategy (Rouleau et al., 2010). Although SAP's boundaries with other strategy research traditions, particularly strategy process, are hazy or challenged (Kohtamaki et al., 2021; Burgelman et al., 2018), researchers may build a direct connection with practitioners by using a practice perspective. Hence, creating a constructive dialogue to explore the relevant and realistic challenges concerning strategic practitioners in organizations today. For example, non-market strategy literature is focused on theoretical concepts that need to be tested by practitioners who, as strategists, either deal directly with non-market strategy or who have to endure its impacts and consequences. Therefore, a practice perspective is crucial in this study to understand how practitioners in Kuwaiti organizations interpret and use non-market tools within their business activities and practices. For the past two decades, S-as-P has emerged as a unique approach to the study of strategizing and strategic work

(Whittington, 1996). It aims to bridge the gap between the theoretical understanding of strategy work and strategizing and the practical importance for practitioners and other organizational participants as a research stream (Rouleau et al., 2010).

Over the past two decades, strategy-as-practice (SAP) has become one of the most active subfields of modern strategy study. One may observe the creation of multiple streams of research within the SAP research community due to the field's rapid growth (Kohtamaki et al., 2021). The S-As-P field has developed rapidly, and interest has proliferated; however, Kuwait lacks genuine interest in this unique approach. For instance, S-as-P conferences and seminars are mainly held in Europe and North America (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). Also, there are a small number of studies on strategy formulation examining practices in the context of the Arab world (Elbanna, 2007).

S-as-P identifies strategy-making as something individuals do (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Hambrick, 2004). This interest in researching strategic practices stems from the fact that existing strategy theories neglect the human factor during strategy work (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). As a result, SAP research focuses more on a phenomenon—strategic work—than a whole body of theory, like practice theory. Strategy is a complicated phenomenon with many facets, just like any essential aspect in large companies (Kohtamaki et al., 2021; Vaara, 2010).

Some may consider strategy practices as a 'black box' containing the behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs of the individuals involved in the work (Mintzberg, 1983; Golsorkhi et al., 2015). Therefore, understanding the nuances of the social activities embedded within this work may require new

theories, concepts, and methodological approaches, which S-as-P is well-positioned to provide (Golsorkhi et al., 2015). S-as-P pursues a profound reversal of prevailing ideas of strategy. Even though the strategy has typically been seen as something a company has, for S-as-P researchers, strategy is something that people do and engage in as a social activity. Strategy is not just a document owned by companies and circulated and promoted at the culmination of long and complex processes. It is a type of work that involves interpersonal interactions among various stakeholders (Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008). This re-conception of strategy inevitably unlocks facets of strategy that have been slow to be tackled by the academic discipline.

Strategy is a situated, socially accomplished practice from an S-as-P perspective. At the same time, strategizing comprises those acts, interactions, and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated practices they rely on in carrying out that activity (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). It explores how practitioners engage during their strategy-making activities with their context's social and physical elements and how these experiences determine the mode of action within their organizations and specific contexts. This strategy perspective answers a question that researchers have been looking at for years: how does organizational strategizing work? (Khamaar, 2010). To provide more answers to these issues, Whittington (1996) established a structure in strategy to bridge the gap between practice and theory. He identifies three core

themes: praxis, practice, and practitioners. These core themes address the ongoing investigation of strategy activities within organizations.



**Figure 1**

*The 3P Framework Adopted from Whittington (2006)*

As illustrated in figure 1, S-as-P focuses mainly on strategic praxis, practices, and practitioners (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Praxis refers to strategy activities undertaken directly during strategy work, the process of exercises such as meetings, communications, and presentations through which strategy work gets completed. Practices include the different routines, narratives, tools, and technologies by which this strategy work is made possible. Finally, strategy practitioners are broadly described as directly involved in strategy-making, such as executives, middle managers, consultants, and those with indirect impacts on an organization's strategy. These include subject matter experts and academic institutions who can ultimately shape and legitimize these practices (Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008).

Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) suggested a strategy framework focused on the three research themes identified by Whittington as practice studies (2006). While these are distinct

components, according to Jarzabkowski et al. (2007), their interdependencies should be considered more significant. As previous strategy work in companies is composed of who is doing strategy work, how they do it, and what they use to complete these activities, strategizing as 'strategy doing' takes place at the crossroads of these three themes (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).



**Figure 2**

*Provides a Depiction of the Themes of Strategy as Practices and their Relationship in Research*

As illustrated in figure 2, the areas marked A, B, and C represents the intersections between the three themes of S-as-P: A is the relationship between practitioners and practices, B is the relationship between practices and praxis, and finally, C represents the relationship between practitioners and praxis (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). This framework is developed to

instigate new research in S-as-P and explore the more profound meaning and interconnections between its components.

### 2.3 Who are the strategy practitioners?

According to Vaara and Whittington (2012), practitioners can be characterized as those who participate in the strategy-making process and attempt to influence the outcomes of the same process indirectly. They may be supervisors, chief executives, advisors, or expert actors who try to direct the work of strategy and its results within a company. Practitioners are the individuals who do the strategy work in a company within the 3P system (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006). The existing literature on the practitioners' position and identity offers much-needed insight into who is doing the strategy work. Some research focused on senior executives and middle executives in companies and their positions in the process of strategy-making (Rouleau, 2005; Samra-Fredricks, 2005; Hoon, 2007; Laine & Vaara, 2007; Mantere, 2008; Angwin et al., 2009). Other research focused on the role of external consultants and their organizational and strategic relationships and behaviours (Nordquist, 2011; Whittington et al., 2011; Nordquist & Melin, 2008). Practitioners are individuals whose social relationships, attitudes, and talents make a difference in how they work and accomplish activities they put their hands on. Their cultural backgrounds, nationalities, and even their gender may significantly impact how they perform and engage in their organization (Rouleau, 2005; Samra-Fredricks, 2005). Although Whittington (1996; 2003) defined who the practitioners could be, there remains a gap in the research to understand how these differences in backgrounds and cultural

orientation impact how practitioners perform strategy work. The general assumption in the literature on the role of the practitioner is based on studies conducted in different contexts, with minimal emphasis on middle eastern ones. For example, Jarzabkowski et al., (2017) discussed the relationship between religion and business and argued that religion might provide researchers with insights into the behaviours of organizations and their actors. They highlighted that, to date, research streams have not devoted proper attention to the mechanisms by which practitioners draw on their religious affiliations as they perform their organizational activities. Since the context of this study is based in a geographical area that can be considered highly sacred, there is little that we know about how practitioners manifest their personalities in strategy work. Hence, the focus of the author on integrating the Kuwaiti context as a main source of data to rely on as this study progresses.

The conventional strategy approach gives top-level executives and senior managers within companies the role of practitioners (Nag et al., 2007). S-as-P expands this scope to include other players in an organization who influence the strategy function. Whittington (1996) outlined four basic tasks that characterize a strategy practitioner's role to understand better how these functions materialize within an organization. He described these positions as, i) the arbitrator who rules on such strategic problems between two competing groups or parties, (ii) the advocate who talks in favour of the strategy of the company and actively promotes it, and (iii) the analyser who investigates strategic issues in-depth and examines triggers, factors, and potential solutions and outcomes, and finally, (iv) the counsellor or advisor who gives guidance and re-examines strategic issues. Previous research focuses on certain types of practitioners, primarily middle

managers, and consultants (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Mantere, 2005; Knights & Morgan, 1991; Nordqvist & Melin, 2008; Rouleau, 2005). These works have addressed traditional strategic processes and did not account for differences in context or external environment. The ability to generalize the results from these studies may be unrealistic due to the cultural and societal differences. The methods and tools being evaluated in these studies are heavily used and practitioners may hold a bias towards them as they've become a pillar of strategy work (e.g., SWOT framework).

## 2.4 What is Praxis?

The second component relates to the strategic work activities carried out and their relation to the organizational, institutional, and social contexts. This may include all the research, workshops, consultation, and discussions necessary within an organization to plan, execute, and communicate a strategy; thus, 'all the different activities involved in the deliberate formulation and execution of the strategy' (Whittington, 2006). Activities are what stakeholders do and handle (Johnson et al., 2003). The term *praxis*, a Greek word, refers to the actual action that individuals perform in practice. Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) observed that praxis consists of the 'social, symbolic, and material instruments by which strategy work is carried out (p.70). Training can occur at both micro and macro levels and is the basis of what happens within society and what actors do (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Whittington described the practice as 'all the different operations involved in the intentional formulation and execution of strategy. In addition, the practice includes the interconnection between various organizations to which



individuals' function and contribute. This implies that practice will work at various levels (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Whittington (2006) suggested that practice encompasses a large area, including board meetings, leadership retreats, workshops, and even basic conversation. In addition, Whittington (2006) noted in his model for strategy as practice research that 'strategizing' or 'doing strategy' occurs in praxis episodes, highlighting the value of studying praxis as a subject for strategy research. Although previous research highlights the different types of praxis, few empirical studies examine this matter. For example, as popular as strategy workshops are in organizations, there still exists a gap in how some workshops achieve their desired purpose while others do not (Johnson et al., 2010). The local routines of organizations differ according to the type of organization, the nature of the business, and the national context and environment in it exist; thus, practitioners must understand these 'local routines' to effectively do strategy work (Whittington, 1996). This document is therefore motivated by the need for more research on how practitioners do strategy work locally within a politically charged environment.

## 2.5 What are Practices?

'Practices' was defined by Whittington (2006) as 'the common behavioural routines, traditions, norms, and procedures for thought, acting and using things.' The 'practice' concept is more concerned with the macro-level phenomena that function as guidelines for behaviours. This applies to similar behavioural routines, such as traditions and codes, and different processes for deciding, conducting, and using strategic instruments (Whittington, 2006). This entails formal

and informal interactions and events at the centre of the organization and on the periphery (Regnér, 2003). Reckwitz (2002) was cited by Jarzabkowski et al. (2007), who characterized the practice as a 'routinized type of behaviour consisting of several elements, interconnected with each other' (p. 9). They also argued that activities are related to 'doing' since they use various tools and often collaborate to complete an action. The ability to research the construction of strategic activities would be strengthened by understanding how practitioners use these tools in their strategy work (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).

## 2.6 Strategy tools: from design to experience

Strategy tools are the way strategic thought is turned into action during strategy work. Many are designed and used to create a shared understanding of the business environment and its various factors. Business schools ensure that their graduates are well versed in the latest, most practiced strategy and management tools. In many cases, these tools reflect and, in a way, shape the current state of strategic thought (Vuorinen et al., 2017). Research highlights that managers and executives utilize these tools to assist them in developing a rational decision about their work. They use these tools in a manner that they consider being rational (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). Tools such as Porter's five forces analysis (Porter, 1980), strategic maps (McGee & Thomas, 1986), or the BCG Growth Matrix (Henderson, 1979) are used to support practitioners in making sense of the world around them and ultimately in making what they believe to be the right, most rational decision. Consultants and managers have not traditionally promoted these tools to reach practical solutions for organizational problems and have received considerable attention in the literature thus far. They are portrayed as straightforward and uncomplicated, focusing on

organizational priorities, and providing a sound structure for analysis during strategy work (Stiles & Jarratt, 2010). The internet is filled today with links to sites promising to deliver the best 20 tools for strategy development, the ten most used tools for strategic thinking, the must-know strategy tools of all times. A search for strategy development tools yields about 1,250,000,000 results on Google. From major consulting firms promoting their all-inclusive strategy toolkits aggregated by their vast expertise ([Strategy Toolkit - Frameworks, Tools & Templates | By ex-McKinsey \(slidebooks.com\)](#)), to innovative companies whose entire business model revolves around the development and dissemination of strategy tools (e.g., <http://academy.strategytools.io>), there is a vigorous push by tools designers and practitioners towards normalizing and institutionalizing the use of strategy tools during strategy work. An example of such action can be seen with the development, promotion, and use of the Blue Ocean Strategy frameworks and tools developed by Renée Mauborgne and W. Chan Kim in 2004. Their frameworks became a movement, and practitioners and academics alike hail a new school of thought in strategy and. Books sales, guides, and certifications in Blue Ocean Strategy became the trend, and executives and entrepreneurs raced to reap the benefits promised by implementing these tools in their organizations.

Yet, with all the publicity and praise given to the role of strategy tools, some believe that a gap still exists between the theory of how strategy tools should work and how practitioners use them. March (2006) critiqued a practitioner's excessive trust in these tools, or 'technologies of rationalities' as potentially 'defending a utopia of the mind against the realism of the experience.' It is precisely this gap that constitutes the central argument of this dissertation. How practitioners

perceive and use the tools varies based on the context and may not be as the tool designers initially intended. Research of strategy tools tends to explore what practitioners are using as strategic devices. However, few focus on using these tools in various contexts (Gunn & Williams, 2007; Clark, 1997). Answering questions regarding why practitioners select specific tools over others and their use seem to be a complex subject area.

The intention of these tools is to be used during times of great uncertainty associated with strategizing and solving organizational problems. However, March (2006) claimed that it is precisely that the use of these tools can be problematic during these times of uncertainty. '[D]ecision-making disasters can stem from the oversimplification or misrepresentation encoded in tools' (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). The reliability of these tools can change as the situations shift, and the more complex and uncertain the environment is, the more ambiguous the impact of these tools can be (Hakala, H., & Vuorinen, T., 2020). March (2006) also highlighted how managers can lead their organizations into undesired strategic outcomes by the inapt use of tools by utilizing the wrong information or misinterpreting the results of the analysis, as current research on strategy tools still lacks the actual accounts of how practitioners use the tools and the interpersonal interactions and motivations behind that use. Researchers and practitioners alike require a better understanding of the relevance of strategy tools and their role within specific contexts (Jarzabkowski & Wilson, 2006; Johnson et al., 2003). Practitioners can utilize this knowledge to internalize and reflect on their strategy work processes and practices (Johnson et al., 2003). By exploring how and why practitioners use these tools, scholars and tool designers can better understand and address all aspects of the tool(s) which might facilitate or constrain

its use, thus tackling the call of Sandberg and Tsoukas (2011) for a better understanding of practice as opposed to scientific rationality. The contextual impact on a practitioner's use of strategy tools is of great importance to this research. This research attempts to respond to the call for studies focusing on different contexts, types of actors, and tools (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015).

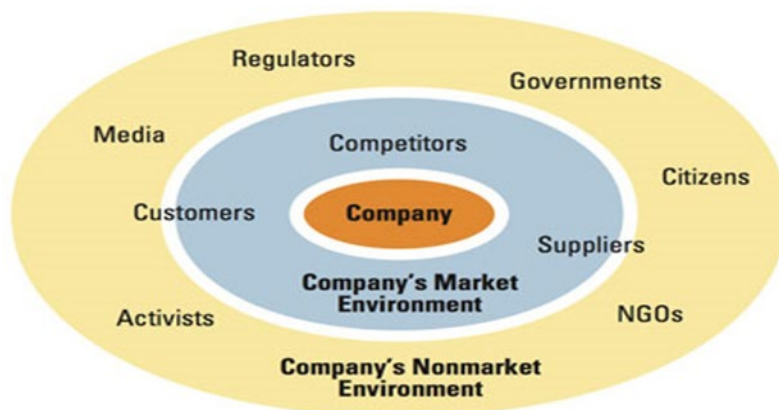
To deep dive into the practitioners' tool usage, some studies suggest identifying and categorizing strategy tools as a steppingstone for proper use analysis (Vuorinen et al., 2017). This categorization may prove helpful in understanding the general landscape of strategy tools from one end and identifying how strategic thought is being translated into frameworks and concepts on the other end. Strategy tools can be classified along two dimensions: strategy process tools and strategy content tools (Vuorinen et al., 2017). This study embarks on an alternative path, straying away from the most popular and commercialized strategy tools. The author identifies a tool which directly addresses the contextual concerns plaguing strategy work in Kuwait. Since the identification of a firm's nonmarket environment as a key player impacting Kuwaiti organizations' corporate strategies in previous documents, an overview of nonmarket strategy and its tools is intended to inject a contemporary and realistic point of view to strategy work.

## Non-market Strategy

The business environment in Kuwait can be characterized as politically charged with heavy government involvement in its operations. Companies that can identify and address these issues, can ultimately gain a competitive advantage. Devising corporate strategies can be useful, however, solely relying on them can deem unproductive and critical especially in times of uncertainty. These corporate strategies should be supplemented by an analysis of the nonmarket environment to understand its key components and driving forces.

Strategies can't work in isolation from their surroundings. Markets are used to implement corporate strategies, which are intrinsically different from nonmarket plans (Boddewyn, 2003). Competitors, customers, suppliers, and investors or shareholders are all examples of stakeholders in a market environment. These stakeholders are concerned about the organization's financial well-being; therefore, they will guarantee that each transaction has a monetary value that will improve the organization's long-term competitive position (Al Hasawi, 2019). The nonmarket environment of an organization, on the other hand, encompasses the interactions between the company and the players who make up this sort of environment. Government, policymakers, the public, and the media are examples of such actors. It may also include non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and activist groups that advocate for specific causes and topics (Baron, 1995). The actions and behaviours of these groups can have an impact on how a company creates and implements its strategic plan. The interactions taking place in this type of setting are not economic in nature, making it difficult for practitioners to comprehend the value of planning and implementing a nonmarket strategy within their firms. Different factors

influence and govern the interactions and connections among stakeholders in an organization's market and nonmarket contexts. These elements influence how the company understands, manages, and executes its strategic agenda, as well as how successfully it achieves its strategic objectives (Al Hasawi, 2019).



Practitioners analyse these elements using strategic tools such as SWOT and PESTEL (Hakala, H., & Vuorinen, T., 2020). Thus, this study aims to introduce a tool designed specifically to analyse the nonmarket environment and test the use and usefulness of the tool; which, to the author's best knowledge, has not been attempted within the context of Kuwait and by using s-as-p as a conceptual lens.

The literature review highlights how key research in S-as-p, strategy tools and nonmarket strategy are to some extent outdated, with more recent studies generally summarizing findings from previous studies (Hakala, H., & Vuorinen, T., 2020). Therefore, a key contribution of this study can be seen in providing recent and contextual data in three distinct areas that are normally researched in silos.

### 3. CONCEPTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

#### 3.1 A Framework for Strategy Tools-in-Use

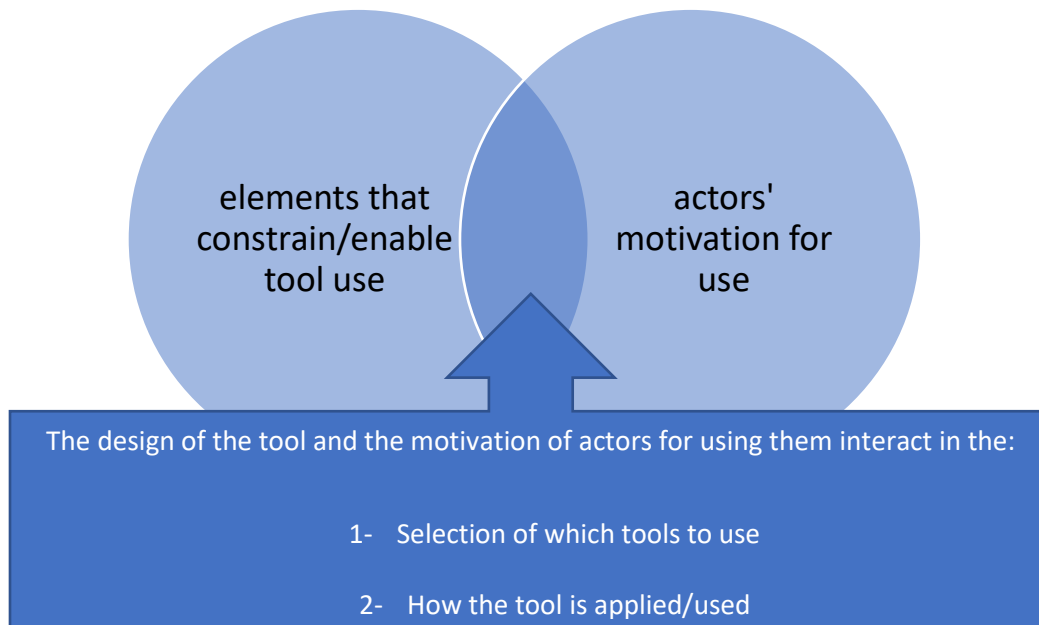
Jarzabkowski and Kaplan's (2015) tools-in-use framework aimed to investigate the practices of actors engaging with tools by adhering to an approach which treats tools as 'fluid objects' (p. 583), in that the use of these tools is manifested through their selection, use by specific actors in different contexts, and potential outcomes. The framework also provides insights on the affordance (possibilities and constraints) associated with the tools. It also highlights the agency of the actors.

The tools-in-use framework (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015) is chosen in this study for two main reasons: 1) to serve as the analytical framework for structuring knowledge in this document in terms of data collection and interpretation; and 2) to provide a practical foundation for practitioners and academics alike to test different tools, examine different actors, and understand the affordance of the tools and frameworks. Figure 3 presents Jarzabkowski and Kaplan's (2015) tools-in-use framework.



**Figure 3**

*A Framework for Strategy Tools-in-Use (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan 2015, p.539)*



The framework applies a practice perspective to explore the affordance of the tools and the agency of the individuals who use them and how the tools and actors interact during the selection, application, and outcomes.

### 3.2 Tools Affordance

Strategy tools contain elements that might enable or constrain their use (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008). These elements constitute the affordance of an instrument, or as Zammuto et al. (2007) stated, 'the materiality of object favour, shapes or invites, and at the same time constrain, a set of specific uses' (p. 752). Jarzabkowski and Kaplan (2015) share an example of how a chair

may be designed for sitting and be used as a coffee table or a barrier to keep children away from harm. However, the same chair cannot be used as a window shade or a cooking pan. The use is determined by the material design of the object and how the actors engage with and interpret these objects in innovative ways (Faraj & Azad, 2012; Jarzabkowski & Pinch, 2014). Similarly, there are affordances embedded in strategy tools, thus drawing away their neutrality and objectivity. They provide structure to knowledge that highlights what is and what is not essential or relevant to analyse (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015).

### 3.3 Agency of Actors

Actors engaging in strategy work seek to collect the necessary information about strategic issues to develop, what they believe, is a rational decision (Dean & Sahrman, 1993). The tools-in-use framework suggests that actors use these tools as part of a process to seek rationality in their work; thus, using the tools provides the actors with a sense of rationality (Pondy, 1983). Furthermore, the expert use of strategy tools can give the appearance of competence and qualification to actors, enhancing their corporate profile as practitioners who can perform within the best practices of strategy-making (Knights & Morgan, 1991).

### 3.4 Strategy Tools-in-Use Selection, Application, and Outcomes

Jarzabkowski and Kaplan (2015) argued that actors and tools interact in selecting, implementing, and outcomes. They highlighted that although tool designers may intend for them

to be used in a specific way, a gap can still exist in the knowledge of how actors choose or use the tools. There is much to suggest, according to Jarzabkowski and Kaplan (2015), that the choice of devices can be influenced by the competence of the actors in their use, the actor's power and position in their organization, and their limited rational satisfaction, where a wide range of tools would be considered suitable for a specific strategic issue in many instances. The framework is supplemented with a list of statements to support identifying themes and the structuring of results from research in how actors engage with strategy tools. These statements are presented in the below table extracted from Jarzabkowski and Kaplan (2015, p.540).

Table 1: Dynamics of Strategy Tools-in-Use (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015, p. 540).

Table 1. Dynamics of strategy tools-in-use

	Selection	Application	Outcomes
	<p><i>There is no one right tool for each situation. The affordances of the tools as well as the bounded rationality and constrained agency of the actors who want to use them shape which tools are selected.</i></p> <p><b>Arrow 1</b></p> <p>1.1. The selection of tools may be more dependent on organizationally standardized use than on the “fit” of the tool with the situation in the environment.</p> <p>1.2. The selection of tools may be influenced by the degree to which they are simple and offer clear visual representations, where simpler tools are easier to remember and use.</p> <p>1.3. The selection of quantitative tools is attractive to users because numbers can signal rationality, but this attractiveness is offset by potentially greater difficulty in using the tool.</p>	<p><i>Tools are applied improvisationally by organizational actors, both to interpret the strategic context and pursue preferences and interests.</i></p> <p><b>Arrow 3</b></p> <p>3.1. Tools provide a common language for strategic conversations between managers across hierarchical, functional, and geographic boundaries.</p> <p>3.2. Tools create a space for social interactions about strategy at which actors can negotiate their different interests</p> <p>3.3. The content and structure of the tool channel potential improvisations as the tool is used.</p>	<p><i>Outcomes of tool use extend beyond the achievement of a strategic decision in an individual project, to individual, group, organizational, and field level considerations.</i></p> <p><b>Arrow 5</b></p> <p>The “success” of the use of a tool at the organizational level can be measured by the degree to which:</p> <p>5.1. It is adopted and routinized in organizational practice.</p> <p>The “success” of the use of a tool at the field level can be measured by the degree to which:</p> <p>5.2. It diffuses and is widely adopted in management education.</p> <p>5.3. It diffuses and is widely adopted by managers in organizations.</p>
<b>Affordances of tools</b>	<p><i>The interpretive flexibility of a tool is what makes it useful. Its affordances constrain and enable action and outcomes.</i></p>		
<b>Agency of actors</b>	<p><i>Actors select and use tools to cope with uncertainty in the environment, though this process may not be “rational” in the classical sense.</i></p> <p><b>Arrow 2</b></p> <p>2.1. Actors may select tools based on satisficing. They pick the first tool that they know how to use (or are familiar with) that seems to fit the problem at hand.</p> <p>2.2. Actors have more or less freedom to select a tool, depending on their position in the hierarchy (formal power).</p> <p>2.3. Actors have more or less freedom to select a tool depending on their competence in its use (expertise power).</p>	<p><b>Arrow 4</b></p> <p>4.1. Actors use tools as interpretive devices that enable them to focus attention on and make sense of strategic issues for themselves and for others.</p> <p>4.2. Actors find it useful to marshal tools to legitimate particular positions or viewpoints</p> <p>4.3. As actors work with tools, they adapt them to fit the needs at hand.</p>	<p><b>Arrow 6</b></p> <p>The “success” of the use of the tool for actors can be measured by the degree to which:</p> <p>6.1. Its use provokes new explorations.</p> <p>6.2. It enables interim decisions that allow a project or organization to move forward.</p> <p>6.3. Their “client” is satisfied with the outcome of the project (internal client or consulting client).</p> <p>6.4. They demonstrate competence.</p> <p>6.5. Users achieve their personal objectives (legitimacy of position or ratification of a particular strategic choice).</p> <p>6.6. Differences across actors are surfaced and resolved.</p>

The framework presents an argument that the selection, application, and outcomes of strategy tools are interconnected, as depicted in Figure 3 by the double-headed arrows A, B, and C. Furthermore, the double-headed nature of the arrows signifies that there is an interdependency between the elements and that influence moves in both directions. Table 2 below introduces a set of statements that can guide future research on strategy tools.

**Table 2**

*Recursive Relationships Between Selection, Application, and Outcomes of Tools-in-Use (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015, p. 550)*

Arrow A: selection-application	Arrow B: application-outcomes	Arrow C: outcomes-selection
A1: The application of a tool is shaped by which tool is selected.	B1: As tools are applied, actors' goals and the outcomes that they are able to achieve can shift.	C1: When the application of particular tools has enabled actors to achieve at least some of their desired outcomes, such tools are likely to be selected for future strategy-making processes.
A2: Tool selection is shaped at least partially by anticipation of a particular application.	B2: As goals shift, the applications of the tools may be adapted.	C2: Tool selection is shaped at least partially by anticipation of or desire for a particular outcome.
A3: Tools may be known solutions looking for problems to which they can be applied.	B3: Actors may adapt the application of a tool based on anticipated or desired outcomes.	C3: The relationship between tools and outcomes could become routinized and self-reinforcing such that it could be a source of inertia in the face of change in organizational circumstances.

The main research questions in this study will be addressed by the collection and analysis of the data using the framework above: How do practitioners in Kuwait generally perceive and think about strategy tools and their usefulness? How do they select the tools they use in their strategy-making work? How do they use these tools? And what do they think about the outcomes generated by their selection and use?

The following chapter addresses the research design and how these questions will be answered with an interpretive methodology and methods.

## 4. CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Ontology

Ontology is the study of reality and the nature of existence (Crotty, 1998). It poses the central question of whether social entities should be viewed as objective entities whose truth stands separate from the actors within them? Or should it be considered to construct these social actors' different perceptions, values, experiences, and actions? (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It is the proposed assumptions made about the nature of reality (Richards, 2003). In this study, the researcher orients from a socially constructionist position. This position upholds the belief that reality is constructed through social interaction with others. It challenges the notion that entities have external realities separate and unimpacted by social actors associated with them (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

In researching how practitioners use strategy tools in their work, the researcher is interested in exploring how practitioners perceive and make sense of their reality, as opposed to merely describing it (Van De Ven, 2007). This research considers the idea that actors might hold their own realities as the 'truth' (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). Nevertheless, the researcher's aim is to highlight these so-called truths and bring to light their commonalities.

## 4.2 Epistemology & Qualitative Research Method

Epistemology is concerned with the question of what can be accepted as knowledge in the world (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It is the general set of assumptions regarding the ways of inquiring into the nature of knowledge (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). The researcher assumes an interpretive stance as its naturally a product of constructionist ontology. From a philosophical standpoint, the distinction between philosophies can be very clear when it comes to specifying the structure by which the proposed study is pursued and the methods by which the research is carried out (Bulmer, 1998; Punch, 1986). Therefore, instead of engaging in a philosophical discussion on the essence of social science research relating to the views of ontology, methodology, and epistemology, the researcher assumes that a specific choice of method of data collection and analysis should be chosen based on its perceived suitability to help address the research question. In general, it is taken from the social constructionist perspective that truth is contextual rather than absolute, independent of its interpretation (Gao, 2016). Therefore, a focus on which methods and stance can best support the researcher in answering the research questions is employed. Due to the nature of this study and the type of research questions posed, a qualitative research method is selected to emphasize how practitioners construct their reality and how they interpret the social world around them.

## 4.3 Justification for methodology selection

There are two major justifications for choosing a qualitative methodology to undertake this research. The first pertains to the type of research questions the researcher is interested in

answering. Questions regarding the 'how' are typically embedded in the doing of things. In particular, the way practitioners do strategy work and engage with strategy tools to make sense of their environments can be easily described from a positivist perspective. However, a contribution to knowledge and practice can only be achieved by exploring the interactions between the actors and specific tools in practical settings.

The methods used in a natural sciences approach do not lend themselves well to the study of strategy practices. Furthermore, there cannot exist an accurately portrayed social reality because of the various perceptions and frames of reference of reality for the different actors involved in strategy work (Bryman, 2008).

The second justification for using a qualitative research method is a logistical one. Although as a requirement of this DBA, students were required to conduct both qualitative and quantitative pieces. The quantitative document was based on an online survey which was distributed via email and text messages to targeted participants. The delays in the response rate and the lack of initiative to partake in the study caused major delays in the timeline of the study. Also, most of the participants requested to meet face-to-face with the researcher to answer the questions of the survey since they felt that the survey would not allow them to elaborate on the topics being explored in the survey. These issues, coupled with the fact that strategy issues of any organization are considered sensitive information, were deemed more appropriate as a necessity to conduct interviews. Hence the use of focus groups and observations to remain mindful of the time element of this study.



#### 4.4 Methodology Limitations

There are limitations to this research strategy that the researcher will consider during the data collection and analysis. The researcher's role in this instance can be regarded as a strength and a limitation simultaneously. The relationship the researcher has with the potential practitioners interviewed may influence the responses. The amount of data to be collected and analysed can also be time-consuming, including the researcher's required presence during the data collection process.

#### 4.5 Focus Groups and Participant Observation

According to Kitzinger (1994), focus groups are 'group discussions organized to explore a specific set of issues such as people's views and experiences' (p. 103). This method is employed in this research to support the extraction of deep experiences about how practitioners use strategy tools. It is also complemented by an observation element where participants will be observed as they practically work with the AI3 tool under examination. Focus groups are a useful method to understand the underlying mechanism and reasoning of the participant's views pertaining to the issues under examination; also, to capture the deeper interpretations and meanings of their interactions which cannot be obtained by a quantitative approach. It is imperative to note that although a specific framework was used for the analysis of the results, consideration was awarded to emergent themes, and space was provided for deeper, more

meaningful discussions and interactions between the participants (Grow & Christopher, 2008). The use of a focus group in this study was appropriate to understand the individuals, their social situations, and distinctive views and experiences on strategy and its tools. The cornerstone of focus groups was the use of dialogue between group members to generate knowledge that would generally be less accessible if not for the engagement occurring among group members (Morgan, 1988). The synergy of the focus group enabled members to draw on each other's knowledge and experiences which ultimately led to the generation and discussion of a significant array of thoughts, views, concerns, and themes (Berg, 1998).

There were advantages to choosing this research method: it permitted the researcher to harness socially constructed views and experiences of strategy tool use among the participants (Berg, 1998). It also supported participant's requests for a face-to-face encounter as opposed to online surveys. And finally, it permitted the researcher to examine the interactions between the participants in real-time as they attempted to use the AI3 tools, which afforded her some degree of control over how the conversation was carried out. As Gibbs (1997) stated, 'focus groups elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context' (p. 2). These social and emotional interactions were key to understanding the underlying issues and mechanisms behind using strategy tools at work among Kuwaiti practitioners. Another reason for using this method was that it proved to be useful when the participants seem to be a mix of various levels and expertise, as in the case of this study (Gibbs, 1997).

#### 4.6 Methods Limitations

However, the limitations of this method are worth noting and were considered in this study. The homogeneity of the group was a limitation in the sense that all participants belonged to the same organization, and the organizations were similar in their nature and business model. The author addressed this limitation by requesting that the participants of the focus groups resembled a realistic strategy team. The participants were a mix of all organizational levels. There were c-level executives, senior managers, middle managers and in two of the three groups, the advisors were also present.

The fear of groupthink or having a dominant voice trumping all others during the sessions was another limitation facing this research. This occurred when leaders were joined by their subordinates in the same group. The researcher ran the risk of participants not being fully transparent about how they feel and think and being reluctant to engage in the exercise as it may highlight their shortcomings with regards to strategy knowledge in front of their superiors. Although strategy tools can be used to solve organizational problems, some practitioners used the tools to prove their competence as strategists and as practitioners (Mantere & Vaara, 2008).

The language barrier, in this case, was another critical limitation which the researcher addressed in the transcription and translation of the results. Although English is the second most spoken language in Kuwait, some organizations, especially in the public or government sectors, worked and communicated in Arabic, the official language of the country. Some participants did not speak English as well as others do, which made the facilitation of the interviews and questions challenging as the researcher had to switch back and forth between two languages or had to

conduct the full session in Arabic then translated it back to English, as was the case with the first focus group conducted. This potentially impacted how participants understood the questions and how they answered them.

#### 4.7 Pilot Study Justification

With regards to this document and the choice of methodology and methods, the author did not conduct a pilot study prior to mobilizing the actual instruments during the focus group and observations. There are three justifications for the researcher's decision:

- 1- **Limited number of participating organizations in the study:** as the study was progressing, the author has reached out to multiple, non-profit organizations who fit the required profile to participate in the focus groups. The response rate was reduced since the study was being conducted in English and that it addressed strategy, which was a sensitive topic to many organizations. Ultimately, only three organizations responded with consent to participate. Each organization is comprised of small teams to begin with which would have impacted the number of participants in the pilot study. The limited number of participants would have also impacted the composition of the pilot study participants in the sense that they would not have resembled an actual strategy team, as requested by the researcher.
- 2- **Need to limit prior exposure to AI3 tool being tested:** as part of the focus group, the participants were asked to interact and use the AI3 tool for the first time and as a team. And since only consisting of organizations would have been able to take part in a pilot study, the observation element of the interaction and utilization of the tool would have

been compromised, as some participants would have an advantage over others in their teams. By limiting access to the tool prior to the focus group sessions, the researcher was able to observe in real time how they perceived, negotiated, and utilized the tool as team without any influences from herself or others who were aware of how the tool should be used.

- 3- **Time restraints imposed by participating organizations:** each organization had its challenges with agreeing on a time to participate in the focus study as a team. One organization had to reschedule multiple times. This inconsistency with committing to the sessions and the difficulty the researcher faced with the timing proved to be challenging when considering conducting a pilot study.

#### 4.8 Research Setting

This research was focused on Kuwaiti practitioners of three large non-profit organizations operating in Kuwait. The first organization, Organisation A, was an organization that served companies within the industrial sector in Kuwait. It was established in 1989 as a platform for those who were interested in investing in and advancing the industrial sector in Kuwait. Organisation A served as the voice of the industry and regarded the interests of its 380 members with the government and other external stakeholders. It was constantly facing issues pertaining to the impact of the government, social or regulatory factors and at the time of data collection, it was in the process of re-designing its strategic directions. The second organization, Organisation B, was established in 1981 as the result of an agreement among local chairmen in

the investment and banking industry to create a stronger network and develop channels for cooperation. The association consisted of 23 members. Organisation B has engaged a large consulting firm to design its strategic plan and implementation roadmap and was also undergoing a silent battle with regulators and politicians to institute the mortgage law in Kuwait for the first time. The third organization, Organisation C, was also a non-profit organization concerned with supporting entrepreneurship and innovation among Kuwaiti youth. The organization was participating in the development of a national innovation strategy for Kuwait at the time that this study was undertaken. The reason for choosing non-profit organizations was that they were naturally well-positioned to deal with the non-market elements of a strategy, thus matching the purpose for which the AI3 model was originally designed (Allen & Back, 2010). As non-profit organizations, they lobby for their members, build member capacity, and support their growth and development. Thus, to look internally at the way they strategize, the AI3 model seemed like a natural extension to these frames of thought. Another reason for choosing these specific organizations was the comfort these organizations have with the researcher. The trust embedded in the professional relationship built over the previous five years supported the researcher in obtaining approvals for conducting the focus groups with their management and staff. It also enabled the participants to engage with the questions more openly and understand that the researcher will continue to have their best interests at heart.

#### 4.9 Designing and conducting the focus groups.

The design of the focus group data collection instrument was informed by Whittington's (2003) 3Ps model which examined the practitioners and their practices. It was also informed by the tools-in-use framework as an analytical tool for structuring the questions and ultimately the results of the study. The aim of the focus groups was to assess the participants' current perceptions and knowledge about the use and usefulness of strategy tools in general and tools that are designed to analyse their external non-market environments. Figure-4 highlights the data collection process used in this research and how each step related to the research questions posed:

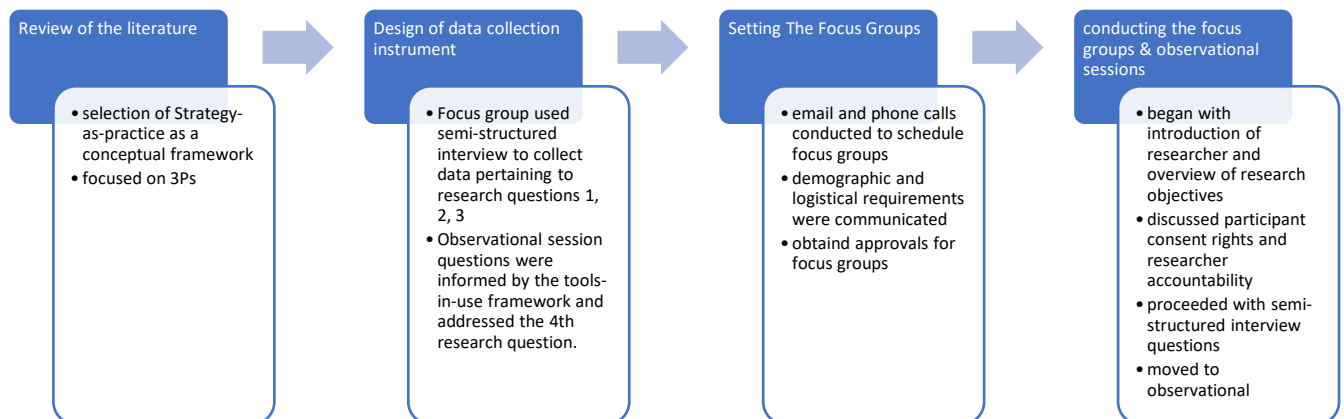


Table 4 shows the questions and their progression throughout the focus groups.

**Warm-up**

- First, I'd like everyone to introduce themselves. Can you tell us your name?

**Introductory question**

I am just going to give you a couple of minutes to think about your experience with using strategy tools during your professional career. Is anyone happy to share his or her experience?

**Guiding questions**

- What are the attitudes of you and other staff towards strategy tools in general? (What did people think/say/do?)
- What drove the positive/negative reaction? If negative, how could it be rectified?
- What do you think about the objectives of strategy tools?
- Do you think strategy tools improve the way you strategize or understand the strategy? If not, why not? (Similar questions for outcomes, efficiency, teamwork, and communication)

I will introduce you to the AI3 model, which is a strategy tool used to analyse the social, political, and regulatory elements impacting your work. Please take 2 minutes to look it over and think about its design, content, and format.

- What are your thoughts on the format? (Explore different options)
- What are your thoughts on the content? Is there anything that needs to come off? Is there anything you feel should be on and is not? Was the language easy to understand?
- When thinking about how the tool was introduced to you, are there ways that could have been introduced to make it easier/better for you?

I would like to ask you now to attempt to use the tool to analyse your own organization's external environment as a group. Please take 15 minutes to do so.

- What are the main issues around actually using the tool here?
- What are the barriers to using the tool? What are the enablers?
- Did you feel comfortable with using the tool? Do you think there is a need for training? (if yes, explore who would need training, how, and where?)
- How would you make it easier to use/implement?

**Concluding question**

- Of all the things we've discussed today, what would you say are the most important issues you would like to express about this tool?

**Conclusion**

- Thank you for participating. This has been a very successful discussion.
- Your opinions will be an asset to the study.
- We hope you have found the discussion interesting.
- If there is anything you are unhappy with or wish to complain about, please speak to me later.
- I would like to remind you that any comments featuring in this study will be anonymous.
- Before you leave, please hand in your completed personal details questionnaire.



The script began with a brief introduction of the researcher and her background and then moved to collect introductions of the participants. The researcher then proceeded to explain that the sessions will be recorded and that the participants had the right to withdraw within ten days of the session. The participants had to sign a written consent which detailed the ethical requirements of data collection. Then a general question was posed about how participants understood or interacted in the past with strategy tools. The guiding questions in this section of the interview attempted to obtain stories, experiences, or real situations to explore how participants were currently interacting or have interacted with strategy tools in the past. The questions also attempted to gather information about the participants' belief in the efficacy of strategy tools in their actual work practices. Once this general information was collected and addressed, the AI3 model for non-market strategy analysis (Bach & Allen, 2010) was introduced as a one-page image to all participants at the time of the focus group.

No participant had the opportunity to see and interact with this model prior to the focus groups. Based on the results of the previous qualitative and quantitative documents, Kuwaiti practitioners were unaware of the existence of the AI3 model as a tool for analysing the non-market environments of organizations. The tool and its components were briefly explained, and then the participants were asked to examine the tool at first glance and share their thoughts on its format, content, design, and language. Then they were asked to immediately test the use of this tool as a team. The role of the researcher at this point was to observe and note the way the group attempted to use the tool to solve a current strategic issue pertaining to their organization. Once the allocated time has passed, the script offered questions that were based on Jarzabkowski

and Kaplan’s (2015) tools-in-use framework. The researcher attempted to extract insights regarding the affordances of the tool or the enablers and constraints of using this tool, how practitioners selected the tools they work with, how they felt about using it, and what outcomes did they anticipate from using this specific tool. Table 3 below highlights the demographics and structure of the participants of the focus groups.

**Table 3**

*A Description of the Demographic Make-Up of the Focus Group Participants*

Characteristic	Organisation A	Organization B	Organization C
<b>Date, time, and location</b>	Sept. 14, 2020 9 AM–11 PM Organization’s HQ – Kuwait	Sept. 14, 2020 12 PM–3 PM Organization’s HQ – Kuwait	Oct. 10, 2020 11 AM–2 PM Organization’s HQ – Kuwait
<b>Type of organization</b>	Non-profit	Non-profit	Non-profit
<b>Number of participants</b>	Four participants (the total number of staff is nine)	Seven participants	Eight participants
<b>Roles of participants</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. C-level/director</li> <li>2. Staff</li> <li>3. Staff</li> <li>4. Middle manager</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. C-level/director</li> <li>2. Middle manager</li> <li>3. Middle manager</li> <li>4. Middle manager</li> <li>5. Advisor</li> <li>6. Staff</li> <li>7. Staff</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Staff</li> <li>2. Staff</li> <li>3. Staff</li> <li>4. Middle Manager</li> <li>5. C-Level/director</li> <li>6. Consultant</li> <li>7. Consultant</li> <li>8. Consultant</li> </ol>
<b>The average number of strategy projects the participants have taken part in or lead</b>	Five projects are undertaken by c-level participants only	Two projects as a group average	Three projects as a group average
<b>Average years of experience among the participants</b>	2–5 years on average	5–10 years on average	10+ years on average
<b>Language of session</b>	Arabic – at the request of the participants	English – some Arabic spoken socially	English – some Arabic spoken socially

At the conclusion of each focus group, the researcher provided a summary of the major points discussed in the focus group to obtain confirmation or clarification by the participants. The summarization technique helped participants feel heard and assured them that their thoughts and comments have been considered by the researcher (Lewis et al., 2007).

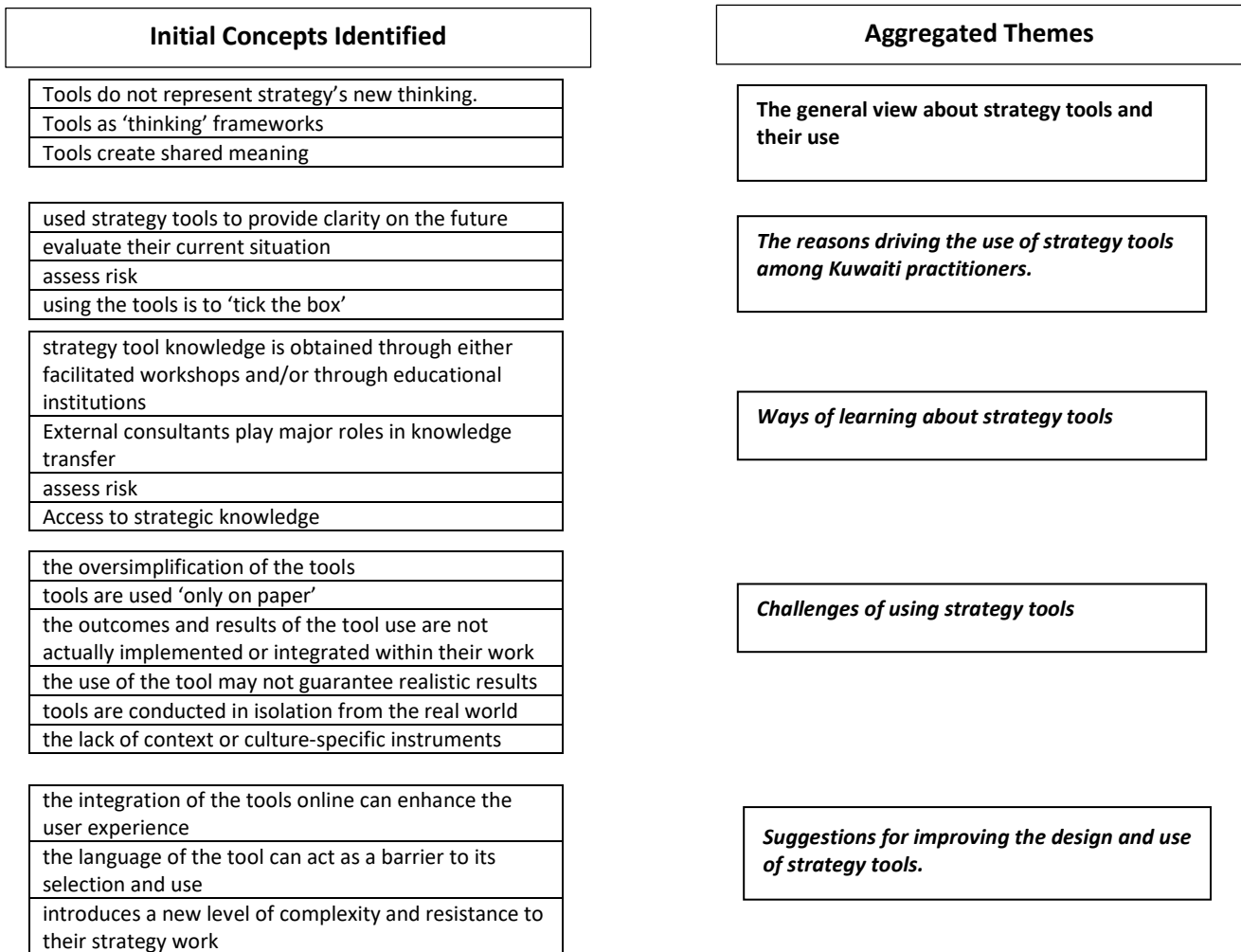
The group's structure attempted to resemble the true form of the organization's strategy team. The main goal of this request was to depict a real-life situation in which these individuals would interact with each other to resolve a strategic matter and thus use a strategy tool. Although research suggests that these interactions and relationships are important to understanding strategy practices, little is known about their true nature and role (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015).

The recruitment of the focus group participants was done by reaching out to c-level directors of the organizations using the personal and professional connections established with them by the researcher over the years. The position and professional reputation of the researcher as a strategy advisor for the government of the state of Kuwait have also eased the conversation and enhanced the chances of participation as the executives believed that she is fully qualified to discuss strategy issues from a practice perspective.

#### **4.10 Data Analysis**

The data analysis process began by reviewing the full recording of the sessions and the written notes to extract initial high-level concepts and ideas within the data. The identification of these initial concepts was guided by the questions posed in the semi-structured focus group script. This

process was completed manually by the researcher as the sample size of the focus group participants was not large. Next, the initial concepts were analysed for commonalities to begin aggregating them into higher level themes. The axial coding facilitated the identification of relationships between and among these concepts (Gioia & Corely, 2004). Finally, a list of emergent themes was assembled according to the relationships found within the analysis. The researcher employed a reiterative approach where she kept referring to the data sources and forming the relationships. The initial concepts and the emergent themes are illustrated in figure 5 below.



Once the themes were developed, the second level of analysis was conducted for the observation portion of the study. The researcher employed the tools-in-use framework to categorize the data collected by observing the participants interact and use the AI3 tool. As a result of the interplay between the accessibility of the tools and the freedom of the actors in their selection, application, and outputs, the tools-in-use concept presents the dynamics of strategy tools. Reference statements were created by Jarzabkowski and Kaplan (2015) to explain how these connections function. The researcher was able to map the data from the session to the pre-constructed statements in the framework to develop.

#### 4.11 Building Rigor

To ensure rigor and validity during the data gathering phase, first, the researcher ensured that all data collection instruments, field notes, video recordings, focus group transcripts, analysis working documents, participant information records were organized and handled systematically using Microsoft office applications. Second, the use of multi-layered analysis techniques where thematic analysis was used to identify general themes in the focus groups, and tools-in-use framework, with its pre-constructed approach was used to analyse the outputs of the observation sessions. It subjected the data for multiple phases of analysis and ensured that the process can be replicated easily.

The following chapter discusses the findings of the focus groups and attempts to interpret the results by using 1) thematic analysis to extract the general themes and patterns of the semi-structured interview in the first part of the focus group and 2) the tools-in-use framework to

capture insights on the selection, application, and outcomes of the AI3 tool being practically tested by participants in the second half of the focus group.

## 5. CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The analysis of the qualitative data gathered from three focus groups took on a layered approach. The first layer of analysis was done to extract the general themes and patterns regarding the participant's experiences and views with strategy tools in general (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was conducted by reviewing the video recordings of the sessions and the transcriptions and translations to identify common ideas, experiences, and views.

Field notes were taken by the researcher also captured emergent comments, ideas, and the actions of the participants and were reviewed as well to assess the value of their inclusion and its impact on the final findings of this research. The general thematic analysis uses an inductive approach where data is not being fitted into a specific model or conceptual framework but rather coded as emergent and frequently sighted ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The second layer of analysis employs the tools-in-use framework and focuses on the observational part of the focus group where participants will test the AI3 tool. The researcher applied the tools-in-use model to the data to extract participants' views and experience regarding the affordance of the tool (what they felt enabled or constrained its effective use) and their agency (role and motivation) in the selection, application, and outcome of the AI3 model. The tools-in-use framework provides statements that describe how affordance and agency interact in the selection, application, and outcomes phases, as well as statements that describe the recursive relationship or feedback loops between selection, application, and outcome (Jarzabkowski &

Kaplan,2015). Using this framework will also promote further understanding of its applicability in different contexts.

### 5.1 Research Findings: Thematic Analysis of Focus Groups

The qualitative data gathered introduced five general themes that are common among the three focus groups conducted. The general themes related to the questions of how, in general, do the participants perceive the use and usefulness of strategy tools in strategy-making work. The researcher prompted the participants to answer these questions by asking them to share specific stories or experiences when using the tools. These topics range from comments on the design of tools, the objectives of designing them, and some challenges they face when applying the tools in their current roles. Table 4 lists the general themes extracted from the transcriptions and translations of the focus group responses.

**Table 4**

<i>No.</i>	<i>Theme Description</i>
1	The general view about strategy tools and their use
2	The reasons for their use of strategy tools
3	Ways of learning strategy tools
4	Challenges of using a strategy tool
5	Suggestions for improving the design and use of strategy tools

*FHA-List of General Themes Extracted from Three Focus Groups*



## 5.2 General Themes Identified from the data.

### **Theme 1: General views about strategy tools and their use**

Each focus group began with an introduction of the objectives of the research and a verbal presentation of what the researcher is attempting to explore. The participants were asked to draw upon their own experiences, thoughts, and views on what they think of strategy tools in general. To assist the participants, the researcher gave examples of popular strategy tools to instigate the conversation as there were hesitations on who should start first. This hesitation could be attributed to the presence of their directors/c-level executives, and as a sign of respect in Arab cultures, the start of any conversation is given to either the oldest or the ones with seniority. This took place in the first two focus groups with Organisations' A and B. However, in one focus group, the chairman 'gently requested' for others to begin answering the questions first, so they did.

#### **Sub-theme 1.1: Tools do not represent strategy's 'new thinking.'**

The respondents believe that the current strategy tools available are generally outdated and do not reflect the realities of their practice. Some went as far as calling the tools 'obsolete',

especially post the COVID 19 pandemic, where the world as a whole and work practices specifically have shifted drastically. One respondent from Organisation A stated:

[NR]: *I think the tools that are applied to planning strategy or strategic thinking maybe [are] a little old. We follow things that go back to our parents and ancestors (metaphorically) and what we learned in the past. I feel now, in 2020, we need something different, new things, especially after the pandemic, life will change, and everything will become different. We need new strategic thinking and new tools.*

Respondents from Organisation B also stated:

[HA]: *For so many years, tools have been developed and changed, actually. And what we used probably 20 years ago is probably obsolete nowadays.*

[SE]: *Just to emphasize on [Dr. HA's] point that such tools are being evolved through our time. Organizations and enterprises right now are not the same as 3 – 5 years ago. There are more advanced ways of thinking, and there are more helpful applications, whether it's hardware, software, new approaches.*

The idea that strategy tools represent 'old thinking' was frequently mentioned, and it poses the question: What could be considered strategy's 'new thinking' and how is that determined and by who? The tools are not designed to support the new way of thinking about strategy work; thus, there still remains a need for strategy tool designers to design tools that are more relevant to the needs of executives and their organizations (Stenfors et al., 2004). When the researcher asked if the participants can give her an explanation of what they believe is the 'new thinking' in strategy, they continuously referred to how the only tool that resembles

strategy work in Kuwait is currently SWOT analysis. As the chairman of Organisation C put it [FT]: ‘*SWOT is the icon of strategy here in Kuwait.*’ Recent studies support this notion that the strategy tools’ environment is remarkably conventional and that recent strategic thinking trends have not yet been translated into functional tools that can support practitioners in their strategy-making work (Vuorinen et al., 2017). The word ‘routine’ came up often in the conversation regarding how the participants view the use of strategy tools in their work. They believe that doing something for a long time, and in the same way, impacts how tools are used. They addressed the idea that some of these tools and the way they are used to analyse their strategic issues are embedded as normal working routines. An example of this is presented in the statement of two participants from Organisation A:

- [NR]: *It relies on the old schools, on an old, sometimes bureaucratic, routine. This routine kills any execution or activation of any plan we may have agreed upon.*
- [DA]: *It lacks the modern method of strategic planning. It is the routine that governs most of these actions.*  
(emphasis added)

### **Sub-theme 1.2: Tools as ‘thinking’ frameworks**

In the continued discussion of their views on strategy tools and their use, participants alluded to the fact that strategy tools can act as a form of a ‘thinking-frame,’ in that tools can have an influence on how they structure their thinking. They stated that tools have an impact on the type of information deemed ‘strategic,’ how the information is extracted and how it is analysed. Studies on the popularity of tools (e.g., Clark, 1997; Frost, 2003; Gunn & Williams, 2007;

Hodgkinson et al., 2006) and their usefulness (Wright et al., 2013) have awarded them attributes that influence the thoughts of top and middle managers, as well as their interactions (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). In addition, business schools instruct their students to use these instruments to the best of their abilities, which in turn broadens the future effect of these tools, especially with regards to how executives work with them (Wright et al., 2013; Vuorinen et al., 2017). However, Kuwaiti practitioners attributed a negative connotation to this influence throughout the conversations. They regard this influence as being restrictive to the creative flow, which is sometimes needed in their strategy work:

Organisation A [HB]: *They [the tools] can sometimes isolate you from the real world because they are applied in a vacuum.*

The guided thinking, which can result from the use of strategy tools, according to the participants, can hinder their ability to communicate with each other as well as with external stakeholders of their organizations. It may not represent the breadth of thoughts, perspectives, and knowledge of everyone involved, and it may not permit some practitioners to express their ideas which can be contrary to what the tools provide or offer.

One participant in Organisation A supported this by saying:

*If the category is there, I have to fill it (showing that the design of the tools and information provided in it have the potential to dictate the way they use it and interact with it).*

### **Sub-theme 1.3: Tools create shared meaning**

The literature on strategy tools highlights that one of the key benefits of using them is to create a shared meaning among practitioners in an organization. These tools can help practitioners solve organizational problems, generate knowledge about their situation and environments, and build platforms for a cross-functional dialogue pertaining to the strategy work being constructed (Chelsey & Wenger, 1999; Wright et al., 2013). They can also provide the foundations for initiating strategic level conversations and, sometimes, debates about issues pertaining to their future directions and vision (Vuorinen et al., 2017). Participants in this study confirmed that they view strategy tools to developing purposeful conversations about their strategy work, as highlighted by the following statements:

Organisation B [SE]: *tools are [an] important part of our strategy work here.*

Organisation B [KH]: *it allows us to have a common conversation about our work.*

Organisation C [AM]: *it helps us create stories to share with others.*

### **Theme 2: The reasons driving the use of strategy tools among Kuwaiti practitioners**

Kuwaiti practitioners offered various reasons that drive them to utilize strategy tools during their work. Coupled with the purpose of creating a shared meaning across their teams and organizations, participants provided other reasons which generally initiate and guide the

selection and use of these tools. For example, participants in Organisation A used strategy tools to provide clarity on the future, to evaluate their current situation, to develop options for their way forward, and to finally assess risk:

Organisation A:

[NR]: *In order to know my project (referring to strategic initiatives the participant might be responsible for implementing), where is it going, and what is it going to face, how to prevent any possible risks from occurring? Is it [the project] applicable? Is it worthy to implement my project or not? I mean, if there are many disadvantages or risks, for example, how do I overcome these risks, and how do I solve these problems so that my project runs and survives?*

[HB]: *Exactly!*

[DA]: *It gives us a vision about the future and a look ahead.*

[NR]: *Right, it gives us a future vision.*

[DA]: *By giving me an overview, in the long run, I can see it, and if I feel that in the long run things are not going to work, then I will stop from the beginning, by this I cut short the road and save a lot of effort, you know!*

Other participants attributed their use of strategy tools to the support of smaller strategic initiatives throughout their organization:

Organisation B [HA]: *we just use it [the tools] for internal phases of whatever strategy we are trying to do, like changing, for example, our PR for just looking at online or [just] looking at our media communication implementation.*

Organisation C [MA]: *we use the tools to structure our time, resources, and needs.*

However, an interesting perspective was also given by other participants from Organisation C, where they believed that the only true purpose of them using the tools is to 'tick the box, or to show that they have done it, and not necessarily to utilize its outputs in their strategy work:

Organisation C [FT]: *we use the tools just for the sake of doing it. For us, it's just about going through the motions and ticking the right boxes.*

The focus for Organisation C was on the process of using the tool and not on the outcomes and implementation of its resulting information. This comment reinforced the idea presented earlier that strategy tool use can be part of a routinized work process within the organization and that the selection and application of these tools are not based on a rational choice on the part of the practitioner.

### **Theme 3: Ways of learning strategy tools**

The researcher provoked the participants to think about how they normally acquire their knowledge of strategy tools both on a personal and an organizational level. The literature highlights that strategy tool knowledge is obtained through either facilitated workshops and/or

through educational institutions (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Whittington, 2003). Kuwaiti practitioners named these two as the main methods for obtaining their knowledge about strategy tools but also added that the role of the consultants they hire to conduct strategy work within their organizations plays a major role in developing knowledge about strategy and its tools. Organization B, at the time of the study, had engaged a multi-national strategy firm to design its strategy. Its participants stated that they learned about certain tools by engaging in discussions with the consultants on-site. They regarded consultants as authorities or experts and held their interpretations of these tools as the 'correct' way. Although studies in the past have attempted to understand the different roles of practitioners in strategy work, a deep dive into the nature of the influence of consultants and how they transfer knowledge to the top and middle managers during strategy work remains scarce (Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2013).

In Organisation A, one of the participants introduced the notion of how the new generation of the workforce is taking control of how they learn and how they are utilizing technology and the internet to access not only strategy-related knowledge but the knowledge that can support their organization and personal development. A debate regarding the efficacy of knowledge obtaining methods occurred between Organisation A's participants, and the conversation turned away from the researcher as they began addressing each other. The researcher believes that because of recruiting a mixed team of top management, middle management, and staff, the negotiations can fade as the GM tries to have the last word, which was the case with Organisation A. This may explain the agreement of other participants with the



statement of the GM as it was clear she was not pleased with being contradicted. An excerpt of this conversation is provided below:

[Researcher]: *So, what's the best way you feel you have learned about strategy tools?*

[HB/GM]: *Training and workshops!*

[NR]: *I watch YouTube but don't watch a specific channel.*

[HB/GM]: *But I don't think YouTube is good! I think that a training plan should be [designed] in an attractive and nice way.*

[DA]: *For me, I prefer workshops and training because I don't even go to YouTube and search for these things.*

[HB/GM]: *Right!*

[DA]: *Even when I have the time! (laughter)*

[NR]: *I feel it depends on what type of learner you are; I love to see; I am a visual learner. When you do this in front of me and tell me how you do it, I get it.*

[HB]: *How would you do this? Some people prefer the interaction, that means the training has to be this way.*

#### **Theme 4: Challenges of using strategy tools**

The most common representation of strategy tools is that they are uncomplicated, focusing on key issues, and offering a way to structure thoughts about strategy processes and

strategic decision-making (Gunn & Williams, 2007; Wright, 1998). However, the oversimplification of the tools, the lack of what practitioners might foresee as proper definitions, and the embedded choice of factors presented for analysis can be considered core challenges for both tool designers and tool users alike (Jarratt & Stiles, 2010). When the participants were asked to discuss the challenges related to their practical application of strategy tools, they reiterated the notion that strategy tools are only used to conform to a long-standing strategy process within their respective organisations. Some participants explained how tools are used ‘only on paper’, and that the outcomes and results of the tool use are not actually implemented or integrated within their work. A participant in Organisation A stated:

[HB]: *tools are only done on paper, and they are not actually applied.*

Another participant in Organisation B commented that:

[HA]: *we don't focus on the results when we apply the tools. We only focus on the process. Did we do it or not.*

This focus on process as opposed to the results is found to be a recurring theme across the three focus groups, and it also supports findings from the previous qualitative and quantitative pieces of this study where strategic plans were developed to adhere to organisational policies and procedures (Alhasawi, 2015; 2019). The respondents also identified that the use of the tool may not guarantee realistic results, as these tools are conducted in isolation from the real world. Some went as far as to describe the outcome as the ‘desired’ outcome, which redirects attention to the agency of the actors using the tools and their inherent motivations for doing so (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). As the respondents elaborated further

on the matter, the issues of realistic outcomes and interconnectivity with other organisations when conducting strategic analysis manifested again. In Organisation A, for example, they chose to talk about their application of SWOT analysis and how the results of such analysis are not factored into their actual daily work and their relationships with other stakeholders:

Organisation A:

[HB]: *The SWOT does exist and applied in my organisation, but it's not activated when connecting with other institutions because the nature of our work within the union is linked to many institutions. Even the institutions of the private sector which should operate under a more organised and developed mechanism, lacks the modern method of strategic planning. It is the routine that governs most of these actions, right?*

[NR]: *Right, in addition to that we all know how SWOT works, but not how to implement it. I mean, I know how to define the strengths, weaknesses, advantages, and disadvantages of the project, but how to apply them, we don't know. I learned about SWOT after university from the courses I attended and from my personal efforts at the university. What did we do with SWOT? OK, I know how to do SWOT Analysis, but how should I apply it to my project? How should I apply the results to my work? I know the tools, I know the best of them, and I know how to fill in each category, but there is no application. Even companies and institutions use SWOT a lot, but do they apply it? No, they just fill [in] so many papers and put them in files!*

[HD]: *Not implemented.*

[DA]: *Like what she said, we apply it in our organisation, but our work is related to the outside. I will not be able to apply it outside. I mean, whether I do it or not, it will not matter because I can't control the outside environment.*

In Organisations B and C, the notion of power and influence was introduced when discussing this element of the study. Organisation B's participants validated the argument that strategy tools and the analytical output they produce are not practically utilised in their strategy work. They emphasised the idea that throughout their collective experiences, strategy work has been about the process and not the output. It was more important for them and their organisations to 'own' documents called 'the strategic plan'. However, the application of the directives present in the plan were almost never carried out. They believe that one of the core challenges they face with strategy tool use is the fact that they do not choose which tools to work with or apply. These tools are chosen for them by consultants who will only share the results of the analysis and not the analytical process which lead to the provided outcome:

Organisation B:

[Researcher]: *Great, so let me go back to something that you said doctor. You said that we don't know which tool to use sometimes, so can we talk about selecting the tools? How do you normally select the tools that you are going to use or the tools that are being incorporated into your strategy?*

[HA]: *Usually what we do is through hiring a consultant.*

[Researcher]: *OK.*

[HA]: *And like I said previously, when we deal with a consultant, unfortunately, they don't go into that detailed explanation of what are the components of the tool, how it's going to be executed but we see the results with it. So, for example, if they say we are going to be using SWOT, we are not told that they are doing weaknesses with strengths and looking at the opposite gap between them.*

[HA]: *And then developing our strengths based on the environment that we are in. We don't see that detailed work, but we see the outcome of it.*

[Researcher]: *So, am I right in saying that you feel that tools are imposed upon you by the consultants?*

[HA] *Yes, they were imposed on us because the person who was actually doing the analysis on our behalf is doing it separately. You know, each consulting firm have their own methodology, you know that! (laughter) You are a consultant! (laughter) So based on who you choose, you get different results!*

[Researcher]: *Yes! (laughter) And you are saying that they are bringing you the outcomes or the results of the application only!*

[HA]: *Yes, exactly!*

Organisation C attributed power and influence to a different practitioner role. They explained that it is top management who dictates which tool to use and how to use it. They noted that senior executives throughout their work experiences have directed and, in some cases, redirected the process of strategic planning within their organisations to fit their objectives. To these respondents, it is about the hierarchy, or as one participant said:

[FT]: *strategy is power! And your knowledge of strategy tools gives you that power. And*

he went on to describe that:

*the people on top are the ones who give you orders. The ones with higher authority than you can either support or fight the way you work.*

Although power and influence are not what the researcher is seeking to address in this study, she cannot ignore the importance of these relationship dynamics in the practice of strategy within Kuwaiti organisations. Especially since these organisations function in a highly contextual environment (e.g. religious and male-dominated) that considers age and rank to be the natural measures of knowledge, expertise, and ultimately, power. S-As-P scholars have encouraged new research to examine the chaotic realities of strategy to increase the significance of the research to practitioners (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008; Whittington, 2006).

Some studies claim that S-as-P and power research can benefit from a deeper examination of their intersection, since both streams address the issue of power as something a manager possesses (McCabe, 2009).

Other challenges facing Kuwaiti practitioners when using strategy tools can be found in the lack of context or culture-specific instruments. Respondents stated that the design of the tools originates mostly in contexts influenced by Western thoughts and practices. Therefore, the tools do not consider the nuances of the Kuwaiti corporate culture. Most of the tools used may need to be translated into Arabic, the official language in Kuwait, so they believe that there is an inherent risk of losing the true essence and meaning in the translation of the tool. Studies show that practitioners interact differently with tools. They may reconstruct a tool to fit their needs,

or they may develop a new tool completely to do just that (Knott, 2008). In this study, Kuwaiti practitioners stated that they do not reconstruct the tools; they use them in the hope of capturing the true essence and purpose of its design. In Organisation A, for example, the GM believed that using the tools 'the right way' can guarantee the desired results. Thus, disregarding any comments made by others on how tools should be fitted to their specific corporate and national cultures. On the contrary, Organisation B's participants agreed that they can and should adjust the tools to fit their specific needs. One participant stated:

*[HD]: I can combine, adjust, or choose another tool all together if this does not match my need, right?*

She posed this question while looking for confirmation from her GM, which he did.

#### **Theme 5: Suggestions for improving the design and use of strategy tools**

This theme pertains to the question posed by the researcher on how the design of the tools can be enhanced and how they believe this will impact the potential use of these tools. Organisation A's participants explained that the integration of the tools online can enhance the user experience. They also believe that integrating some strategy tools in general that share the same purpose and possible outcome, can bring clarity to the practitioner. Vuorinen et al. (2017) have mapped the landscape of strategy tools for the purpose of categorising them. They found 88 tools which have been heavily commercialised by consultants and academics alike. This is a large number if one is to consider the complexity of some of these tools and the complexity of the environment in which the practitioner must operate. The idea that Kuwaiti practitioners must

choose among, for example, 88 different tools, introduces a new level of complexity and resistance to their strategy work. Respondents from Organisation B reported that the language of the tool can act as a barrier to its selection and use. The fact that all strategy tools are developed by Western thought leaders, academics, and practitioners imposes the need to translate these tools for Kuwaiti individuals who do not speak English.

The participants spent the first part of the focus group's allocated time in answering the general questions about their experiences and perceptions of strategy tools use and their usefulness. The second part of the focus group was dedicated to observing the participants come together as a team to use the AI3 Non-market Strategy tool introduced earlier in this document.

### 5.3 Research Findings: Use of the AI3 Non-market Strategy Tool

Once the participants were given the chance to conclude their thoughts on their experiences with using strategy tools in their work; the researcher introduced the AI3 tool by showing a one-page image of the tool. She explained the purpose of the tool, as described by its designers (Bach & Allan, 2010) and defined the components of the tool. The tool was translated into Arabic for Organisation A which was challenging for the researcher as she had to use the words which closely resembled the original content considering the variety of vocabulary and their descriptive nature in the Arabic language.

Observation is used in qualitative research as a data collection method. Researchers using observation can collect data on social phenomenon which may not be captured by traditionally



positivist approaches such as surveys. Data regarding people and their behaviours, processes and social interactions and contextual matters can be collected by observing the subjects of the study in their natural context or setting. Marshall and Rossman (1989) defined it as 'the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for the study' (p. 79). This method supports the researcher in understanding the situations being studied by providing a snapshot or a 'written picture' for further analysis (Kawulich, 2005). Observations are useful to researchers in that it enables them to identify the non-verbal interactions of participants, their means of communicating with each other, and most importantly for this research, how they perform certain activities and with what tools (Schumuck, 1997; Kawulich, 2005). Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) suggested that the use of participant observation may increase validity of the study, especially when used with other strategies such as interviews or questionnaires.

The justification for using observation in the focus group is based on two reasons: firstly, it responds to the many calls in literature to understand how practitioners engage and use these tools in their practice. Studies that have explicitly focused on strategy tools have been traditionally conducted to answer the questions of which and when tools are used as opposed to the how and why of the use (Frost, 2003; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; Knott, 2008). The results have been normally gathered through self-reporting surveys which employ some form of a list of tools for practitioners to select from, or interviews which collect accounts of how the tools are used but not the actual, situated doing of it. Roper and Hodari (2015) cited the findings of a study conducted by interviewing ten top managers about their use of strategy tools (Knott, 2008). The study identified that practitioners may have different and sometimes conflicting views of what

constitutes as a tool in the first place. It also cites the way the practitioners consider having used a tool, even in an informal or a limited context. Therefore, survey-based studies are not ‘a measure of actual activity, but simply a gauge of what is “fashionable talk”’ (p. 29). This cited study supports the researcher’s argument, her previous findings, and the S-as-P premise that strategy tool use cannot be separated from the real-life context in which it occurs. Secondly, strategy tool use usually happens in facilitated strategy workshops, or away-days (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008; Knott, 2008; Frost, 2003). So, having the same individuals as part of the focus groups resembled their involvement in strategy workshops which normally happen outside of their daily activities. Thus, depicting a real situation for observing tool use within their respective organisations. The analysis of this exercise was subjected to the thematic approach to draw out common themes and views. Subsequently, the tools-in use model was applied to verify the themes found and to test the model for effectiveness of structuring the analysis.

The participants were prompted to engage with the tool conceptually, to describe how they interpret its physical components and its content, and to think about its use. The following is the section of the script listing the questions being posed at this point in the focus group:

I will introduce you to the AI3 model, which is a strategy tool used to analysing the social, political, and regulatory elements impacting your work. Please take two minutes to look it over and think about its design, content, and format.

- What are your thoughts on the format? (Explore different options.)
- What are your thoughts on the content? Would you change anything? Should anything stay or come off the tool? Was the language easy to understand?
- When thinking about how the tool was introduced to you, are there ways that could have been introduced to make it easier/better for you?

The groups' initial response to the tool was similar across the board. Participants discussed their thoughts on the format of the tool, the content, the language used, and finally, how they felt about the way it was introduced to them by the researcher. They described the tool as simple, clear, and universal. For Organisation A, they believed that it would be an effective tool to use since its components cover the issues needed for a comprehensive strategic plan:

[NR]: *It discusses every possible thing raised in corporate planning, organisational planning; we can say these are common factors for every strategic issue which leads to a complete plan.*

[HB]: *When you go through them you discover that these are things you already think about, but not in the same way when you put it on the table and discuss it.*

Organisation B's focus group spoke about the design of the tool and described it as simple and clear. They felt that they understood the purpose and the components of the tool from the initial introduction, and that its use will not be complicated. For example, the participants appreciated that the tool is designed to fit one page; however, they also believed that the analysis will also be in one page as well, which may not always be the case depending on the depth of the analysis conducted:

[HA]: *It's simple, straight forward and I can visualise it. I don't need to see a part here and then go to another page and another page, you know like a fish bone diagram when we do it, we do it in one page and we see all the problems and stuff like this.*

The participants also viewed the tool as universal as being used by organisations in different industries and various models. Organisation A's participants commented that:

[HB]: *Yes, universal and it's not restricted to a certain culture.*

[NR]: *It's basic and I think it can work for all.*

[DA]: *It can be used with all.*

[HB]: *Wherever you think you can answer it, so there are no restrictions.*

The researcher's initial observation when participants were asked to evaluate the AI3 tool visually and conceptually was the simplicity and universality assigned to the design. Most members in the focus groups agreed that the tool 'looks' simple, and therefore, assumed that the application of the tool will be straightforward as well. A question collected from the field notes at the time of the focus group pertains to the idea of how tools may have the ability to over-simplify a strategic issue or a situation. What might be the implications of such an over-simplification imposed on the users by the design of the tool? The answers to these questions were drawn out once the participants began the application exercise in the next part of the focus group, which the observations focused on how the participants interacted with each other, how they negotiated the purpose of the tool, and how they practically used it to produce a piece of analysis.

Once the researcher began the timing for the application of the tool, the GMs felt the need to reiterate the instructions of the testing exercise. They began speaking immediately after the timer began and as other participants in their groups were reviewing the notes they collected.

The leaders also immediately began directing in Arabic, which to participants who spoke English fluently as a second language, added a layer of complexity to what was required since part of the meaning was lost in the translation.

Each focus group was allotted 15–20 minutes to complete the exercise. Although each organisation operates in a different industry, they are all non-profit organisations, which led them to begin thinking on an institutional level as to what their strategic issues could be. And even though participants were not directed on how to specifically use the tool, all three groups decided to select a strategic issue upon which to apply the tool, as opposed to letting an issue emerge as a product of using the tool. This may be contributed to the design of the tool which begins with the question: What is the issue? This led participants to negotiate the selection of relevant and pressing projects or initiatives to be analysed. An interesting debate arose as the focus groups were negotiating what constitutes strategic issues, and which one to apply the tool to. For example, in Organisation C, the chairman stood up immediately and prepared a blank sheet on the flip chart near her. She wrote down the key questions presented in the tool and immediately asked the advisor as to what the possible issues could be. In this organisation's case, the chairman and the advisor controlled the conversation regarding the selection of the issues to be analysed. Although several members of her team offered alternative issues, she ultimately selected the issues she presented. This speaks to not only the role of the advisor or the consultant in the organisation, but also to the relationship between top management and consultants. There was an apparent level of trust between the advisor and the chairman, and it was evident by the way their communication flowed much easier than with other members in the focus group.

Organisations A and B physically moved their seating to be closer as a team. They waited for the GMs to finalise their directions and began listing issues which they believed are strategic in nature and required further analysis and resolution. In Organisation A's session, the GM was dismissive of her team's suggestions and justified this by stating that these issues were never raised in board meetings or by board members. In Organisation B, the team referred to an example given by the GM during the first part of the session and used it as the strategic issue under current analysis. Three main themes emerged from the testing of the AI3 tool which were common across the three focus groups. The table below lists the themes found.

**Table 4**

*Themes Emergent from Participant Observations*

	Theme	Description
1	The role of the facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Verifying and approving of the work</li> <li>- Providing knowledge and expertise</li> </ul>
2	The role of the leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The role of Kuwaiti top management as 'openers' and 'closers'</li> <li>- Nature of the relationship between top managers and advisors</li> </ul>
3	Tool user experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Comparison to original thoughts about the tool</li> </ul>

**Theme 1: The role of the facilitator**

The researcher was faced with the challenge of being both the researcher and facilitator in the same session. As a researcher, the boundaries of her relationship with the participants were clear. They were aware of why she was conducting the research, how she will be conducting it, and what were her expectations from their attendance. However, these boundaries became blurred when the researcher asked the participants to test the AI3 tool. The groups began by negotiating their perceptions of the 'correct' way to use the tool. As their discussions progressed,

they continued to look at the facilitator for validation and confirmation. They expected the facilitator to confirm what they were presenting was 'correct'. In Organisation A, the participants asked the facilitator to explain the terms in Arabic to confirm their understanding of what the terminology meant. The word 'actors', for example, is translated in Arabic as 'movie actors', however, in this context, it means the stakeholders or individuals with vested interest in the strategic issue being analysed. They asked the facilitator to clarify a way to properly translate the terms of the tool, which posed a challenge to the facilitator as she has difficulty herself in translating from English into Arabic. Thus, she translated 'stakeholders' into Arabic and explained the translation verbatim. They continued to directly address the facilitator in hopes of receiving validation on how they were progressing. Organisation B operated in the same manner. The participants were led by the GM in the discussion and negotiation of what the terms mean, and how deep the analysis should be. The third focus group in Organisation C, looked for confirmation in every step of the testing process. The general observation was that the participants in all three focus groups were more interested in the correctness of the use as opposed to the outcome or results of the use. They assumed that there exists a right way to using this tool, and they believed that by the end of the session, the facilitator will demonstrate that use. This is evident by the fact that all focus groups asked the facilitator to conduct the analysis herself at the end of each session to show them how they should have used the tool and how they should have analysed their non-market environment. Organisation C went as far as to ask the facilitator to schedule a separate session to teach them the proper way of using the tool.

The traditional role of the facilitator is to enhance the communication and information flow of a group discussion in a way which supports appropriate decision-making. The key to effective facilitation is to limit the imposition and influence of the facilitator's own thoughts, biases, and directions on the overall direction of the discussion. There is an inherent amount of influence which must be exerted by the facilitator to guide a conducive group discussion. Thus, an understanding of how this role differs from other roles such as the consultant or traditional leader specifically in strategy workshops warrants further understanding and exploration (Ortquist-Ahrens & Torosyan, 2009). The literature on the roles and identities of strategy practitioners focuses on top executives, middle managers, and consultants (e.g., Whittington, 1996; 2003; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). This body of knowledge could benefit from understanding how traditional roles can morph during strategy work in different contexts.

## **Theme 2: The role of the leader**

For the purposes of this study, the researcher will refer to the GMs and chairman of the three organisations that took part in it as 'leaders', to unify the terminology and simplify it. The three leaders in this study exhibited some control over how thoughts and perceptions about using strategy tools are presented and negotiated. They guided the conversations, gave permissions to discuss or excluded certain topics and acted as mediators in some instances. However, what emerged as an interesting theme across the different focus groups was the idea of the leader as an opener and closer of the negotiation. Leaders tended to take charge when the



discussion was conceptual or theoretical in nature. They provided background information on issues, updated their groups regarding the high-level organisational directions, and introduced institutional level policies as components of the discussion. For example, Organisation B's GM introduced the issue of mortgage law in Kuwait and proceeded to discuss updates on their organisation's lobbying efforts with external stakeholders. Also, Organisation C's chairman provided her team with updates on where the issue of a national innovation strategy currently stands and what communications she has been engaged in to move it forward through the appropriate channels. They laid a foundation of information and knowledge which proved valuable as their teams began using the tool. It is at this moment, the actual commencement of the analysis, that the leaders took a back-seat approach, and the middle managers and staff took over the conversation. It was apparent to the researcher that the middle managers and their staff were accustomed to this type of dynamic. Once they began applying the tool to the issue, the leaders acknowledged their specific talents and expertise. For example, once the GM of Organisation B decided on Kuwait's mortgage law as the main issue to be analysed, he directed the conversation to the legal advisor, who was responsible for drafting the law, and to the public relations manager who was responsible for designing the campaign associated with the law. In Organisation A, the leader addressed one of her staff jokingly and asked him to begin the analysis process:

*[HB]: OK, I will let you begin with the issue [analysis] now, since you are the only guy [amongst] three ladies.*

Middle managers and staff led the discussion of the issues and subsequent questions proposed in the tool, and they were more vocal in defending their views and positions as they originated from practice. They continued to use words such as 'in my experience' and 'when this happens, I normally...' to support their points of view on how the questions regarding the tool should be addressed and how the issues should be handled. They began addressing each other more and brief nuances of their dynamics as a team began emerging such as inside jokes.

The leaders' presence was apparent at the end of the testing exercise when summaries and final decisions needed to be made regarding the outcome of the tool. They provided validation on the results and confirmation on its applicability to their existing practice. Jarzabkowski (2005) defined the social practice of strategy as 'the situated, socially accomplished activity constructed through the interactions of multiple actors' (p. 7). This social view of strategy gives rise to questions about who these actors are and how do they engage in the work of strategy (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). The broad definition of practitioners provided in the literature identifies top managers, middle managers, consultants, and experts as the types of actors engaging in strategy work ((Whittington et al., 2003). However, the ability for these multiple roles to manifest in one practitioner is not widely examined and could benefit from additional attention.

Another observation of the role of the leader pertains to his/her relationship with their advisors in the organisation. Organisation C's chairman portrayed her communication with her advisor differently from other participants. For example, she was very decisive and direct when mediating between her team members, however, as she discussed matters with her advisor, she

relied on him to validate her thinking and support her in making decisions regarding the elements of the tool. Organisation A did not have an advisor as a participant, and Organisation B's advisor was not the GM's advisor per se; therefore, the level of trust witnessed between the chairman of Organisation C and her advisor was not seen in her interaction with the other members of the focus group. Top executives turn to their advisors not only for their support, but also for their feedback and expertise. They view them as a sounding board to their thoughts and concerns (Price, 2020). This relationship and its dynamics may have a significant impact on how strategy work is done as top executives are responsible for initiating the strategizing process and approving its outputs.

### **Theme 3: Tool user experience**

The third theme pertains to how certain perceptions and views of the participants regarding the design and potential use of the tool changed after they used the tool. The way they perceived the content, design, and application shifted after they had practically engaged with the tool and applied it to an existing issue facing their respective organisation. The table below presents a comparison of participant views before and after the application of the tool.

The participants initially viewed the tool as simple, straightforward, and universal in the sense that it can be used in various contexts. They also perceived that adjustments can and should be made to tools prior to their use to ensure their alignment with organisational needs. Although all three organisations remarked for the need to translate the tool's language and

terminology into Arabic, they felt that the original language (English) and terminology used for the tool was clear and to the point. Some groups appreciated how using this tool might support their efforts in generating a shared understanding of their environment and operations as they perceived the elements of the tool to have a logical progression of analysis.

Perception before use	Org. Ref.	Perception after use	Org. Ref.
The tool is simple.	A, B, C	'You need someone to explain it to you.'	A
The tool is clear.	A, B, C	'Why are some sides hidden? Why is it a cube? Does that mean something?'	B
The tool is universal and can be used in different contexts.	A, B	'Can we add weights to the different elements of the tool? How do I know which component is the most important?'	B
The tool can be easily adjusted.	B, C	No guides/instructions on how to use the tool	B
The tool should be translated into Arabic.	A, B, C	How to verify and integrate the outcome?	A, B
It can generate shared understanding.	B, C	'It's difficult in real practice.'	C
The tool is logical.	A, B	Definitions are not clear even for English-speaking participants.	A, B, C
		Time-consuming and not as simple as it appears.	C
		'Not clear that we need to answer in sequence.'	C

When asked to review the tool again after they have had the opportunity to use it, participants reported some difficulty in its use. One participant in Organisation A, for example, stated that without having a facilitator guide them through it, it would be very difficult for them to apply the tool properly. A member of Organisation C admitted that 'it is [the tool] difficult in real life'; thus, signalling how tool design may over-simplify practitioners' thinking and give the illusion of affordance. Others stated that it was time-consuming and not as simple as it appears.

With regards to the language and terminology of the tool, participants initially believed that the terms were clear and easy to understand, and that the only adjustment they would include is the translation of the tool into Arabic. However, while using the tool, the researcher can see that they were struggling to define and use these terms within their specific contexts. Even for participants who spoke fluent English, the meaning of the terms could not be easily attained. The design of the tool was described as logical by participants, but when asked again about this particular point, some explained how they had difficulty in understanding how the questions in the tool should be answered. As a member of Organisation C stated:

*'it was not clear that we need to answer in sequence'.*

Also, participants from Organisation B posed questions such as:

*'Why are some sides hidden (referring to the cube-shape design of the tool)? Why is it a cube? Does that mean something'?*

And,

*'Can we add weights to the different elements of the tool? How do we know which component is most important'?*

Strategy tool use is a dynamic and social activity as it is part of strategy work (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). The need to understand how practitioners truly engage with the tools remains scarce in strategy tool literature. The researcher argues that these differences in perception between assessing the tool conceptually and its actual application require further assessment, and their exploration and definition can prove invaluable to academia and practice alike, but in

particular to tool designers. As Jarzabkowski and Kaplan (2015) stated: 'While the developers of tools may design them with specific types of strategic problems in mind, it is not clear that managers inside organizations pick or use tools for these reasons' (p. 541).

The previous themes which emerged from the thematic analysis of the interview and observation of use provide insights into how Kuwaiti practitioners interact with the tools.

As a second level of verification, the researcher applied the tools-in-use model to: 1) link these themes to a wider, more international context for tool selection, application, and outcomes; and 2) to contribute to the literature of strategy tools by extending the tool-in-use framework to include the examination of different tools and different actors. Jarzabkowski and Kaplan (2015) introduced a research agenda which acts as a natural extension to the tools-in-use framework. These extensions include the examination of the interaction of the practitioners and tools with regards to the creation of new tools, the assessment of different types of tools, and the assessment of different types of actors. By examining the AI3 model as a different tool and Kuwaiti executives in non-profit organisations, the researcher argues that she is indeed extending the model and advancing the research agenda on strategy tools.

#### 5.4 Analysis using the tools-in-use framework

The tools-in-use framework introduces the dynamics of strategy tools as a product of the interaction between the affordance of the tools and the agency of the actors in their selection, application, and outcomes. Jarzabkowski and Kaplan (2015) developed reference statements to

describe how these relationships work. Although literature suggests that these relationship impact how tools are used, there is little evidence regarding the nature of this impact.

The AI3 model was subjected to the tools-in-use framework to examine the relationships between its various components as observed during the testing of the tool by Kuwaiti practitioners during the focus groups. The analysis begins with the understanding of the affordance of the AI3 model, the agency of the practitioners, and how these elements interacted during the selection, application, and outcome.

#### *5.4.1 Affordance of the AI3 model*

Zammuto et al. (2007) defined the affordance of a tool as ‘the materiality of an object [that can] favour, shape or invite, and at the same time, constrain, a set of specific uses’ (p. 752). Strategy tools contain an affordance that defines their use (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). The way the tool is designed, the type of information it focuses on, and the nature of its knowledge can influence how practitioners engage with it and use it. However, the researcher argues that although some tools may have the appearance of enabled use conceptually, these elements can be a constrain during the application of the tool. For example, when participants were asked to review the tool from a conceptual perspective, they believed that the design of the tool, the terminology of the tool, and how the knowledge is structured was simple, easy, and applicable to various contexts. Furthermore, as the participants engaged with the tool and began using it to analyse their organisation’s environment, they found that the design was over-simplified which gave the illusion of ease of use. They also found that the terminology was not as clear as they

had originally perceived since they had to apply these terms to their specific contexts. Although the participants have mentioned that they would amend a tool or modify it to fit their organisational needs, the observations of their use proved otherwise. They used the tool as it was given to them without any attempts to amend or modify it. This could be attributed to the fact that they have not used this tool prior to the session, and they had no prior knowledge or experience to judge the criticality of the information structure provided in the tool. Although the participants commented on the constraints of using the tool, such as the language barrier and its hidden complexity, they believed that such a tool should be part of their arsenal of tools as they move forward.

#### *5.4.2 The agency of the actors*

The agency of the actors using strategy tools defines their roles, their motivation for using a specific tool, and their expected outcome from doing so (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). Although research on strategy tool users has traditionally focused on top management (Frost, 2003), applying a S-as-P lens guides research into considering different types of strategy actors such as middle management and those external to the organisation (Whittington, 2007). The selection, application, and outcomes of strategy tools depend not only on the affordance of the tool, but also on the motivation of the actors using these tools. These motivations may include engaging in strategy conversations (Balogun & Johnson, 2004), presenting information to enhance perception of strategy (Floyd & Lane, 2000), or advancing their own self-image by demonstrating knowledge and expertise to others (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015).



The participants acknowledged that the use of the AI3 model will enhance their organisational dialogue about strategy and strategic issues. Participants from Organisations B and C explained that the use of the tool allowed them to have a common dialogue about the issues being analysed and that it contributed to the creation of a shared sense of understanding towards these issues which did not exist prior to the session. The legal advisor in Organisation B described how she will use this model in her master's thesis as a conceptual framework which structures the analysis and guides the interpretation of the data. This supports the notion that some practitioners will use tools to advance their own personal agendas and attain and enhance their self-image by exhibiting certain strategic knowledge.

#### *5.4.3 Affordance and actors' interaction in the selection, application, and outcome of strategy tools:*

To illustrate the relationships described in the tools-in-use framework, the resulting themes from the use of the AI3 model were extracted to explore their potential alignment with the existing framework. The tools-in-use framework describes these relationships as arrows looping between the affordance of the tool and the agency of the actor.

To examine the data in this light, the researcher compared the themes which emerged from the testing of the AI3 tool with the statements provided by Jarzabkowski and Kaplan (2015). The resulting analysis highlighted that the framework can be slightly adjusted to include additional statements which relate to the emergent themes in the context of Kuwaiti practitioners.

The tables below contain a list of the statements in the framework, the themes related to them as they emerged from the data, and the additional statements which can be added to enhance the efficacy and reach of the framework. Each table addresses a specific set of relationships: the first will address the affordance and agency in the selection, the second will address the application, and the third will address the outcomes.

	Selection	Theme Alignment
Affordance	<p>Arrow 1</p> <p>1.1. The selection of tools may be more dependent on organisationally standardised use than on the 'fit' of the tool with the situation in the environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kuwaiti practitioners selected the tools which were considered part of the 'routine' work.</li> <li>• They referred to tools such as SWOT as 'the icon of strategy in Kuwait'.</li> </ul>
	<p>1.2. The selection of tools may be influenced by the degree to which they are simple and offer clear visual representations, where simpler tools are easier to remember and use.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The continued mentioned of SWOT speaks to this point.</li> <li>• They also perceived the AI3 tool as simple, clear, and universal prior to its use.</li> </ul>
Agency	<p>Arrow 2</p> <p>2.1. Actors may select tools based on satisficing. They pick the first tool that they know how to use (or are familiar with), that seems to fit the problem at hand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This was evident in previous studies when asked to select from a list of tools and the top two were SWOT and PEST.</li> <li>• All the examples given in the session used SWOT.</li> <li>• They lacked knowledge of any non-market strategy tools, thus when asked if they would have chosen this tool, the answer was 'no' due to a lack of familiarity with the tool.</li> </ul>
	<p>2.2. Actors have freedom to select a tool, depending on their position in the hierarchy of the organisation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kuwaiti practitioners will either use the tools they know and have been routinised in their organisation, or the tools will be selected for them by external consultants, as most strategy work is conducted by them.</li> <li>• They have more freedom to select the tool if their position was higher up in the hierarchy.</li> </ul>

	Application	Theme Alignment
Affordance	<p>Arrow 3</p> <p>3.1. Tools provide a common language for strategic conversations between managers across hierarchical, functional, and geographic boundaries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kuwaiti practitioners reported that strategy tools do create a common language to establish an effective strategic dialogue, however, certain team dynamics presented themselves especially during the application of the tool.</li> <li>• Although a conversation is occurring, top managers are part of the start and the end of it.</li> </ul>
	<p>3.2. Tools create a space for social interactions about strategy at which actors can negotiate their different interests.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The participants used the space to negotiate the 'correct' way of interpreting and using the tool.</li> <li>• This might hold true of the tool if it has been institutionalised.</li> </ul>
	<p>3.3 The content and structure of the tool channel potential improvisations as the tool is used.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The observation of Kuwaiti practitioners while using the AI3 model showed that tools perceived as new or unfamiliar will not be modified and will be used as-is.</li> <li>• Although they stated that they would modify the tool, their use proved otherwise.</li> </ul>
Agency	<p>Arrow 4</p> <p>4.1. Actors use tools as interpretive devices that enable them to focus attention on and make sense of strategic issues for themselves and for others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The participants were able to consider elements of their markets in a different way by using the AI3 tool.</li> <li>• It supported their understanding of the various social, political, and regulatory factors which have been impacting their organisations but have been identified and analysed appropriately.</li> </ul>
	<p>4.2. Actors find it useful to marshal tools to legitimate particular positions or viewpoints.</p>	<p>This was not evident in this particular study due perhaps to their unfamiliarity with the tool.</p>

	Outcomes	Theme Alignment
Affordance	<p>Arrow 5</p> <p>The 'success' of the use of a tool at the organisational level can be measured by the degree to which:</p>	
	<p>5.1. It is adopted and routinised in organisational practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kuwaiti practitioners believed that although a tool might be routinised, the outcome generated from its use may not be applied.</li> <li>• Participants highlighted that they used other strategy tools, but only as part of a process, not necessarily to apply the outcome.</li> <li>• They explained that some outcomes might be unrealistic and cannot be applied.</li> </ul>
	<p>The 'success' of the use of a tool at the field level can be measured by the degree to which:</p>	
	<p>5.2 It diffuses and is widely adopted in management education.</p>	<p>Kuwaiti practitioners use tools that have been introduced to them in business school, or during their executive education.</p>
	<p>5.3 It diffuses and is widely adopted by managers in organisations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The tools Kuwaiti practitioners consider to be successful do not have to be widely adopted by the organisation they belong to.</li> <li>• As some of the tools are imposed by external actors, the success of the tool can be linked to the expertise and knowledge of the actor delivering it.</li> </ul>
Agency	<p>Arrow 6</p> <p>The 'success' of the use of the tool for actors can be measured by the degree to which:</p>	
	<p>6.1 Its use provokes new explorations.</p>	<p>Kuwaiti participants believed that the AI3 model is successful in exploring new factors which impacted their work but have never been structured for analysis.</p>
	<p>6.2 It enables interim decisions that allow a project or organisation to move forward.</p>	<p>The outcomes of the sessions were all applicable projects which the participants will initiate once proper processes are undertaken:</p> <p>Organisation A's outcome: create an industry advisory board to enhance communication and collaboration across the industrial sector in Kuwait.</p> <p>Organisation B's outcome: a PR campaign to support the lobbying for the development and passing of the mortgage law.</p> <p>Organisation C's outcome: key risks which need to be mitigated to develop a proper national innovation strategy.</p>

## 5.5 Findings Analysis

To bring all the information presented and discovered together, a return to the nature of the research questions is warranted. This study aimed at answering questions pertaining to how Kuwaiti practitioners perceived the use and usefulness of strategy tools. These questions also aimed to address how these practitioners selected, used, and interpreted the outcome of these tools. The analysis addresses the interplay between practitioners and practices with regards to how they perceived the tools, as well as the interaction between tool affordance and practitioner agency.

At the onset of the data analysis, the themes which emerged from the first part of the focus group led the researcher to establish that the way Kuwaiti practitioners conceptualise strategy tools are highly contextual in the sense that it depends on the nature of their organisation, their background, and expertise. Kuwaiti practitioners offered general views on strategy tools which illustrated that these tools do not represent the new way of thinking about strategy. They believed that these tools could create frames of reference which then guide their thinking regarding what is considered important and strategic. However, they all agreed that the use of strategy tools created a sense of shared meaning and offered a platform to launch critical conversations across the organisation. The purpose of strategy tools, for Kuwaiti practitioners, is embodied in the idea of clarity and vision. They believe that using strategy tools can guide them to discover future directions. They also introduced a contextual element specific to the corporate and professional culture in Kuwait: they highlighted how the purpose behind using strategy tools is usually to tick boxes, or to follow a process. This can be seen across various types of organisations in Kuwait, especially public. And as the participants in this study all belong to non-profit organisations,

their interactions with the government and public sectors are extensive, thus their observations have merit.

Knowledge is becoming accessible due to the fast-growing technological advancements. Practitioners are taking more responsibility for their own learning and are using alternative methods to access this knowledge as opposed to the traditional classroom method of learning. In this study, local practitioners expressed how they gain and access knowledge about strategy tools. Although some remain traditional and require the brick-and-mortar approach, others believed that knowledge is readily available and do not require the structuring of special circumstances. They stated that they learned about new tools and approaches through the use of channels such as YouTube, etc. This speaks true to the nature of the new workforce, especially post-COVID-19, where face-to-face interactions are restricted. The way strategy knowledge is structured and presented needs to adapt to the demands of the new workforce.

Specific to the study's context, and which could be worth exploring in future studies is the notion of tools as a process and not as an outcome. Most of the participants explained that one of the challenges they face when using strategy tools is the organisational focus on the process of using the tool, and not necessarily the outcomes it generates. This contributes to the institutionalisation of tools, where they become part of the routinised work of an organisation, without any outcomes to apply. Once a tool becomes institutionalised or becomes part of the organisation's routine work processes, it risks losing its ability to provoke strategic thinking and instigate critical strategic conversations. This can be seen with the participants' views on SWOT analysis use and usefulness. They referred to the tool multiple times and used it to illustrate their examples during the focus groups, however when asked about the application and outcomes of SWOT, all agreed that its outcomes can be static or unrealistic.

The language of the tool and the language used to describe elements of the tool also posed as a challenge to Kuwaiti practitioners. Although English is the second language in Kuwait, non-profit organisations must work and provide documents in the country's official language – Arabic. The translation between the two languages can risk the loss of pertinent information and meanings. The idea that these tools are designed based on Western thought and Western practices introduces a new layer of complexity to using these tools by local practitioners. Therefore, they suggest, as a way of improving the design and use of strategy tools, that they be translated into multiple languages to accommodate various users in their specific, localised contexts.

The AI3 model is designed to assist organisations analyse their non-market environment (Bach & Allen, 2010). According to the authors the tool has been used in case studies (e.g. Shell, NOVARIS, TOTAL) to analyse how these organisations navigated the political, social, and regulatory issue which faced the progress of their strategic initiatives. Bringing this to the context of the study, the choice to focus on non-profit organisations brought the researcher closer to organisations which could benefit from a closer look at the non-market factors impacting their strategic directions. Practitioners reach out to PEST analysis as the core tool to support their external analysis efforts, however PEST provides a snapshot of the main elements, as opposed to the AI3 which delves deeper into the impact of these elements around a specific issue. The themes which emerged from the observation of the participants testing of the tool introduced new types of actors, new relationship dynamics, and an account of the user experience pre- and post-use.

The literature on S-as-P focuses on certain types of practitioners such as top management, middle management, and consultants (Whittington, 2003; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). However, Kuwaiti practitioners introduced the role of the facilitator into the equation. What proved interesting to the researcher and could benefit from further examination is how one practitioner can embody multiple roles at the same time. The researcher, for example, had to walk a thin line between

being a researcher and being a group facilitator. The leaders of the organisations had to shift their roles from heads of their organisations to facilitators. There could be practical ethical implications when shifting roles: for example, the researcher must remain impartial and cannot influence the discussion of the participants. However, as she switched roles to a facilitator in the testing of the tool, the participants began acknowledging her presence in a different way such as requiring her assistance in mediating a negotiation or requiring her verification and approval of how their work was being conducted.

Although this study focused on strategy tools use among Kuwaiti practitioners, certain themes emerged which were not considered in the analysis; however, it deserves an honourable mention in the discussion as it could lead to future streams of research or extensions on this particular study. The first theme is the perceived difference between government and private sector organisations regarding their strategic planning capabilities and knowledge. Once the researcher posed the question of how you perceive strategy and its tools in Kuwait, all three groups began addressing the national development plan of Kuwait, as if the word 'strategy' was synonymous with the national plan of the country. They described, sometimes in detail, how public sector organisations lack the proper strategic planning tools and do not adhere to the best practices of the field. They also believed that public sector organisations in Kuwait prepare a strategy only as a way of enhancing its reputation or to comply to the requirements of a higher authority. When asked why they believe there is a difference between public and private organisations in their strategy practice, participants attributed this difference to the public organisation corporate culture. They assumed that the lack of accountability, the focus on the process instead of the results, and the complicated nature of the processes add to the inherent lack of progress. They also attribute these differences to the idea that since private sector organisations focus on the results, its practitioners must continue to explore new methods and ideas and must continue to develop their capacity to meet the demands of the organisation. As opposed to the practitioners in the public sector who are 'guaranteed',



by means of the Kuwaiti constitution – a job in the government. Therefore, their evaluation is not based on performance, as much as on things like attendance, etc.

Also related to the government was the theme addressing their role in the success or failure of corporate plans in both private sector and non-profit organisations. The participants expressed their discontent with the way government entities operate and attributed some of their strategic failures to issues pertaining to government procedures. An example was given by participants in Organisation B regarding their efforts to introduce a mortgage law in Kuwait to support families who wish to purchase homes but lack the funding required to do so. They described how the major portion of the time allocated to addressing this issue is spent in complying with the processes and requirements of the public entities responsible. In the case of Organisation C, whose strategic issue was the development of a national innovation strategy which supports inventors from Kuwait, they were met with multiple committee formations and deformations. They painfully stated that the impact of such behaviour is taking a toll not only on the organisation itself, but also on those it serves. This difference in how strategizing takes place in the public sector versus the private sector, as well as the role of the government was conveyed across the three focus groups and could be explored in future studies that focus on strategizing in different contexts.

Another theme which arose from the discussion but was not included in the analysis was the idea of recognition and how that impacts a practitioner's strategy work. Participants introduced the notion that being 'recognised' by their superiors can have a positive impact on the way they perform strategy work. They explained that for some, the mere fact of being invited by their managers or top executives into a committee meeting or a strategy workshop even as an attendee motivates them to think about the strategic issues at hand and to take the initiative in finding solutions. Other explained that being recognised for their strategic abilities impacts their willingness to share information with their peers. They

become more approachable and believe that they have a role to play in the growth and development of others. This theme could benefit from being exposed to a psychological lens to develop an understanding of what constitutes the psychology of the strategist, his personal traits, and motivations.

## 5.6 Analysis of S-as-P and Nonmarket Strategy in Kuwait

The findings suggest that there remains ample room to explore how strategizing is taking place within different contexts. Specifically, within the context of Kuwait, it is apparent that there is a focus how the practitioner's role impacts the use of strategy tools. The relationship between practitioners and practices is an area which has been continuously promoted in literature as a critical area of exploration (Jarzabkowski, 2018; 2015). When the participants were prompted to think about strategy work, they could not separate the role of the practitioner from the impact they had on conducting strategy work. Therefore, understanding how to utilize that role to maximize the efficiency and impact of strategy work seems critical.

The traditional views of strategy continue to advocate for a rational and linear approach to how the work is conducted, however the results of this study show that regardless of how process-oriented strategizing can be, the overlap between the practices, praxis and actor remains unexplored in Kuwait theoretically and practically. Practitioners believe that applying the process of strategic planning will result in the desired outcome. However, the results suggest that they focused instead on "ticking the boxes". This could be attributed to how strategic knowledge is obtained and transferred. And can also be attributed to the limited interaction with strategy as a socially situated act within their organizations.

While using the tool, it was evident that the practitioners exhibited a higher level of confidence in their knowledge of how the tool should be utilized and, in their ability, to obtain the desired outcomes. This confidence diminished promptly once they were able to practically interact with the tool, which

suggests that strategy practitioners in Kuwait oriented from a perspective that applied a sense of simplicity and directness to strategy tools. As suggested in the literature, faults in a practitioner's decision-making ability may stem from the oversimplification and misuse of strategic tools (Jarzabkowski, 2015).

With regards to nonmarket strategy, practitioners were able to identify the tremendous impact of its factors on strategizing; however, they had no practical means of hedging their organizations and strategies against them. They understood that the failure of their strategic plans is due largely to regulatory, political, and social elements within their external environments; however, they continued to use certain tools to address them. Their selection of the tools used was mainly informed by how "routinized" the tools has been within their organizations. Therefore, Kuwaiti organizations continued to struggle in shielding themselves from the impact of their nonmarket environment as they were not availing the appropriate tools, nor were they addressing the most salient issues. Nonmarket elements in Kuwait remain faceless. Hence, the decision of the author to test the only tool promoted to analyse an organization's nonmarket environment and in turn, bring these issues to light. When the participants had the chance to delve deeper into their nonmarket environment, their positions on how their organizations can strategize shifted. They were able to cite concrete reasons to defend their positions, where previously they were only able to present a snapshot of what the external environment looked like. This is due in part to the nature of nonmarket strategy and to the design of the AI3 tool. They were able to address a specific issue from multiple perspectives, while by using other tools such as SWOT or PESTEL, they were only able to list the issue they are or may encounter during their strategic journey. According to the results of the study, it is critical to create an understanding of nonmarket strategy, and to promote how its tools can benefit during strategy work especially in highly volatile environment such as Kuwait.

## 6. CHAPTER 5: Discussion & Conclusion

Strategy tools are used differently by various actors, even though there is a common belief that practitioners perceive and engage with the tools from a similar foundation (Chaffee, 1985). However, earlier suggestions of non-conformance and variance existed in the literature for a long time. That strategy work is multidimensional and situational, which means it varies across actors, organisations, and industries (Hambrick, 1983). The findings in this study confirms the notions that strategy work is perceived and conducted differently in various contexts, national cultures, corporate cultures, and personal knowledge and expertise have an impact on how Kuwaiti practitioners strategize, and specifically, how they use strategy tools in their strategy work. The study provides actual accounts of how strategy work takes place in Kuwaiti organizations, and how its practitioners engage with strategic tools to conduct that work.

This study can contribute to both the S-as-p and NMS bodies of knowledge in that it advances our understanding of 1) how practitioners connect with practices in terms of tools 2) presents verified descriptions of how practitioners in Kuwait view and employ strategy tools. It also outlines problems that affect how well strategy tools work. Since the actual application of strategic tools and practitioners' demands are not usually taken into consideration, it examines how they are used by Kuwaiti practitioners. Thirdly, it advances theoretical knowledge of non-market strategy and its implications for the Kuwaiti context's strategy-making process. The study can clearly address the research questions due to the use of an integrated conceptual module

which explore the interconnectedness between S-as-p, nonmarket strategy and the contextual elements which are unique to Kuwait. Using such integration, the author was able to provide actual accounts of how Kuwaiti practitioners view the use and usefulness of strategy tools, and how they interact with these tools to produce strategy work. Traditionally, these fields have been studied extensively as separate bodies of knowledge. Therefore, one of the most important contributions of this study is its ability to bridge the gap between the theoretical and practical. the author's focus on the relationship between s-as-p elements as opposed to the traditional way of approaching it constitutes a response to calls in literature to advance the agenda. By focusing on how practitioners and tools interact in real time, as opposed to only descriptively addressing the who, the what and the how, the author can practically inform strategy work.

With regards to strategy tools, this study introduces a novel tool to supplement the expansion of the nonmarket strategy knowledge in a new context. The interaction between Kuwaiti practitioners and the nonmarket strategy tool (AI3) constitutes a response to the idea of testing different tools by different actors (Whittington, 2013). It expands the theoretical and practical implications of tool use and usefulness into new territories. It also aids in breaking the boundaries between how tools are perceived and how they are used. Thus, looking at nonmarket strategy tools, using a s-as-p perspective in Kuwait constitutes the main contribution to knowledge of this thesis.

The research questions in this thesis aimed at understanding how strategy practitioners in Kuwait viewed strategy tools' use and usefulness and how they used these tools to conduct strategy work within their organizations. The questions are addressed throughout the document

and the results of the focus groups and observations sessions were specifically designed to do so. In terms of how practitioners view strategy tools, this study shows how a gap exists between what practitioners perceive tools are designed for, and what they practically use them for. The level of trust in strategy tools by Kuwaiti practitioners varies depending on their previous knowledge and experience with it. If the tools have been used and became part of their routine work, then trust in its use and outputs tends to be high. However, if the tools is new and the practitioners had no prior knowledge in its application, they refrained from using it even though it might be the most appropriate for their strategic needs. This thesis contributed to the understanding of how practitioners from different backgrounds can perceive the usefulness of strategy tools differently.

the thesis also addressed the research question pertaining to how practitioners choose and use strategy tools. Their motivation for choosing specific tools came to light in the results of this study and highlighted a need for stature and recognition among other motivations. Their previous experience with using a specific tool and their agenda pertaining to the organization's direction also came to light as possible motivation for why a practitioner would choose a tool over another. The study delved deeper into the practical use of tools, and practitioners were observed using the tools and interacting with simulated strategy teams in the process. The role of who is presenting, facilitating, and negotiating the introduction and utilization of the tool became critical as the process unfolded. And the bridging of the knowledge gap of how they believed they could leverage the tool to their advantage quickly manifested.

There are multiple practical implications for this study: implications to tool designers, implications to managers, and implications to strategy educators.

Tool designers, particularly in Kuwait, can benefit from the findings in conceptualising what constitutes the affordances of a tool. As was established in earlier studies, and confirmed in this study, it is not about the correct use of the tool, however, it is about how the tool is actually being used (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). The findings present an opportunity for tool designers to test their conceptual designs against actual as opposed to perceived tool use, thus enhancing the enablers of its usage and limiting the constraints. The testing of the tool cannot happen in a setting which does not depict the actual way strategy work is conducted. It is for this reason that the author opted to select mixed teams who are responsible for strategy work in their respective organisations. Tool designers can also take into account the nuances of team dynamics and negotiations which occur around their tools. This point can prove useful as tools help create a shared meaning across various levels of the organisation.

Managers can also benefit from an understanding of the different roles they must play during strategizing. They may have to shift from leader, to facilitator, and back to leader again, as seen with the participating top management. The early realisation of such shifts in roles can help the transition more smoothly for the managers into these roles, and to get a better understanding what each role entails. By understanding how and why they use certain tools, management can develop new and innovative ways of doing strategy work, use new technologies to integrate the work and develop capacity to sustain their competitive advantage. Strategy

educators can also benefit from the insights in this study to better structure the learning around real experiences as opposed to relayed case studies.



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## APPENDIX 1

Themes and sub themes	Coded Data	Ref.
General information		
Content structure		
It is effective	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>It discusses every possible thing raised in corporate planning, organisational planning; we can say these are common factors for every strategic issue or planning which led to a complete plan.</p> <p>Wherever you use it, it works.</p> <p>It fits all.</p>	3
It is clear	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>When you go through them you discover things, you think about them, but not in the same way when you put it on the table and discuss it.</p> <p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>Issue, actors, interest, arena, information, assets, you can use different words.</p> <p>It's clear.</p> <p>You can use different words if you want.</p>	7

	<p>I think they are clear enough and I like the idea that they are all with either I or A</p> <p>it reflects the meaning of knowledge that you are seeking from us. So, when you say what assets, it gives you a good feeling of the word; OK, really these are the assets that we are going to be having to work with. Information, of course information, we are meeting where, yes it's the arena. Interest, actors, issues, it's clear and straightforward. It's good.</p> <p>It's simple, straightforward and I can visualise it. I don't need to see a part here and then go to another page and another page, you know like a fish bone diagram when we do it, we do it in one page and we see all the problems and stuff like this.</p>	
<p>It is universal</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>Yes, universal and it's not restricted to a certain culture.</p> <p>It's basic and I think it can work for all.</p> <p>It can be used with all.</p> <p>Wherever you think you can answer it so there is no restrictions.</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>Goals of designing strategic tools</p>		
<p>Gives a vision for the future</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>In order to know my project, where is it going, and what is it going to face, how to prevent any possible risks from occurring? Is it applicable? Is it worthy to implement my project or not?</p> <p>It gives us a vision about the future and a look ahead.</p>	<p>4</p>

	<p>It gives us a future vision.</p> <p>By giving me an overview in the long run, I can see it and if I feel that in the long run things are not going to work then I will stop from the beginning.</p>	
Identifying and solving challenges	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>If there are many disadvantage or risks, for example, how do I overcome these risks and how do I solve these problems so that my project runs and survives, there are so many businesses that failed and closed during this crisis, because they may have done SWOT Analysis</p>	1
Achieve desired goals	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>I would compare two things; what do I need and what this tool could actually give me? and in between I will look at all the outside factors and inside factors impacting my organisation.</p> <p>If we are using a tool in one of the implementations of strategy and it's giving us the outcome that is covering all the conditions, definitely we will be satisfied with that.</p> <p>We can use another tool, if we did not get the satisfaction of a tool, we can have two tools.</p>	3
Depends on the perspective and the user	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>It depends on the person who uses it or on the organisation that uses it.</p> <p>It depends on your perspective; from which angle you are viewing it. It's just like opinions.</p>	2

Ease of use	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>But just to go to the point, picking the SWOT, ease of use.</p> <p>So, ease of use, understanding the conditions more directly; I don't have to worry about studying details of details of details. This is more of a general thing that we can talk about.</p> <p>The ease of it as I said makes it a number one choice.</p>	3
Uses of strategic tools		
Improve performance	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>It will help if it is activated in its correct form and applying its results will certainly reduce time and effort.</p> <p>It reduces risks.</p> <p>Evaluates and improves the performance of every employee in the organisation.</p>	3
Use of new methods	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>I believe it will help, if we develop these tools and there are new methods. I feel that it is the right time for new things, and everything has to change.</p> <p>We will avoid repeating the same strategy and plan, and is the plan that repeats itself, but with different titles, it's the same plan two years ago.</p>	2
Ways of learning a strategic tool		

<p>Training and workshops</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>Training and workshops.</p> <p>I prefer workshops and trainings.</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>Interactive and visual learning</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>I watch YouTube, but don't watch a specific channel.</p> <p>I am a visual learner. When you do this in front of me and tell me how you do it, I got it.</p> <p>How to do this, some people prefer the interaction, that means the training has to be this way.</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>Challenges of using a strategic tool</p>		
<p>Lack of a proper Arabic translation</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>When you said it in Arabic and I told you a word, there are words that are more expressive in Arabic more than in English, you asked you how to translate it,</p> <p>I have it in my head, but the translation is not helping me communicate what I mean!</p> <p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>No, it does not exist. Does it matter?</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>Lack of information</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p>	<p>7</p>



	<p>In addition to that, we all know how SWOT works, but not how to implement it. I mean, I know how to define the strengths, weaknesses, advantages, and disadvantages of the project, but how to apply them, we don't know.</p> <p>I know how to do SWOT Analysis, but how should I apply it to my project?</p> <p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>When we deal with a consultant, unfortunately, they don't go into that detailed explanation of what are the components of the tool, how it's going to be executed.</p> <p>Some organisations might be unaware of what are those. So probably awareness and educational tool should be in order for them to decide which one is good for them.</p> <p>Lack of information.</p> <p>Lack of information, when we don't have numbers, for example, when we were asking how much the actual budget for housing for the next year or for the next 5 years and we don't know!</p> <p>Policy-makers if they are not into the issue or not pushing the issue it would be a big constraint, nothing would go forward.</p>	
<p><b>Outdated tools</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>The tools that are applied to planning strategy or strategic thinking maybe a little old.</p> <p>We follow things that go back to our parents and ancestors and what we learned in the past.</p> <p>It's rare to find anyone who comes up with new things or new ideas, new rules or new laws and regulations, they follow what was there in the past.</p>	<p>7</p>

	<p>I feel now, in 2020, we need something different, new things, especially after the pandemic, life will change, and everything will become different. We need new strategic thinking and new tools.</p> <p>It relies on the old schools, on an old, sometimes bureaucratic, routine. This routine kills any execution or activation of any plan we may have agreed upon.</p> <p>Lacks the modern method of strategic planning. It is the routine that governs most of these actions.</p> <p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>What we have used probably 20 years ago is probably obsolete nowadays.</p>	
<p>Limited application</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>If it is successful for me inside my organisation it might not be successful outside because I cannot be isolated and implement my current plan only inside the organisation, I have to be connected to the various state institutions, the private sector, and the government.</p> <p>I know the tools, I know the best of them, and I know how to fill in each category, but there is no application. Even companies and institutions use SWOT a lot, but do they apply it? No, they just fill in so many papers and put them in files.</p> <p>Like what she said, we apply it in our organisation, but our work is related to the outside. I will not be able to apply it outside. I mean, whether I do it or not it will be stopped.</p> <p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p>	<p>4</p>

	<p>When we want to use that internally, we use it on small projects not really a huge like 5 –10-year strategy or something like that.</p>	
Lack of standard and clarity	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>There is no standard or clarity in the strategic analysis tools that we are dealing with now.</p> <p>Sorry but currently there is no transparency, neither at the level of our institution nor at the level of the plan in general in the country, because we are following the plan of the country on which we are organising our general plan and that plan has no clarity nor tools that are applicable and activated which we can set our plan based on it.</p> <p>I mean the meanings are clear in SWOT, for any group of people would like to apply, people with experience or without experience or even fresh graduates. SWOT is so easy.</p> <p>You have to clarify it before starting and it's advanced of course but you can receive more information and answers from the SWOT.</p> <p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>It depends on how much the information is clear to me. How I have..., the information is clear so I can get the benefits from the tool I am using.</p>	5
Lack of centralisation	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>There is no centralisation of a strategic plan for the country or for the institution that is competent, such as the General Secretariat for Planning or others, and who governs or draws a roadmap for state institutions or legislation.</p>	2

	<p>When you said I am forced to adopt an orientation ... there may be many challenges, but they are mentioned, and I am not inventing, I assume their existence, and they may not exist, but because you forced me to think that way.</p>	
<p>Difficulties in tool selection</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>The available tools are not approved and are not applied and activated by us inside the Kuwaiti institutions.</p> <p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>Using it the right way I think is the key issue. Because sometimes we get confused; do we use SWOT for this project, or do we use best practice?</p> <p>Sometimes we get confused to which one we should be using, even the consultants when they meet with us sometimes, they don't really explain these tools.</p> <p>Most of the organisations, I am talking about this part of the world, they really get the conclusion, the outcome but not the technical approach or the methodology of using the detailed approach of the tool or we get the results of the tool, that's might be.</p> <p>It's very great and important part of any strategy build-up to have the tool and it has to be clear which one we should be using.</p>	5
<p>Constrained thinking</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>If you made a SWOT, I would stick to the table that I created, and this is what I meant when I said we should do new things. Think outside the SWOT or the tool I use, and do something with a different way of thinking.</p>	1

Suggestions on improvement		
Need for an Arabic translation	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>When you said it in Arabic and I told you a word, there are words that are more expressive in Arabic more than in English, you asked how to translate it.</p> <p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>I mean since you were speaking like what are the words, how do you feel about them and everything. This is in English, what about Arabic?</p> <p>If you are able to change the words in English, then I don't see where is ... where it matters if it was in Arabic as long as the audience can understand.</p>	3
Having a facilitator or a key	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>I feel if we want to give it to the whole industrial sector that they would have to do this or follow this. At least the first time they need to have someone with them, so they know how to do it for the first time.</p> <p>You have to explain it. If you only give us the tool without giving us the basic definition, we would have seen it as OK these are a set of questions, what's required?</p> <p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>Some people said all right we need a key, or we need a legend just to understand and work on that without confirmation from the facilitator.</p>	3
Online training	<a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a>	1

	This can be done online.	
Well documented	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>I prefer to see it written.</p> <p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>It would be good if it was made to a documentation.</p> <p>No seriously, if this is made to a paper or a document, a hard copy.</p> <p>It would be easy to identify colours, like when we define what is the issue here is this.</p>	4
Working with influencers	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>We have to lobby; we came to a conclusion that we have to work with influencers.</p>	1
Integration with other tools	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>What about at some point integrating with some tools that are already there? To help me find my outcome.</p> <p>Supporting tools.</p> <p>Could it be linked to something else or this is a standalone?</p> <p>Supporting some tools.</p> <p>Integration and support by other tools.</p>	5
A13 Strategic tool application		
What is the issue?		

<p>Lack of a mortgage law</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>Based on our issue which is the mortgage.</p> <p>The issue of the mortgage.</p> <p>Our main issue is that we don't have a mortgage law in Kuwait, OK? Which is impacting our role as bank and financing clients. Because we don't have that law.</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>Need for local products</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>The need for local products.</p> <p>The importance of the local product in Kuwait.</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>Who are the actors?</p>		
<p>Government and legislative authorities</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>The government.</p> <p>The legislative authority, and whoever influences the government, which is the parliament, the National Assembly, the last concern for the National Assembly is industry—the local product!</p> <p>The government is more related by contracts and other things.</p> <p>Legislation and implementation. We can say that the government's last concern is the industrial sector.</p> <p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>The government.</p> <p>The government is an actor.</p>	<p>8</p>

	We have the National Assembly this is regarding the law.	
Factories and investors	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>The factories.</p> <p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>The housing and the Credit Bank.</p> <p>Housing, yes, they have a problem. And the Credit Bank and the banks.</p> <p>We have the Real Estate Unions and all their workers; the evaluators, and The Union of Investment Companies because all of them are in the same boat.</p>	4
Consumers	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>The people who need houses are part of the actors because some of them have created lobbies; like the campaign of 'let's build our houses', so these people are involved as actors.</p> <p>The real estate owners and also those who own land and want to sell their land, we need to have a mortgage law.</p>	2
What are the interests of the actors?		
Service to the people	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>The provision of housing.</p> <p>Get a house.</p> <p>To provide housing.</p>	10



	<p>To provide a better life for citizens.</p> <p>A better lifestyle.</p> <p>To ease the burden of the budget.</p> <p>To reduce the budget pressure.</p> <p>The National Assembly, their interest is not to touch citizen's pocket (not to make them pay money) so when a citizen buys a house, his house is not taken from them because according to the mortgage law, if a citizen does not pay, the house will be taken from him.</p> <p>The Credit Bank, this is the government role of easing the burden which I already talked about.</p>	
<p>Invest and make a profit</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>It should also provide money.</p> <p>The interest of real estate development companies to have mortgage to be able to develop and invest their money.</p> <p>The interest of banks is to provide financing in the form of loans.</p> <p>The banks provide project financing, and that creates a profit for them.</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>Personal interests</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>They don't have the trust.</p> <p>It's not about trust, it's a conflict of interests.</p> <p>Personal interests we can say.</p>	<p>6</p>

	<p>Because he is the agent of Gulf products, he wouldn't terminate it.</p> <p>They benefit from this and benefit others.</p> <p>Because it is essentially if the industrial sector in Kuwait is expanded, it conflicts with the commercial sector. Trade and industry, which are supposed to be on two sides of the same coin, but unfortunately, they separate it in a way for personal interests. This is how we say personalisation and interests.</p>	
In what arena do the actors meet?		
Tenders	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>The tenders.</p> <p>They depend on supplying sources and suppliers. For example, someone may have a factory in China or has a partnership in a German factory.</p>	2
Business interests	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>It's business interests... someone may have farms in the Philippines or Lebanon and import from there. When you tell him about manufacturing a local product in Kuwait, what happens to his business? Also, he may have a partner who is a decision-maker in the government!</p> <p>Give me this tender and I will give you this business, it's all about business relationships</p> <p>Every year I give you the power of attorney for branches, 10% of this project, so I want to enter products from China, and you tell me you would bring investors! Also, I will share it with you. And the employment we bring from the UAE.</p>	3

Implementation of the legal framework	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>All of them will come together with the lawmakers at the National Assembly and the government when it comes to implementing the legal framework.</p>	1
Financing the project	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>The banking system is what really brings all these together from a financing point of view.</p>	1
What information moves the issue in this arena?		
Job creation	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>Create jobs.</p>	1
Achieve self-sufficiency and interests	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>Achieve self-sufficiency</p> <p>Not after they leave, because they think about how can I lose my business? I have agencies, interests, and branches outside beside the employment. And he cares about his interests and business.</p>	2
Encourage local products and revive SMEs	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>Encouraging the local product.</p>	4

	<p>Revive even the small enterprises sector, when small enterprises are the ones that feed these large projects and when these opportunities are created for them and I say local content, by the way the neighbouring countries that arose and made a big leap have given absolute priority to local products</p> <p>In Gulf agreements that say the local product and Gulf product are one and they made agreements which give priority to the Gulf product.</p> <p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>To give the opportunity to the private sector.</p>	
<p>Cost reduction</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>Our money as a non-profit organisation here is how we actually reduce cost for the banks.</p> <p>For the banks that's one. How can we actually instead of ... the banking sector each bank is spending a million KD on a program, we can spend instead of 11 million we can spend 1 million.</p> <p>Collectively and we do it under KBA and we work with companies, with the central banks with everyone to do something like that.</p> <p>So, whatever the gap between what they could pay and what we manage to pay, that's 10,000 difference OK? That's profit for us.</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>Availability of resources</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p>	<p>1</p>

	<p>We need to know first of all, how much land is available in Kuwait? How much land can be freed up in Kuwait? I mean land plots. Because if you really don't have this information, you don't know how great the size of your financing will happen, right?</p>	
<p>People's ability to repay</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>We need information on the people's abilities to repay and regarding this we have to do a forecast specially with the situation we are in today. A year or 6 months earlier, there were not so many people with a financial stumble.</p> <p>We need to have a new projection, how many people are going to be able to continue in their jobs? How many people can really pay? Or repay the loan, if they have been given banks loans. This is a very important information that we need to have.</p>	2
<p>What assets do the actors need to prevail in this arena?</p>		
<p>New administrations</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>A new administration, a new authority, proper legislation and a proper administration, not just a new board of directors and a new authority.</p>	1
<p>Having a team of consultants</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>We can have a team of consultants under the umbrella of the union which includes the most influential people.</p> <p>Consultants who come together and find solutions and to take our voice the right to the higher authority or entity.</p>	2

<p>Decision-makers and influencers</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation A</a></p> <p>People with authority and power.</p> <p>A decision-maker.</p> <p>I have in my mind Hind Al Sobeih, she is assertive and influential and has a strong background in the government and outside. Someone like Mohamed ... is a powerful figure. I ask them to come together.</p> <p>We need decision-makers with background and influencers that their voice is heard in this field.</p> <p>They represent us because some people's attitude is neutral. I mean, someone in the industry sector, a decision-maker or a politician with experience. This is the only solution.</p> <p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>Lobbying, social media campaigns, influencers.</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>Role of a facilitator</p>		
<p>Tool clarification</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>Yes, I think it's vital that the facilitator should be a clarifier and gives confirmation.</p> <p>It's just for clarification.</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>Availing notes</p>	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>So, we are basically defining and explaining the issue, actors, whatever. OK, this I will be able to do it on my own, I would not need a facilitator in this case.</p>	<p>2</p>

	So, the facilitation could be in different formats.	
Effectiveness of the AI3 tool		
Well structured	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>Very structured, I liked it because it takes you in a very natural step-by-step.</p> <p>Clarifies the next step of ideas.</p> <p>Clarifies steps one after the other.</p> <p>It helped in organising of the ideas.</p> <p>It coordinated our thoughts and integrated them as well.</p> <p>It helped collecting the ideas from everyone.</p> <p>It has a sequential development of thoughts.</p> <p>Even beginners they have no issue in understanding what's the question and what do they need to apply it with. Yes, it's very structured, very guided starting from step 1 until step 6 so one info leads into the other.</p>	8
Easy to use	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>It's an easy-to-use tool like a walk through for not advanced figures.</p> <p>It's straightforward.</p>	2
Helps in solving issues	<p><a href="#">Non-profit Organisation B</a></p> <p>It's related to laws as we face a lot of issues regarding those.</p>	6

I see it's a very good tool as we are talking about a law.

I would say that anything has to do with laws or decisions on a national level or social, I think it should be OK.

I am implementing this tool to the campaign, the (winners) campaign we are doing with the Central Bank of Kuwait and it's very effective, I can see the points going.

Now we put all our information, how this tool will help me find a solution to my problem.

Yes, how it's going to help me solve my issue? Now I put my information, strategic now and everything in place, how is it going to help me in my problem? How is it, the technique it's going to use?



## APPENDIX 2

According to Bach and Allen (2010), the purpose of the AI3 model is to assist practitioners in understanding their non-market environment and the impact of its social, political, and regulatory elements on their business strategy and operations. They build on the previous work of David Baron (1995), who identified the differences between market and non-market environments and proposed the alignment of both. The authors argued that using this framework will enhance the analytical clarity of the business environment and ultimately Impact how the organization is performing. To better understand the tool, they offer the following definitions and explanations for each of the questions:

### **What is the issue?**

The authors refer to the issue as the 'unit of analysis in the non-market environment (p. 3). A firm's non-market environment is built around various issues which could impact the organization in a positive or negative way. They argued that an organization should not hold multiple positions on an issue, nor should they focus on multiple issues when using the tool as an analytical device. The issue can be a matter concerning that. If resolved, it should enhance the position of the company. The ideal starting point for an issue selection in organizations is their corporate strategy, and thus depending on the nature of their strategic directions and initiatives, certain issues may arise to hinder these advancements. It is specifically these issues that warrant attention and analysis by executives.

### **Who are the actors?**

There are parties that are inherently interested in the issue selected by an organization. This interest could be to advance the issue or to prevent it from doing so. Therefore, organizations must recognize these interested parties, and understand the potential impact of their involvement, whether positive or negative, on their organization. By doing so, an organization can develop a clear understanding of who is considered an ally or an opponent.

### **What are their interests?**

By using this tool, practitioners will be able to identify what these actors desire as a favorable outcome from the issue. It is critical to identify their motivations and what they aspire to achieve by whether supporting or going against the issue at hand. The authors also guide the users of the tool to identify if a specific type of actor is homogeneous by investigating if all members of a particular group share the same view and position on the issue.

### **In which arena do these actors meet?**

The issue being analyzed can play out in various settings such as committees, parliament sessions, industry forums, or even the media. Understanding where these actors meet can provide the ground rules for how to approach a favorable resolution of the issue at hand, as the means to resolve it will vary greatly from one venue to another.

### **What information will move the issue in this arena?**

The authors argued that having the right kind of information can have a great impact on how the issue is addressed and potentially resolved by an organization. As information is the currency of non-market environments, the owners of critical information will have the upper

hand in the negotiation and, ultimately, have persuasion as leverage of the actors. The identification of the type of information needed is a result of answering this question.

### **What assets do the actors need to prevail in this arena?**

The authors defined assets as the factors which will assist the organization in the negotiation and influence the outcome. These assets can be the company's reputation, its detailed knowledge of certain procedures, or its direct and indirect network of contacts and allies. These assets will ultimately be used to support the company's position and move the issue towards a favorable resolution.

**Example of AI3 Model: Case of NOVARIS Pharmaceuticals ( adapted from: What Every CEO Needs to Know about Nonmarket Strategy, by David Allen & David Bach,2010)**

Novartis AG, the world's fourth largest pharmaceutical firm, has been fighting the Indian government over Glivec, a popular cancer treatment, since 2002. Novartis was refused a patent for Glivec in India, claiming that it does not provide "improved efficacy" over its predecessor. Novartis, which possesses Glivec patents in over 40 countries, including China, claims that India's strict requirements for novelty are in violation of international intellectual property treaties. The business is launching a public relations effort that includes testimonies of Indian patients championing the drug's advantages and Indian experts describing the catastrophic ramifications for patients who are denied Glivec. Novartis, on the other hand, was not satisfied with simply defending its intellectual property rights. In a related move, the business began to offer the medication at drastically reduced pricing to needy Indian patients.

The initiative is part of the company's "corporate citizenship" efforts, which include providing free leprosy and tuberculosis treatments to millions of people and low-cost malaria drugs to tens of millions more. Novartis boasts that its multibillion-dollar "access-to-medicines" campaign has reached more than 80 million people throughout the world, including many in India. Novartis is reshaping the competitive landscape by blending strong property rights with pharmaceutical goodwill.

NOVARIS AI3 Model example:

1. What is the ISSUE?	NOVARIS is denied patent by Indian government/regulations not supporting expansion strategy
2. Who are the ACTORS?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NOVARIS</li> <li>- Indian government</li> <li>- Indian public</li> <li>- media</li> <li>- NGOs</li> </ul>
3. What are the actors INTERESTS?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NOVARIS: to gain patent and steer regulation to its favor</li> <li>- Indian government: ensure that medications have improved efficacy and deliver regulations in the best interest of the public.</li> <li>- Indian public: to receive the best treatment for the lowest price</li> <li>- Media: position issues for readership/viewership</li> <li>- NGOs: ensure equality and justice for Indian society</li> </ul>
4. In what ARENAS do the actors meet?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Courts</li> <li>- Media</li> <li>- mainly political and social arenas</li> </ul>
5. What INFORMATION moves the issue in these arenas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Courts: lab results, patient data, efficacy reports</li> <li>- media: testimonials of patients and experts- medicine giveaway campaign data</li> <li>- political &amp; social: lobbying through network with information to discredit general conception of issue. Soft campaign to highlight benefits and goodwill of medication and company.</li> </ul>
6. What ASSETS to actors need to prevail?	-NOVARIS: strong lobbying capabilities-high level connections- strong brand reputation- verifiable efficacy data

	- Indian government: knowledge of context, regulation influence
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