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Five types of organizational strategy



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KEYWORDS

Strategy concept;
Strategy types;
Strategy composition;
Organization strategy

Summary Models in the strategy field defining the strategy concept emphasize schools of thought or strategy perspectives, but not how to define the idiosyncratic composition of an organization's strategy content. Based on a literature review in which meanings have been attached to the concept, this paper presents a new model including five types of organizational strategy. The model emphasizes that key influencers may make heterogeneous contributions to an organization's strategy and also that significant effects may result from interaction between types of strategy.

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Introduction

For several decades the strategy concept has been applied and defined in management disciplines; yet we still seem to lack a general model of an organization's strategy content, which includes the idiosyncratic organizational characteristics that enable discussions on the effects of different compositions of organizations' strategy.

'Strategy' was first introduced into the management of business corporations by Chandler (1962) to mean the 'long-term goals and objectives' as well as the 'courses of action...' of an enterprise (1962:13). Comparing the 1950s' and 1960s' management literature to that of the following decades, shows that previously popular terms, such as 'policy making', 'organizational behaviour' and 'business administration', were replaced by the strategy concept over time (Bauer, 1968; Learned, Christensen, Andrews, & Guth, 1965; March & Simon, 1958; Schoettle, 1968; Selznick, 1957).

Since then the concept has been frequently applied in management texts (Ghaziani & Ventresca, 2005) and with several different meanings. For example, writers have viewed an organization's strategy as its formally stated goals, objectives, policies and plans (Andrews, 1971; Hofer & Schendel, 1978; James, 1984). Other writers suggest that strategy should be viewed as the general language, stories, and metaphors used by managers in an attempt to give meaning and to influence the behaviour of organization members (e.g. Barry & Elmes, 1997; Eccles & Nohria, 1998; Pfeffer, 1981a). Also, writers have defined strategy as managers' intentions of reaching a unique competitive position (Porter, 1996), building a resource base (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993) or testing opportunities inside specific boundaries for future activities (Eisenhardt & Sull, 2001; Markides, 2004).

It appears that management writers attach different meanings to the concept of strategy.

Insightful strategic management scholars have analysed and described different applications of the concept. For example, several contributions have categorized applications as strategy 'models' (Ansoff, 1987; Chaffee, 1985), 'perspectives' (de Witt & Meyer, 1998; Jenkins & Ambrosini, 2002; Whittington, 2001), 'lenses' (Johnson, Whittington,

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& Scholes, 2011) or ‘schools of thoughts’ (Mintzberg, 1990b; Mintzberg & Lampel, 1999). These contributions generally emphasize differences between strategy writers’ focus and the basic premises of their work, like how they view the purpose of strategy, which types of processes or analytical tools they favour, their theoretical fields of inspiration, the relevant organizational and environmental context, whether approaches are descriptive or prescriptive, which organizational level is in focus, and writers’ views on organizational change.

Although these comparisons between strategy writers’ assumptions and focuses are highly valuable in relation to understanding the differences between writers’ recommendations, as well as the diversity of the field in general, comparisons are not necessarily relevant in relation to defining the content of an organization’s strategy, and more specifically, how to identify the idiosyncratic compositions of organizations’ strategy content.

In a linguistic approach, French (2009) analysed the semantics of the concept. Mainly basing his analysis on the juxtapositions ‘strategic planning’, ‘strategic management’ and ‘strategic thinking’, leaves him with no clear conclusion about the meaning of concept because these juxtapositions, in nature, represent different types of organizational processes – not the content of an organization’s strategy.

Similarly, Nag, Hambrick, and Chen (2007) seek an inductive derivation of a consensus definition of the field of strategic management on the basis of studying the vocabulary of scholars in key strategic management journals. This approach also differs from defining the content of an organization’s strategy, although Nag et al. get closer to the issue when linking the word ‘strategy’ with the ‘major intended and emergent initiatives’ that are taken by general managers (Nag et al., 2007: 942).

A few attempts have been made to categorize an organization’s strategy content (e.g. Hax, 1990; Moncrieff, 1999; Peattie, 1993). The most well-known contribution is probably Mintzberg’s (1987) ‘The Strategy Concept 1: Five Ps for Strategy’. In his paper Mintzberg describes five ways of defining the concept; strategy as a plan, ploy, pattern, position and perspective, arguing that each definition competes, but also complements, and adds important elements to our understanding of what strategy is.

The inadequacy in applying these frameworks for generally understanding the idiosyncratic content of organizations’ strategy can be exemplified by Mintzberg’s ‘five Ps’ framework.

First, three out of Mintzberg’s five types cannot be assumed to be present in all organizations. Not all organizations have thought out something that can be viewed as a ‘strategy plan’, search for a specific position or articulate ploys to mislead competitors. Thus, the framework may not be relevant for describing the strategy content for all organizations.

Further, the framework does not address the relations between the five defined types of strategy. This is problematic because interaction between strategy types may be critical in understanding the idiosyncratic characteristics of an organization’s strategy content, e.g. whether ‘plan’ or ‘position’ relates to ‘pattern’ in a particular organization.

Moreover, Mintzberg’s model – as well as the models by Peattie and Hax and Moncrieff – leave out the question of

how the strategy of an organization is composed; e.g. that there may not be *one* plan, ploy, search for position, pattern or perspective in an organization, but many (formal as well as informal) among key influencers, and that such plans, positions, perspectives, etc., in some situations may be relatively concurrent while in other situations diverse and conflicting.

Some writers have argued that strategy should not be viewed as one organizational concept, but rather as composed of several conflicting intentions that are pursued by sub-organizational groups and coalitions (Cyert & March, 1963; Pettigrew, 1977; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978); and recently writers have called for attention to the perspective that strategy should be viewed as organizational members’ ‘day-to-day practices’ (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 1996) and as the ‘micro activities’ of all managers and strategy actors in organizations (Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2005; Regné, 2008).

These contributions emphasize the need for redefining an organization’s strategy content in a way, which allows for participation of multiple actors, – actors who may cause diversity in the strategy content at the organizational level. Moshe Farjoun (2002) describes this as the need to move from a ‘mechanistic’ to an ‘organic’ perspective on strategy, arguing that ‘in the organic view interaction and mutual influences are highlighted’ (2002: 570).

This paper presents a new model of the content of an organization’s strategy. The model aims to portray the idiosyncratic characteristics in the composition of an organization’s strategy content and the dynamics derived from interaction of possibly multiple influencers. In this way, the model seeks to open up the discussion on two important questions that have not been emphasized by earlier models:

1. What may cause diversity in the composition of an organization’s strategy content? And what are the implications of diversity in strategy content?
2. How may constituents of an organization’s strategy content interact? And in which ways may such interaction influence, and characterize, the strategy content of an organization?

The model is meant to be generally applicable for describing the strategy content of organizations, regardless of their individualities and approaches to strategy making (e.g. planning or learning, formal or informal processes).

The paper includes four following sections. In section two, the research method is described and the findings from a literature review, which form the research basis of the paper, will be presented.

In the third section a new model of an organization’s strategy content will be presented based on review findings. The model is defined and related to contributions from literature, which emphasize perceptions that are represented by the model’s strategy types.

In section four, the model’s capacity for representing the idiosyncratic characteristics of an organization’s strategy content will be discussed. After referring to basic differences and similarities between four theoretical views in the field of strategy, this section advances proposals for how the model adds new dimensions to the in-field discussion in relation to

the two aimed applications of the model: the composition of organizations' strategy content and strategy constituent (/strategy type) interaction.

The last section includes a discussion on how the contributions of this paper are related to current in-field debates and suggestions for further research.

The research

Method

The initial question of the research has been: which perceptions should be included in defining an organization's strategy content?

This question was approached by a review in the fields of general management, organization studies and strategic management.

The review followed a systematic approach, as recommended by [Jesson, Matheson, and Lacey \(2011\)](#), including an initial database search for key papers. This was supplemented with an identification of additional texts (including papers, books and book chapters) from the key papers' reference lists ([Webster & Watson, 2002](#)).

First the twelve top rated journals in the fields of general management, organization studies and strategic management, according to the ABS Academic Journal Quality Guide 2009, were searched from 1970 to 2009 in order to identify key contributions to the research question.

The ABI/Inform Global database was applied for the purpose. The search criteria were that the paper title contained the word 'strategy', and in order to identify the contributions that have a conceptual emphasis, the words 'strategy' and 'concept' both had to appear in the abstract.

This search produced 74 papers. Abstracts (when necessary also texts) were subsequently skimmed based on the following criteria:

- A. Contributions that were not seen to answer the question: 'How can the content of an organization's strategy be defined or perceived?' were excluded from review findings. For example, contributions defining strategy as schools of thought or as theoretical perspectives are generally more focused on comparing strategy writers' assumptions and specific emphasis than on defining the content of an organization's strategy. Also applications of strategy in sub-organizational or other contexts, like 'HR strategy' or 'IT strategy', were excluded.
- B. Perceptions or definitions of strategy as organizational processes, or as linked sequences of activities to be conducted (e.g.: 1. Analyse external environment and internal resources, 2. List alternatives, 3. Evaluate alternatives, and 4. Allocate resources), were excluded from the findings. Processes and proposals for specific over time linked activities were not viewed as an organization's strategy content but as possible processes, which may influence or produce the strategy content of an organization (cf. [Pettigrew & Whipp, 1994](#)). Process-based perceptions were seen as covered by complementary concepts such as strategy making, strategy processes, strategic planning or strategizing.

Based on these criteria, 34 papers were excluded and 40 key papers were analysed in regard to the research question.

To supplement the systematic database approach with a more inclusive, and more variety seeking, process, more texts (books, chapters, papers) from 1960 to 2009 were identified based on references in the initial 40 papers. In this process variety in answers to the research question was sought and the approach continued until results tended to stabilize ([Hart, 1998](#)).

Perceptions (of the content of an organization's strategy) were treated in the following way to develop a model of an organisation's strategy content:

Since results were meant to be applicable to organizations in general, perceptions of strategy that were identified in the review were generalized to a level where they are seen as relevant to any organization. In this way ideological perceptions of strategy content and specific systems of ideas, like 'strategy content should be focused on building a company's resource-base (e.g. [Barney, 1995](#); [Wernerfelt, 1984](#)), or strategy must be coherent, coordinated and comprehensive (e.g. [Hax, 1990](#); [MacCrimmon, 1993](#)), become possible examples of a *generalized constituent*, which is seen as present in any organization.¹

The generalized constituents, which have been identified in this way, become the basic building blocks of a model of an organization's strategy content. The model is created by combining constituents in a way that is seen to facilitate a presentation of the idiosyncrasies in an organisation's strategy content. Therefore, the model must allow for multiple influencers contributing to an organisation's strategy content and open-up the discussion on dynamics caused by possible over time interaction between constituents. Accordingly, assumptions on specific over time relationships between constituents are avoided in the strategy content model.²

Findings from the literature review

The review identified three basic perceptions, i.e. generalized constituents, of an organization's strategy content that co-exist within the researched fields:

1. Strategy is perceived as 'communications': what key influencers orally or in writing communicate to organization members and external stakeholders about the organization and the actions and behaviour of its members.
2. Strategy is perceived as 'intentions': the personal or shared ambitions of key influencers about a desired future development or course for the organization.
3. Strategy is perceived as 'realized': what organizational members do, the decisions they make, their actions or activities in regard to their organizational tasks.

¹ In this way, e.g. the [MacCrimmon \(1993: 114\)](#) perception of strategy as 'conditional, comprehensive and coordinated series of actions' is seen as an example of 'series of actions', belonging to the generalized constituent 'realized' in [Table 1](#).

² Although the basic model of an organization's strategy content does not include processes, the application of the model, in which possible relations between these constituents are discussed (including [Figs. 2 and 3](#) in this paper), includes process issues.

Table 1 Three generalized constituents of an organization's strategy content:.

Generalized constituent	Key words	Authors
Communications	Formal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Plans, Game plans, Politics, Goals, Objectives, Mission ● Formal statement ● Strategy concepts 	Andrews (1987); Campbell and Yeung (1991); Chandler (1962); Dess and Miller (1996); Hofer and Schendel (1978); James (1984); Lynch (2006); Ohmae (1982); Steiner (1969) Emshoff and Finnel (1979); Hambrick and Fredrickson (2001) Burgelman (1983); Huff (1982)
	Informal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Story telling, drama, myths ● Metaphors, symbols ● Language ● Competitive signals, ploy, pronouncements 	Barry and Elmes (1997); Deal and Kennedy (1982) Pfeffer (1981a, 1981b); Whittington et al. (2006) Eccles and Nohria (1998); Ezzamel and Willmott (2008); Peters (1978); Smircich and Stubbart (1985) Heil et al. (1997); James (1984); Mintzberg (1987); Peattie (1993); Porter (1985)
Intentions	<i>Intentions to build...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Position ○ Resources ○ Capabilities ○ Competences ○ Core competences ● Intended actions/-initiatives ● Growth/harvest intention ● Strategic Intent ● Hidden/invisible plans ● Implicit strategy ● Clandestine strategy 	Hooley, Lynch, and Jobber (1992); Miller (1992); Parnell (2000); Porter (1980, 1996) Barney (1995, 2002); Collis and Montgomery (1997); Grant (1991); Peteraf (1993); Wernerfelt (1984) Day (1994); Stalk et al. (1992); Teece et al. (1997) Sanchez, Heene, and Thomas (1996) Prahalad and Hamel (1990) Mintzberg and Waters (1982); Nag, Hambrick, and Chen (2007) Kaplan and Norton (1996) Hamel and Prahalad (1989); Liedtka and Rosenblum (1996) Goold and Campbell (1988); Peattie (1993); Sarrazin (1977/1978); Sminia (2005) Hax (1990); Peattie (1993) Mintzberg and Waters (1985)
	Realized	Patterns/series of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Actions or behaviour ○ Decisions or choices <p>What people do/activities that lead to strategic outcomes Micro activities/innovations</p>

Table 1 refers to writers and key words representing these generalized constituents of an organization's strategy content.³

A common denominator of the three constituents of an organization's strategy content is that they either express

³ Some of the writers referred to in Table 1 define strategy in ways that include more than one constituent, for example Chandler (1962) beyond communications also includes actions and resource allocation – belonging to the constituent 'realized'. While the purpose of the table is only to demonstrate that writers perceive strategy content as consisting of the three generalized constituents, not to position writers precisely in relation to these constituents, each perception has been placed in only one category based on a judgement of writers' primary focus.

what can be seen as *possible* patterns of actions/activities/decisions of organization members ('intentions' and 'communications') or *actual* patterns of actions/activities/decisions of organization members ('realized').

The review found that there are different assumptions and propositions in the literature as regards relations between the three key constituents of an organization's strategy content. In particular, the relationship between the two 'strategy as possible' constituents, intentions and communications, as well as the relationship between these constituents and strategy as realized, are seen as key to developing a model representing the idiosyncratic characteristics of an organization's strategy content.

As regards the relation between intentions and communications, the review found that writers in the field have different assumptions and propositions about whether these

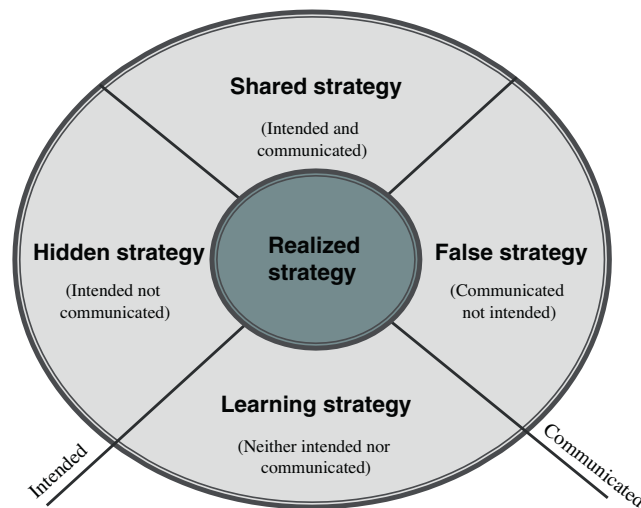


Figure 1 The strategy wheel: five types of organizational strategy.

constituents are or should be identical. While many writers recommend, or simply assume, that strategy communications directly represent the content of intentions, the review found both theoretical and empirical evidence for stating that this is not always the case in real-world organizations – nor should always be the case. Strategic intentions may not be communicated and communications may not reflect actors' real intentions. In Table 1 such cases are represented by the key words: 'hidden/invisible plans, implicit strategy, clandestine strategy' and 'competitive signalling, ploys, pronouncements', respectively. Because this is seen as an idiosyncratic characteristic of an organisation's strategy content, possible combinations of intentions and communications are included in the strategy model.

As regards 'strategy as possible patterns of actions' versus 'strategy as actual patterns of actions', the review found that writers base their argumentation on different assumptions as regards this relation. However, the relations between intentions/communications and actions are closely linked with over time interaction, which are kept open in the strategy content model (in order to be emphasized in the model application section).

In the next section a model of an organization's strategy content is defined based on these findings.

The strategy wheel model

Defining the model

Representing a common denominator⁴ of the identified strategy content constituents the strategy of an organization is

⁴ Of the 'realized' constituent's key words: actions, behaviour, choices, decisions and activities, only 'actions' are applied in the definition for reasons of simplicity. E.g., 'decision', 'activities' and 'choices' de-emphasize that realized strategy may emerge without conscious considerations thus not including all approaches to strategy making.

defined as *actual or possible overall⁵ patterns of actions of organization members*.

'Realized strategy' expresses the *actual* overall patterns of actions of organization members and the term 'strategy as potential' refers to *possible* overall patterns of actions of organization member.

If strategy as potential reflects aspirations of strategy actors, it is termed 'intended', and if a linguistic representation of strategy as potential has been openly announced by strategy actors to organization members, it is termed 'communicated'.

'Strategy actors' are regarded any internal or external, individual or group of stakeholders capable of influencing the overall patterns of organization member actions.

Possible combinations of intended and communicated leads to four types of strategy as potential: 'Shared strategy'⁶ (intended and communicated), 'Hidden strategy' (intended but not communicated), 'False strategy' (communicated but not intended) and 'Learning strategy' (neither intended nor communicated potential). These four types of strategy as potential – along with the realized strategy type – make up the five types of organizational strategies in the strategy wheel model in Fig. 1.

In the following, the five strategy types will be described by referring to some of the contributions in the strategy literature that are represented by the types.

⁵ That patterns of actions must be 'overall' separates strategic and non-strategic actions. Other possible criteria, identified during the literature review like 'long-term', 'integrative' or 'coordinated', have not been found valid based on the criterion that the model should be generally applicable for organizations, regardless of idiosyncrasies and approaches to strategy making (formal or informal, learning or planning), cf. introduction.

⁶ That a strategy has been openly communicated to organization members is no guarantee that all these members share the wish to carry it into effect. This issue is discussed in relation to strategy heterogeneity.

Five types of strategy

Type 1: shared strategy

Shared strategy exists when strategy actors communicate their intentions about preferred overall courses of actions openly to organization members. Shared strategy may be relatively consistent, or it may represent diverse ambitions and communications of a few or multiple strategy actors.

Traditionally, strategy has been viewed – and often defined – as a set of formal communications like plans, goals, objectives, game plans, action programmes, policies and explicitly formulated business programmes (Andrews, 1987; Ansoff, 1965; Chandler, 1962; Hofer & Schendel, 1978; Learned et al., 1965; Lorange & Vancil, 1977; Ohmae, 1982; Porter, 1996; Steiner, 1969). Writers generally recommend that these communications reflect management's aspirations about the organization's future and are written down and openly announced to organization members, even though this is not always stated in direct terms, cf. Mintzberg and Waters (1982: 465).

Other formal versions of shared strategy have been added by culture-inspired writers emphasizing the formulation and internalization of general statements of mission (Campbell & Yeung, 1991) vision (Collins & Porras, 1996), or strategic intent (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989).

Writers in the field have also called attention to managers' application of informal and oral tools of communication, for example the creation of imaginary symbolic representations for organizational participants (Smircich & Stubbart, 1985; Weick, 1995). These writers stress the power of managers' language in shaping the patterns of action of organization participants and stakeholders in intended directions (Eccles & Nohria, 1998; Pfeffer, 1981a). The significance of managers' symbolic behaviour (Peters, 1978) and managers' ability to manipulate symbols or use metaphors to reinforce or adjust the meaning of the organization have also been discussed (Chaffee, 1985; Johnson, 1987). Also storytelling, myths, and the creation of drama have been seen as a key part of an organization's strategy and as being effective in influencing organizational behaviour (Barry & Elmes, 1997; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Weick, 1987).

Several writers emphasize managers' intentions as representing an organization's strategy content and either assume that intentions are communicated openly or leave out this issue. A well-known writer in the field, Michael Porter (1996), views strategy as managers' search to fulfil intentions of gaining a unique competitive position. Other writers suggest that strategy content should rather emphasize common intentions to build company resources (Barney, 1991, 2002; Collis & Montgomery, 1997; Peteraf, 1993; Wernerfelt, 1984), capabilities (Day, 1994; Stalk, Evans, & Shulman, 1992), dynamic capabilities (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997), competences (Sanchez & Heene, 1997) or core competences (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990).

Type 2: hidden strategy

'Hidden strategy' exists when strategy actors have intentions regarding the overall patterns of organization members' actions, but which they do not openly communicate.

Writers with processual or political perspectives have dealt with issues related to hidden strategy in organizations.

For example, it has been argued that at times managers hold back their intentions in order to keep them flexible and open for revision (Mintzberg & Waters, 1982; Quinn, 1980, 1982). According to these writers, over precise articulation and formal programming might impair the flexibility or the imagination needed to exploit new information or current opportunities. It has been proposed that precise articulation locks a strategy because it impedes mental willingness to change it (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985).

Political writers have explained the presence of hidden intentions in organizations as a question of confidentiality to avoid conflicts, resistance or direct opposition when strategic intentions tend to be sensitive in nature or are believed to be generally unpopular (Peters, 1978; Pfeffer, 1981b). For example, strong strategy actors may choose to withhold their opposition to an official strategy plan until they have a better chance to counter or eliminate it (Sminia, 2005). But hidden strategy has also been explained by the need to protect managers' intentions from influential external stakeholders, who are expected to oppose the intended strategy. These might include customers, trade unions or competitors capable of obstructing the desired outcome of the strategy by obtaining early knowledge of its content (Andrews, 1987; Heil, Day, & Reibstein, 1997; Peattie, 1993).

In strategic management literature strategy actors' uncommunicated intentions have been labelled, e.g., 'clandestine strategies' (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985), 'invisible plans', 'hidden agendas' (Goold & Campbell, 1988), 'invisible strategy', and 'implicit strategy' (Hax, 1990; Peattie, 1993).

By stating:

Regardless of how communicative or participative a CEO's management style might be, there is always a private strategic intent that a CEO is unlikely to share with anybody,

Hax (1990: 8) implies that some degree of hidden strategy will always be linked to organizational life.

Type 3: false strategy

To be termed 'false strategy', possible overall patterns of action must be communicated to organization members, but what is communicated does not represent real intentions of the communicating strategy actors.

Contributions related to false strategy can be found in texts featuring political aspects of strategic planning and in competitive, warfare-inspired strategy texts.

A term frequently applied by competitive strategists to illustrate false strategy is 'market signals'; these signals are intended to provoke reactions that the organization desires from competitors. Porter (1980: 76) puts it this way:

Market signals can have two fundamentally different functions: they can be truthful indications of a competitor's motives, intentions or goals or they can be bluffs. Bluffs are signals designed to mislead other firms into taking or not taking an action to benefit the signaler.

Porter (1980) as well as James (1984) and Heil et al. (1997) refer to real-world cases of company managers having successfully discouraged competitors by announcing intentions that they never actually wanted to pursue. In his 1987 article Mintzberg included the 'strategy as a ploy' approach defining it as 'a specific manoeuvre intended to outwit an opponent or

competitor' – a definition clearly demonstrating inspiration from competitive strategy texts.

False strategy, however, is not exclusively targeted market participants but all company stakeholders. While researching the real intentions of company managers engaged in formal strategic planning, Peattie (1993) identified several reasons why managers announced false intentions to satisfy corporate management or to fight internal opposition. Moreover, he pointed to a situation in which the false strategy served as a smokescreen for the hidden strategy, when citing one company manager (1993: 13):

When asked about his formal 5-year plan he replied, 'Yes, it's very useful. It performs two different tasks. Firstly, it keeps the Board of Directors happy. Secondly, it's fixed the wobbly leg of this coffee table. The plan I run the business with was written over a year ago, by me, in my own way, for my business.'

Accordingly, Peattie (1993: 15) suggests replacing the term 'strategy as ploy' by the term 'strategy as a pronouncement', now defined as 'an intention announced to outwit competitors externally, to help to secure resources, or to influence key stakeholders, which the company does not intend to implement'.

Type 4: learning strategy

In this context learning strategy represents the neither intended nor communicated possible patterns of action. Without, or in spite of, earlier formed intentions, without a strategy actor's prior articulation of the intention, patterns of action may emerge in an organization from the pool of opportunities, which here is termed an organization's 'learning strategy'. Learning strategy in other words represents an organization's capacity to develop actions that have not been intentionally sought.

The importance of incorporating this potential for organizational learning was in fact the reason why Mintzberg (1978) redefined strategy as 'realized' and specifically labelled the transformation of the learning potential into realized strategy as 'emergent strategy' – this strategy type being a key characteristic of the strategy models 'Consensus' and 'Unconnected' presented by Mintzberg and Waters (1985).

To explain how patterns in organizational behaviour may develop without prior shared intentions, Stacey (1996: 50–51) argues that they result from 'complex interaction between people' and 'intuitive and unprogrammed decision-making'.

Management implications of learning strategy have also been discussed by writers in strategic management – some arguing that dynamic and unconsidered organizational action may hamper management efforts to change organizational strategies in intended directions or even make them impossible⁷ (March, 1981). In recognition of these difficulties, some writers have suggested that organizational strategies are largely uncontrolled and decoupled from intentions of leading organization members (Weick, 1976), or have asserted

that the role of organizational managers is mainly symbolic (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). More often, though, it has been suggested that the presence of environmental and organizational dynamics means that management has to shift its efforts away from formulating an explicit strategy towards fertilizing the organizational processes underlying strategy formation (Bower & Doz, 1979; Hamel, 1996) or consciously promoting strategic 'trial-and-error' behaviour in order to gain from learning effects (Mintzberg, 1990a; Quinn, 1978).

Huber (1991) argues that an organization's learning capacity can be subdivided into its abilities to acquire knowledge, distribute and interpret information and establish an organizational memory. Similarly, Bierly and Härmäläinen (1995) divide learning that is relevant to strategic management into four external and four internal domains. They argue that in order to create shared organizational knowledge, which is critical for all companies' development of capabilities and competitive advantage, these eight learning domains must all be stimulated and must interact even though the importance of each particular domain changes over time. As regards managers' creativity and learning skills, Roos, Victor, and Statler (2004) exemplify how learning potential may be stimulated by serious play.

Johnson, Melin, and Whittington (2003) suggest that the field should focus more on organizational micro processes and practices which constitute the day-to-day activities of organizational life. They suggest that these activities, which are also termed 'everyday innovations' (Johnson & Huff, 1998), are key to understanding the strategic outcome of organizations although they have often been 'invisible' in traditional strategy texts. Moncrieff (1999) calls this 'strategy in action' and stresses that activities of people may be carried out throughout the organization in ignorance of the formal strategy.

Type 5: realized strategy

Realized strategy represents the perception that strategy is what actually happens – the changing patterns of organization members' decisions, their activities, their actions and reactions, whether these are caused by intention, by adaptation or by pure coincidence.

The starting point of this view on strategy can be found in literature of the 1960s and 1970s where there was an incipient awareness of the possible misconceptions of uncritically accepting managers' pronouncements as corresponding to what was actually going on in an organization. For example, introducing the 'organizations-as-open-systems' view, Katz and Kahn (1966: 480) emphasized this when writing:

'...when officials announce a change in policy to embrace new objectives, we should look for the actual systemic changes taking place rather than accepting the statement at face value(...) because the functioning of a system is not necessarily given in the statements of its leaders.'

Therefore, the authors suggested (1966: 20) looking for the 'patterned activities of a number of individuals' that comprise all social systems. Also, Pettigrew (1977: 78) stated that specific dilemmas may allow us, as analysts, to think of strategy formulation as an intentional process, but '...strategy is being formed implicitly all the time.'

⁷ A pioneer in describing such difficulties for top managers was Chandler (1962).

In line with this thinking and in order to be able to research strategy in a broader and more descriptive context, Mintzberg ceased to separate strategy and organizational behaviour by defining the concept of strategy (Mintzberg, 1978: 934) as 'a pattern in a stream of decisions', although later 'decisions' was replaced by 'actions' (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). Mintzberg labelled this view of the concept 'strategy as pattern' and furthermore used terms such as: 'pattern in the behaviour of the corporation', 'pattern in a stream of actions', 'consistency in behaviour', and 'realized strategy' to represent this perception (Mintzberg, 1987).

This perception of strategy has also been adopted by other influential writers (e.g., Johnson, 1987; Quinn, 1982; Stacey, 1996). More recently Whittington (1996, 2006), Jarzabkowski, Balogun, and Seidl (2007) and Jarzabkowski and Whittington (2008) have promoted the lens of strategy 'as practice', emphasizing the need to align the perception of strategy with what strategy actors *do* in their day-to-day activities. The focus of analysis is the interplay between the material dimensions of the environment, the significance people attribute to them in strategy practices and how this shapes the actions of organization members (Wilson & Jarzabkowski, 2004). For example, it has been investigated how managers employ practices as offsite workshops (Hodgkinson, Johnson, Whittington, & Schwarz, 2006), crafting symbolic artefacts (Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith, 2006), or techniques of strategic mapping and sculpting strategic metaphors, using analogical reasoning (Statler, Jacobs, & Roos, 2008) in order to influence the actions of organizational members.

Strategy heterogeneity and interaction between types

Defining strategy heterogeneity

The main purpose of the strategy wheel model is to facilitate the representation of the idiosyncratic composition of an organization's strategy content. Defining strategy actors as all internal and external, individuals or groups of stakeholders capable of influencing organization members' overall patterns of action, implies that an organization's strategy content may consist of several, and possibly diverse, intentions and communications. In other words, a main idiosyncratic characteristic of an organization's strategy is viewed as the degree to which the content of strategy actors' intentions and communications can be represented as relatively consistent or inconsistent.

In the following, the term *heterogeneity* in an organization's strategy represents a situation of inconsistency and high diversity in or between the contents of an organization's outer layer (strategy as potential) strategy types in the strategy wheel model, for example that these strategy types contain multiple, diverse intentions and/or communications from strategy actors. Reversely, homogeneity in an organization's strategy content represents situations where the contents of an organization's outer layer strategy types are relatively consistent.

In this section the two aimed applications of the strategy wheel model: the model's capacity for discussing the idiosyncratic composition of an organization's strategy and

interaction between strategy types will be emphasized. First, in order to exemplify the in-field discussion on these issues, relevant assumptions of four well-known theoretical views in the strategy field will be analysed, and subsequently the model's capacity for adding new dimensions to the in-field discussion will be exemplified.

Four theoretical views

The review of strategic management literature showed that different theoretical views have different proposals in regard to the issues of strategy composition and strategy type interaction.

In the following, four previously defined in-field views⁸: the 'classical', the 'political', the 'processual' and the 'interpretive' will be briefly examined in regard to their assumptions considering strategy composition (homogeneous/heterogeneous) and proposals for over time relations between potential and realized strategy types.

The classical view

The classical view is described by Whittington (2001), Chaffee (1985) labels the view 'the linear model', while Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel (1998) subdivide the view into the design, planning and positioning schools.

In this view, strategy is initially mentally conceived: among organization top managers, intentions are formed regarding a desirable future or a collective situation (Christensen, Andrews, Bower, Hamermesh, & Porter, 1982). These intentions are then communicated to all organization members using formal, linguistic representations named plans, positioning, game plans, goals, or politics (Ansoff, 1965; Porter, 1980). Classical writers tend to define the strategy concept as collections of these formal representations of shared strategy (Andrews, 1987; Chandler, 1962).

Organizational members are expected to be loyal to thus sharing the goals, plans and directives formulated by organization top managers, that is, the potential strategy is assumed to be homogeneous, which has been described as the 'one-actor-one-goal' perspective (Mintzberg, 1983).

Even though classicists clearly prefer the 'shared strategy' type, some writers in competitive strategy also include elements of 'false strategy' mainly aimed at misguiding competitors' strategic actions (Heil et al., 1997; Peattie, 1993).

Classical writers term the interconnection between strategy as potential and realized strategy 'implementation' (Hill & Jones, 2004; Thompson & Strickland III, 1998). This is an extensive process in which all communicated plans, policies, activities, etc., as unaltered as allowed by environmental conditions, are carried through in a joint effort of all organization members (Ansoff, 1965; Lorange & Vancil, 1977).

The political view

The political view has been described by Eisenhardt and Zbaracki (1992), by Mintzberg (1990b) and by Mintzberg et al. (1998). Ansoff (1987) labels the perspective the 'organic model'.

⁸ These four views are included as examples illustrating differences and similarities in regard to the in-field discussion on strategy heterogeneity and strategy type interaction.

In the political view organizations are seen as compositions of part-organizational groups and individuals pursuing their own goals and interests, some of which are directly, or in part, conflicting by nature (Allison, 1971). According to this view, the officially declared strategy is supplemented by a number of unofficial, non-communicated intentions that are promoted by subgroups using various legitimate as well as illegitimate sources of power, coalitions and power games in order to advance their own interests (Pettigrew, 1973). Thus, potential strategy is seen to be heterogeneous at the organizational level as it consists of hidden, shared, and false strategies being promoted by different strategy actors (Eisenhardt & Zbaracki, 1992).

In the political view, strategy is generally perceived as 'realized'; as the decisions made by organization members (Hax & Majluf, 1996; Mintzberg, Raisinghani, & Theoret, 1976) and – like in the classical view – strategy as potential is also seen to precede strategy as realized (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois III, 1988; Pettigrew, 1977). However, here the transformation process is termed bargaining, compromising, or decision-making (Cyert & March, 1963). In this continuous process of bargaining and decision-making, sources of power possessed and the will and skills to build coalitions or play power games determine the extent of influence on decisions (realized strategy) each subgroup obtains (Pettigrew, 1985).

The processual view

The processual view has been described by Whittington (2001), by Jones (1998), and it is denominated the 'learning school' by Mintzberg et al. (1998).

Processual writers sometimes accept the classical notion that strategic intentions may be pre hoc mentally conceived by top managers and subsequently communicated to organization members as shared strategy. However, more significance is attributed to the learning path to strategy, which may be labelled 'emergent strategy' (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985) or 'incrementalism' (Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1963; Quinn, 1978), and which is seen to make significant contributions to an organization's realized strategy (Bourgeois III & Brodwin, 1984; Mintzberg, 1978).

Like the political view, the processual view also conceives that potential strategy is heterogeneous at the organizational level. Here, however, heterogeneity is not seen as an outcome of strategy actors' conflicts of interest but rather as recommendable since managers are unable to comprehend and predict all aspects of dynamic organizational life (Levy, 1994; Stacey, 1996). According to this view, strategy making should be kept flexible and decentralized so as to promote strategic learning and employee motivation (Day & Tinney, 1968). As a result, organizational experimentation and diversity in intentions will exist at the organizational level. The concept of strategy is defined as 'realized', for example, as 'autonomous behaviour' (Burgelman, 1983) as the 'patterns of actions' (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985) or as the 'micro activities' (Johnson et al., 2005) of organization members.

The interpretive view

The interpretive view has been described by Chaffee (1985), and it is labelled the 'constructionist view' by Mintzberg et al. (1998).

According to this view, what is essential for understanding the formation of an organizational identity, strategy, and the way members of an organization act is the communicated part of potential strategy (Eccles & Nohria, 1998). Strategy is generally comprehended through, and also defined by, the linguistic representations communicated by organization top managers, which may be termed symbols, symbolic language, metaphors, myths, anecdotes and storytelling (Pfeffer, 1981a).

As these linguistic representations of an organization's strategy – reflecting top managers' interpretations of the organization and its situation – are disseminated among organizational members, unity and commonality in perceptions develop, thus, potential strategy is seen as homogeneous at the organizational level (Weick & Roberts, 1993).

In the interpretive view, realized strategy may be termed 'enacted organizational reality' or it may be seen as the actions of organization members (Smircich & Stubbart, 1985). The connections between the realized and potential levels of strategy are perceived as cyclical. The process starts by top managers interpreting their own and others' actions and making sense by adding meaning to these actions (Weick, 1995). In model terms, realized strategy is transformed into intention. Following, top managers communicate linguistic representations of their interpretations (making hidden strategy shared) causing an organization-wide enactment of their view on organizational reality, giving sense, and affecting the actions of all organization members (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Hill & Levenhagen, 1995).

In Fig. 2, the four theoretical views' assumptions on strategy composition (homogeneous/heterogeneous) and proposed relations between realized strategy and potential (/outer layer) strategy types are illustrated.

Propositions for model application

This section includes propositions for how the strategy wheel model adds new dimensions to in-field discussions in relation to:

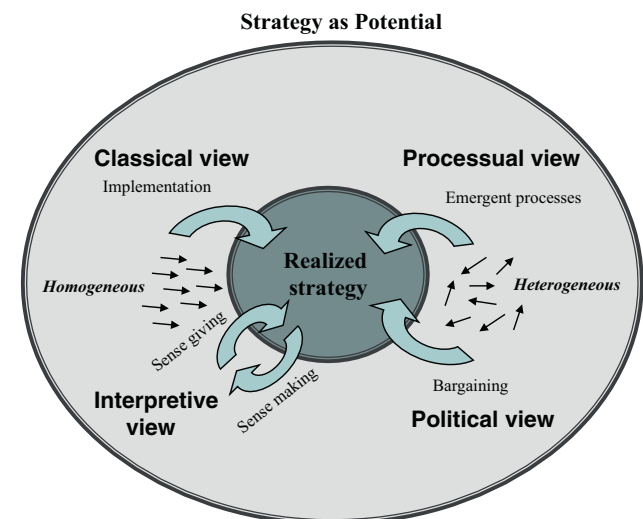


Figure 2 Four theoretical views' assumptions on strategy composition and type relations.

1. Possible causes of heterogeneity in an organization's strategy content.
2. How the outer layer strategy types interact in influencing the inner, realized strategy.

Strategy heterogeneity

The question on possible causes of heterogeneity in an organization's strategy has only received little attention in strategic management literature. However, as revealed in the above review of four theoretical views both the political and the processual views hold assumptions on heterogeneity in strategy composition, although the views propose different causes for this (groups pursuing conflicting goals and autonomous learning, respectively).

The strategy wheel model proposes that several further causes may induce heterogeneity in an organization's strategy content. According to model criteria, heterogeneity in an organization's strategy may stem from the following overall sources:

1. Intentions of strategy actors are inconsistent.
2. Communications from strategy actors are inconsistent.
3. Inconsistency between strategy actors' intentions and communications.
4. Learning potential is inconsistent with strategy actors' intentions and/or communications.

In this way, all four outer level strategy types may contribute to increasing strategy heterogeneity in an organization. In the following examples will be given.

In principle, *shared strategy* may induce heterogeneity in an organization's strategy in two ways. First, different strategy actors, for example different managers, autonomous organizational units or external stakeholders, like corporate or public owners, may communicate intentions that are mutually inconsistent. Intentions may simply not be coordinated, e.g. in order to promote decentralized involvement or due to a loose management style, or strategy actors may not communicate the same intentions because they do not agree about a desired direction of development for the organization.

Second, heterogeneity in shared strategy may also be a result of inconsistency in communications from the same strategy actor, e.g. the company CEO or an organization's management team. Strategy actors may not themselves have formed consistent intentions, which may be reflected in similar inconsistency in their communications. But also, a strategy actor may not communicate consistent intentions to organization members simply because the actor is unaware of aligning the intentions that are communicated in different – formal and informal, written and oral – types of communications, such as plans, goals, policies, directives, narratives, metaphors or mission statement.

Hidden strategy may induce heterogeneity in an organization's strategy. Strategy actors may have various reasons to hide their intentions. Managers may hold back their intentions in an attempt to stimulate creativity among employees, thus seeking to improve the innovative capabilities of the organization. But also managers may choose to hold back intentions because they are convinced that open communication would provide a weakened platform for realizing intentions. Hence specific stakeholder groups like

employees, middle managers, owners, politicians or providers of finance may deliberately be precluded from knowledge of intentions. In some cases, national legislation may forbid top managers to communicate intentions openly (e.g. in relation to upcoming mergers or acquisitions). Also, timing considerations may motivate managers to hold back intentions of future change. Managers may assess that communications are more effective in promoting desired actions if postponed to more favourable occasions.

Organizational groups and influential individuals may pursue intentions, which they do not communicate openly. For example, groups may not have confidence in top managers' ambitions for the organization and therefore choose to pursue their own intentions, which may be to simply continue previous behaviour or to act in manners that are seen as better attuned to current conditions and expected developments. Groups may also develop their own intentions because they feel a stronger commitment towards the group than towards the entire organization or its top managers. When top managers' communications about desired developments are not well understood by organizational groups, for example because communications are perceived as inconsistent, groups may also, unofficially, create and pursue their own intentions.

False strategy may increase strategy heterogeneity. Strategy actors such as top managers may deliberately communicate false intentions in order to satisfy stakeholders like parent companies, banks and investors, the stock market, employees, NGO's or other internal or external stakeholders, or they may do so in an attempt to mislead competitors. Communications may here serve as a smokescreen the purpose being to calm down key opponents to the managers' real intentions, or it is meant to provide peace for the managers to work. Influential organizational individuals, managers or groups may also communicate false intentions, for example to secure their own positions, to keep managers' attention away from actual activities or to fight opposing internal or external actors.

Also strategy actors may communicate false strategy due to an oversight or lack of interest. For instance, this occurs when the formally communicated strategy, like the official plan or the company website, is not updated to match current strategic intentions.

Learning strategy may increase strategy heterogeneity when learning activities are unfocused and inconsistent at the organizational level. It may, of course, be difficult to determine whether or not learning activities are focused, because creativity by nature involves a certain amount of unfocused explorative initiative. However, if learning potential is inconsistent with strategy actors' intentions and communications moving organizational activities into many, diverse directions, learning strategy contributes to strategy heterogeneity.

Interaction between strategy types

The second aim of the strategy wheel model is to open up the discussion on possible interaction between strategy types. In particular the over time relationships between realized strategy versus intended, communicated or learning strategy have been discussed in literature. One of the most well-established concepts in the field of strategic management is the dichotomous division between deterministic and

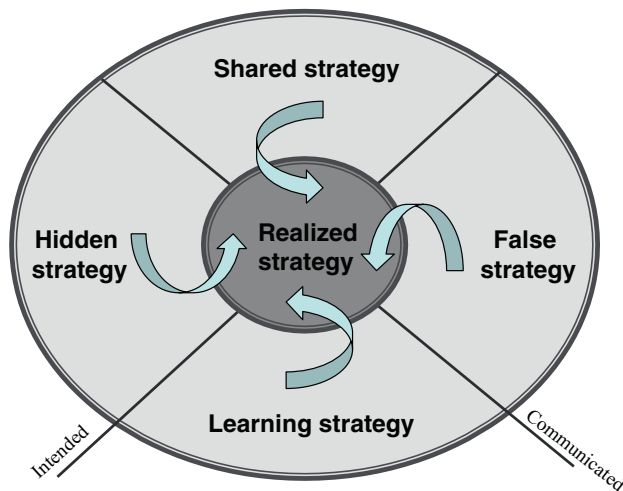


Figure 3 The strategy-type interaction model.

learning-based paths to strategy formation. This dichotomy has been termed ‘planning versus incrementalism’ (de Witt & Meyer, 1999), ‘design school versus learning’ (Ansoff, 1991; Mintzberg, 1990a), ‘prescriptive versus emergent’ (Lynch, 2009), and ‘deliberate versus emergent’ (Mintzberg, 1978). Mintzberg’s ‘deliberate/emergent’ model clearly illustrates this dichotomy arguing that realized strategy is the outcome of either organizational managers implementing their intentions or, the alternative, organizational learning processes.

In Fig. 3, the strategy-type interaction model shows that over time all four, outer layer strategy types interact in influencing the realized strategy of an organization. Interaction between strategy types as well as the possible presence of strategy heterogeneity add complexity and new answers to the question on how intention, communication and learning influence the strategy that is realized, than what is proposed by dichotomous models.

This may be illustrated by the case where an organization’s realized strategy does not correspond well with the official strategy, which was communicated at an earlier point in time (e.g. the official plan was not realized). According to the ‘deliberate/emergent’ model, this situation will generally be seen as an example of ‘emergent strategy’: managers being incapable of implementing their ideas, and instead organizational learning effects developed into the strategy that was realized.

The strategy-type interaction model suggests that because of strategy type interactions beyond this scenario, several scenarios can be added to the explanations of dichotomous models, for example that...

1. managers did implement their (hidden) intention and the official strategy was exclusively communicated to calm down key stakeholders or mislead competitors (hidden and false strategy interaction)
2. managers held one or more alternatives open and communicated only one of these as the official strategy – which, perhaps due to environmental developments, was not the one that was realized (shared and hidden strategy interaction)

3. top managers or other strategy actors abandoned the official strategy at an early point in time, and, in its place another intention was pursued and was realized, despite the official strategy not being changed (shared, hidden and false strategy interaction)
4. learning effects changed intentions gradually over time among key actors – these changes were not officially communicated and may not have been approved by top management (hidden and learning strategy interaction)

In case of strategy heterogeneity it may also have happened that...

5. managers did not succeed in implementing their intentions (the formal strategy) but other stronger organizational strategy actors did – those being actors who had no wish to change the organization’s current direction, or actors who did not share top managers’ aspirations for the organization
6. the realized strategy emerged as a resultant effect based on several strategy actors’ efforts to promote their diverse intentions and interests which were inconsistent with the official strategy
7. managers’ communications were inconsistent, for example, the official strategy was inconsistent with the oral directives, guidelines and stories being communicated by managers – which turned out to have a stronger influence on employee behaviour
8. managers communicated varying intentions over time because their own intentions varied
9. different internal or external strategy actors (e.g. rival managers, politicians and owners) communicated different intentions, which made organization members pursue different intentions

These scenarios are examples of possible relations between the four outer layer strategy types and the strategy that is realized by an organization. More possible scenarios could be constructed illustrating how interaction between strategy types and the presence of strategy heterogeneity add new dimensions, and thus complexity, to this issue.

Discussion and conclusion

The contribution of this paper relates to current in-field discussions and research.

The *strategy-as-practice* perspective which is inspired by a practice turn in contemporary sociological theory (Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1985; Schatzki, 2001) has been introduced to the strategy field by Whittington (1996, 2003) and Jarzabkowski (2003, 2005). In this view strategy should be more focused on what *people do* in organizations when they strategize rather than the simplistic leadership tradition focusing on charismatic business leaders (Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008; Whittington, 1996). This perspective emphasizes the ‘micro strategy’ resulting from day-to-day activities of organizational life (Johnson et al., 2003; Salvato, 2003) that are conducted by organizational individuals, groups and networks (Johnson et al., 2005) at higher (Samra-Fredericks, 2003) and lower organizational levels (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Rouleau, 2005). These activities may differ in content between an organization’s centre and

periphery (Regnér, 2003) and the balance between recursive and adaptive behaviours may be key in understanding organizations' ability to develop dynamic capabilities (Regnér, 2008). Further, in Whittington's (2006) tripartite division for practice research, practitioners, practices and praxis, practitioners may be both internal and external strategy actors. In these ways the strategy-as-practice perspective suggests that potentially multiple actors contribute to the strategy content of an organization, which is the basic premise of this paper's strategy model.

Practice writers' situated approach to research has also shown that pluralistic contexts may include multiple goals and diffuse power (Denis, Langley, & Rouleau, 2007) and how strategy actor contributions may sometimes be conflicting (Laine & Vaara, 2007; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2003; Sminia, 2005), a situation that is described by Jarzabkowski (2005) as the existence of multiple strategies in an organization. In this way practice texts include some interpretations of the particular phenomenon of diversity in the composition of an organization's strategy, which in this paper is defined 'strategy heterogeneity'. Here several general causes of strategy heterogeneity are advanced; in different ways representing inconsistencies in and between the shared, hidden, false and learning strategy types of an organization.

Although strategy-as-practice writers prefer to define an organization's strategy as the situated activities of strategy practitioners (in this paper categorized as the realized strategy type), some writers have argued that communication, such as oral discourse, narratives and written texts, are central practices that should be seen as part of what *people do* in organizations (Fenton & Langley, 2011: 1172; Spee & Jarzabkowski, 2011). The significance of including all oral and written, formal and informal types of communication also is emphasized in this paper. However, here strategy actors' communications and intentions are seen as strategy content and the relations and interaction between these strategy constituents are seen as critical in representing the idiosyncrasy and dynamic characteristics of an organization's strategy content.

In this paper it is assumed that intentions may be formed by strategy actors whether as individuals or as groups. However, as demonstrated in research in *intentional action*, it is not always easily stated when intentions are formed at the individual or at group level, and when not (Knobe, 2006). Bratman (1984) argues that intention for a single actor may have different interpretations, and also the limitations of nonspecialist, or 'folk', conceptions have been discussed (Lanteri, 2012; McCann, 2005; Mele, 2012). Furthermore, it has been discussed when a common intention at the group level can be said to exist (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002), which is relevant to the arguments in this paper when strategy actors are groups of individuals. Tuomela (1995: 2010) has developed criteria for defining a 'we-intention' or a 'we-mode', and similarly Bratman (1997) defines 'shared intention' at the group level, which is relevant to define when strategy actors have formed common intentions to perform desired actions. Also contributions in intentional action have shown that action may involve 'side effects', which actors are aware of but do not care about or side effects that are not actually intended (Knobe, 2003; Mele & Sverdluk, 1996). Strategy actors may also try to promote intended actions in a way

which is ineffective (Hindriks, 2011) and which may cause unexpected results (in model terms: bring unexpected realized strategy).

However, while this discussion is highly relevant to the application of the models in this paper, the models do not per se assume specific links between intention and action, but exclusively define the existence of strategy actors' intentions and organization members' patterns of action. Further, the strategy-type interaction model suggests that strategy actors' intentions, in addition to their communications and (unintended) learning potential, may influence the patterns of action of organization members. Thus this paper seeks to open up the discussion of possible relations between intentions, communications, unintended learning effects and actions, but it does not specifically address the questions: when are actions actually intended? Or whether it takes skills, luck, causal control (Nadelhoffer, 2005), action nets (Lindberg & Czarniawska, 2006) or other preconditions to make actions more or less effective in influencing organization members' patterns of action?

In relation to the contribution and arguments of this paper, more research is needed in regard to implications of heterogeneity in an organization's strategy content. Earlier research has indicated that strategy heterogeneity may involve both constructive and destructive effects as regards its influence on organizational performance. For example, while some writers have suggested that politicalization is a constructive part of strategy formation (Huff, 1988; Quinn, 1982; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977), others have argued that this can lead to suboptimization and inefficient strategy (Eisenhardt & Zbaracki, 1992; Mintzberg et al., 1998).

However, this paper suggests that there are several reasons why inconsistencies in or between the outer layer strategy types in the strategy wheel model may induce heterogeneity in an organization's strategy. The prevalence and effects of such different reasons for heterogeneity may vary and e.g. be more widespread in certain cultures or industries, or in relation to different styles of management. It is needed to develop more research projects to increase our understanding in relation to these issues.

Another issue that has been approached in this paper is interaction between the strategy types in the strategy-type interaction model. More questions could be researched in relation to this issue, for example whether strategy actors intentionally combine outer layer strategy types in order to influence the realized strategy in desired directions. For example, managers may intentionally choose to combine strategy types in order to influence employees' patterns of action in wanted ways. Reasons of timing, confidentiality, felt involvement, reducing stakeholder resistance, etc., may motivate managers to combine strategy types hoping to generate specific behavioural outcomes among groups of stakeholders. Also, specific relations between strategy types (e.g. hidden and false strategy) may be more prevalent under specific environmental or organizational conditions and involve different sets of outcomes.

This paper presents a new model of the content of an organization's strategy. The model aims to portray the idiosyncratic characteristics in the composition of an organization's strategy content as well as the dynamics derived from interaction between the contributions of possibly multiple influencers. Based on a literature review perceptions of

organizations' strategy content reveals three generalized constituents 'intentions', 'communications' and 'realized'. These constituents form the basis of a general model of an organization's strategy content, 'the strategy wheel model', including the five types of organizational strategy: shared, hidden, false, learning and realized. The model emphasizes that an organization's strategy content may be heterogeneous in composition reflecting inconsistencies in, or between, the four outer layer strategy types in the model, e.g. that strategy types contain multiple and diverse intentions and communications from strategy actors.

The strategy-type interaction model suggests that beyond heterogeneity over time dynamic interaction between strategy types add multiplicity and complexity to the relationships between the four outer layer strategy types and the inner type: the strategy that is realized. The examples of four theoretical views in strategic management and dichotomous models of strategy formation have illustrated how the models add new explanations and contributions to in-field discussions.

It is proposed that future research should focus more on the effects of different causes of strategy heterogeneity and how strategy types interact in influencing the realized strategy of organizations.

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