

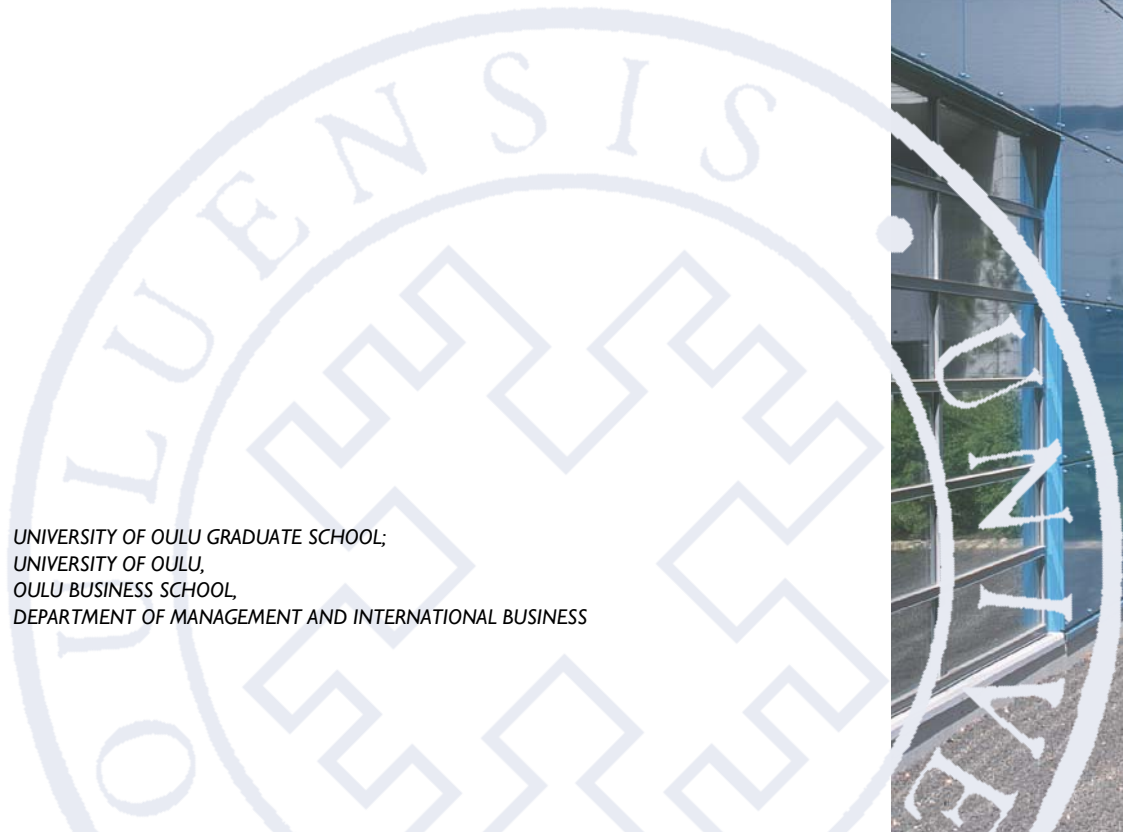
Anniina Rantakari

STRATEGY AS 'DISPOSITIVE'

ESSAYS ON PRODUCTIVE POWER AND RESISTANCE
IN STRATEGY-MAKING

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OECONOMICA

UNIVERSITY OF OULU GRADUATE SCHOOL;
UNIVERSITY OF OULU,
OULU BUSINESS SCHOOL,
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS



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ANNIINA RANTAKARI

STRATEGY AS 'DISPOSITIVE'

Essays on productive power and resistance in
strategy-making

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine how power produces organizational strategy-making. In particular, I follow the theorizations of Michel Foucault and conceptualize power as productive and relational. In my theorization, I adopt the concept of dispositive for a two-fold reason. First, the concept of dispositive enables me to build and integrative theorization for strategy process and practice research that consists of three elements of analysis: power, discourse and subjectivity. Second, dispositive analysis allows me to examine how this framework can be seen as relational and in the continuous state of emerging.

With my thesis I add to poststructural strategy process and practice literature by examining strategy as an organizational dispositive. In my view I define dispositive as an artificial rationality through which relations between power, discourse and subject are intensified into material and social practices. This conceptualization enables me to re-evaluate three underlying assumptions of strategy research: Strategy as rational and intentional planning, defining of a strategist through practices of planning and implementing strategy, and defining organizational practices as strategic practices when they are directly related to the activities of the planning or implementing official strategies. In the empirical part of the thesis I draw in a case study from a Finnish call center. My empirical analysis shows how participation in strategy-making unfolds through power relations, namely practices of organizational control and individual self-actualization. This enables strategy scholars to better understand how strategy realizes through relations of power.

The theoretical framework and the empirical analysis combined enables me to examine three key processes identified in recent strategy process and practice research from a different angle. First, my theorization shows how intensified strategy implementation and striving for coherence can lead to increased conflict and polarization of strategic practices. Second, I show strategy as a future-oriented planning can lead to reproduction of past. Third, I show that resistance can be seen as productive in strategy-making, which leads to also that agency in strategy-making can be defined through practices of resisting.

Keywords: agency, discourse, dispositive, power, practice, resistance, strategy, subjectivity

Rantakari, Anniina, Strategia 'dispositiivina'. Esseitä vallan ja resistanssin tuottavasta voimasta strategiatyössä

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Tiivistelmä

Tämän väitöskirjan tarkoituksena on tutkia, kuinka valta tuottaa strategiatyötä organisaatioissa. Tutkimuksessani nojaudun Michel Foucault'n teoriaan vallasta tuottavana ja relationaalisena voimana. Tutkimukseni linssinä käytän Foucault'n dispositiivin käsitettä kahdesta syystä. Ensiksi, dispositiivin käsite mahdollistaa strategiaprosessi- ja käytäntötutkimuksen teoretisoinnin tavalla, joka yhdistää kolmen analyysielementin tarkastelun samanaikaisesti. Nämä analyysielementit ovat: valta, diskurssi ja subjektifikaatio. Toiseksi, dispositiivi mahdollistaa näiden kolmen elementin välisten suhteiden tarkastelun relationaalisesti ja prosessuaalisesti.

Tutkimukseni kontribuoi strategia prosessi- ja käytäntötutkimukseen tarkastelemalla strategiaa organisaationaalisena dispositiivina. Määrittelen dispositiivin keinotekoiseksi rationaliteetiksi, jonka kautta vallan, diskurssin ja subjektiviteettien väliset suhteet tiivistyvät materiaalisiksi ja sosiaalisiksi käytännöiksi. Tämän kautta voin tarkastella kolmea keskeistä strategiatutkimukseen liittyvää ennako-oletusta, joita ovat: strategia rationaalisena ja intentionaalisena suunnitteluna, strategin määrittelyä strategian suunnittelu- ja implementointityöhön osallistumisen kautta, ja strategisen käytännön määrittelyä ainoastaan strategian suunnittelemisen tai implementoinnin näkökulmasta. Tutkimuksen empirisessä osassa, joka on tapaustutkimus suomalaisesta puhelinpalvelukeskusta, osoitan kuinka osallistuminen strategiatyöhön tapahtuu valtasuhteissa organisaationaalisen kontrollin ja yksilön itsensä toteuttamisen välillä. Tutkimuksen empiirinen osa lisää ymmärrystä kuinka strategiat realisoituvat valtasuhteiden kautta.

Teoreettisen viitekehyksen ja empiirisen analyysin yhdistäminen mahdollistaa kolmen strategiatutkimukselle keskeisen prosessin tarkastelun uudesta näkökulmasta. Ensiksi, kuinka tehostettu strategian implementointi ja koherenssin tavoittelu voi johtaa konflikteihin ja strategiakäytäntöjen polarisoitumiseen, Toiseksi, kuinka strategian tulevaisuusorientoitunut suunnittelu voi johtaa menneisyyden käytäntöjen uudelleentuottamiseen. Kolmanneksi, kuinka resistanssi voidaan nähdä voimana, joka sekä tuottaa strategiatyötä että mahdollistaa strategin määrittelyn resistanssikäytäntöjen kautta.

Asiasanat: diskurssi, dispositiivi, käytäntö, resistanssi, strategia, subjektiviteetti, toimijuus, valta

*To the strongest women I have ever met: Aino Emilia
Rantakari and Aino Elviira Käyhkö*

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Accomplishments do not emerge from a single source. Moreover, the realization of accomplishments can not be explained solely with will power, individual intention, or skills of planning and rational analysis. Even though it would be soothing to trust on the idea of that we all have equal opportunities in life, a lot in life depends on what you are given before you have earned anything. Writing this thesis has been one of those processes that has made this unequal aspect of life explicit. So, without denying the impact of individual efforts, a lot depends on pure luck. And lucky I have been. During this process, I have had exceptional people around me who have supported me, taken me under their wings, and helped me beyond necessary just that I could accomplish something that I want. Hereby, I would like to thank particularly those who have given me this opportunity.

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Learning is not solely cumulative. It is both constructing and deconstructing. It's tricky because if you want to learn, you need to be willing to challenge the existing patterns of your own thinking. This process of writing my thesis has forced me to unpack my own paradigms, both academic and beyond. And what a ride it has been. However, neither life nor learning, takes place only inside academia. Even though I love (and hate) research, the most fundamental part of my life is somewhere else. My daughter Emilia is my world. You have taught me more that I could ever have imagined. I want to be a better person for you. My dear grandmother Aino Käyhkö taught me perseverance. To these two women I owe my work.

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Oulu 5.10.2016

Anniina Rantakari

Abbreviations

etc.	et cetera
i.e.	id est
e.g.	exempli gratia

List of publications

Original publications are not included to the electronic version of the dissertation.

- I Rantakari A & Puhakka V Strategy as dispositive - Analysis of power, discourse and subjectivity in strategy-making. Conference paper in Academy of Management Annual Meeting in Anaheim, US 2016.
- II Rantakari A & Vaara E (forthcoming 2016) Resistance in organizational strategy-making. In Courpasson D & Vallas S (eds) The Sage Handbook of Resistance. Reprinted with permission of SAGE Ltd.
- III Rantakari A & Vaara E (forthcoming 2016) Narratives and processuality. In Langley A & Tsoukas H (eds) The Sage Handbook of Process Organization Studies. Published in this thesis ahead of print with permission of SAGE Ltd.
- IV Rantakari A Participation in strategy realization: The dynamics of control and self-actualization in strategy-making. Manuscript in a journal revision process.

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1 Introduction

Theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice. But it is local and regional, as you said, and not totalizing. This is a struggle against power, a struggle aimed at revealing and undermining power where it is most invisible and insidious. It is not to 'awaken consciousness' that we struggle, but to sap power, to take power; it is an activity conducted alongside those who struggle for power, and not their illumination from a safe distance. A 'theory' is a regional system of this struggle.

Michel Foucault 1977: 208

1.1 Background and the research gap

Traditionally, strategy-making in organizations is seen as the practice of management. In its simplest form, organizational strategy-making is seen as the systemic chain of events: Analysis-planning-implementation-control. This view on strategy reflects the ideas of functional thinking, and defines managers as strategists, while personnel beyond management are left with the role of respondents of strategy implementation and thus objects of strategic control.

However, due to the more general practice turn in management studies (Reckwitz 2002, Feldman & Orlikowski 2011, Schatzki 2001), recent decades in strategy research have witnessed a proliferation of studies that focus on the activities and practices in and around strategy-making (Golsorkhi, Rouleau, Seidl & Vaara 2010, Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl 2007, Johnson, Melin & Whittington 2003, Whittington & Cailluet 2008). This stream of studies, broadly defined as strategy as practice research, has examined strategy as embedded in organizational and societal practices (Vaara & Whittington 2012). Following Jarzabkowski's (2005: 1) seminal definition of strategy '*as something people do*', the focus on the micro-practices of managerial strategy-making has been distinctive to this stream of literature (Spee & Jarzabkowski 2011, Whittington 2003). In this way, strategy as practice studies have opened up strategy research to the variety of qualitative methods to better understand strategy-making (Vaara & Whittington 2012).

Pivotal in gearing attention towards social practices of strategy-making has been Mintzberg's research on the social processes of strategy-making (Mintzberg 1978). In addition to giving emphasis to the dynamics of intended and emergent

strategies (Mintzberg & Waters 1985), Mintzberg work has contributed to the early 'power school' (Mintzberg 1978, Pettigrew 1977, 1986, Pfeffer 1992) of strategy research that has highlighted the plurality of actors involved in, as well as the political conditions of, organizational strategy-making. This view has been central for the developments of strategy research since it has enabled strategy scholars to better understand the dynamic nature of organizational strategy-making. Another cornerstone in the development of philosophically grounded theorizations of strategy-making has been Knights and Morgan's (1991) seminal study of the power effects of strategy discourses. In their study Knights and Morgan applied Foucault's view on power and discourse to build foundations and to better understand the historical and political conditions of possibility of organizational strategy.

However, despite this shift in focus from the functional analysis of strategy towards a more socially-oriented views on strategy-making, strategy process and practice research has been criticized for not truly engaging with the political and relational theories of practice (Carter, Clegg & Kornberger 2008, MacKay & Chia 2007, Rasche & Chia 2009). According to Seidl & Whittington (2014), the fascination with the detailed understanding of local practices has produced atheoretical 'micro-isolationism' around this field of research. With this micro-isolationism Seidl and Whittington (2014) refer to such a view on strategy practices that focuses on to examine local empirical instance in terms of what is evidently present, cut off from the larger phenomena that make it possible. In this way, studies of strategy process and practice research can still be seen to follow the tenets of functionalistic thinking (Carter 2013).

These tenets of functionalist thinking can be shown in the three main underlying assumptions (Alvesson & Sandberg 2011, Davis 1971) related to research on organizational strategy-making. These assumptions are the following. First, strategy is based on rational analysis and calculation (Ansoff 1965: 94, Porter 1980, 1985, Prahalad & Hamel 1994). Second, an organizational actor is called a strategist when the doing is related to the process of analyzing or forming of the corporate strategy (Vaara & Whittington 2012, Dameron & Torset 2014). Third, organizational practices are defined as strategic practices when they are directly related to the activities of the planning or implementing 'strategies' (Spee & Jarzabkowski 2011, Whittington 2006).

Thus, while both Mintzberg's (Mintzberg 1978, Mintzberg & Waters 1985) and Knights and Morgan's (1991) work has advanced our understanding of the dynamic nature of strategy-making, questions related to relationality and the political and historical conditions of possibility have still remained marginal in strategy research.

However, there is one stream of literature within strategy research, namely critical strategy discourse research (Ezzamel & Willmott 2008, Grandy & Mills 2004, Hardy & Thomas 2014, Knights & Morgan 1991; Kornberger & Clegg 2011; Laine & Vaara 2007, Levy, Alvesson & Willmott 2003, Lilley 2001, McCabe 2010, 2016), that has pinpointed to various issues around power in the processes and practice of strategy-making. This stream of literature has strived to challenge the ways how process and practice scholars of strategy treat following two issues: How strategy process and practice research still have the tendency to treat power as the possession of management (Alvesson & Willmott 1995, McCabe 2010), and how strategy process and practice scholars have the tendency to reduce practices of organizational strategy-making into observable and surface level activities of the 'strategists' (Carter *et al.* 2008, Chia & Holt 2006, MacKay & Chia 2013).

So, having said this, I acknowledge that I am not the first one who strives to unpack the abovementioned underlying assumptions of strategy research. The critically-oriented strategy discourse research has contributed to strategy research by examining organizational strategy-making as a societal and historical phenomenon that produces different power effects on organizations. This line of inquiry has adopted conceptualizations of prominent social theorists such as Bourdieu (2002), Derrida (1984), Garfinkel (1967), Foucault (1977), to build a more coherent use of the concept of practice. These studies can also be seen as one continuation from the power school of strategy. More specifically, critical strategy discourse research has contributed to strategy literature by examining three key elements related to practice theory. These elements are: power, discourse, and subjectivity (Dameron & Torset 2014, Dick & Collings 2014, Grandy & Mills 2004, Hardy & Thomas 2014, Knights & Morgan 1991, Kornberger & Clegg 2011, Laine & Vaara 2007, McCabe 2010).

However, even though critical strategy discourse research has advanced our understanding on substantial elements of analysis, namely, power, discourse, and subjectivity, two aspects have remained underdeveloped within this stream of research. These aspects are: the relational nature of practices (Chia & Holt 2007, Chia & MacKay 2007, Rasche & Chia 2009) and theorizations that would conceptually integrate these three elements to strategy process and practice research (Carter *et al.* 2008). I will discuss these elements in a more detailed manner in the next section.

1.2 Objectives and the research question

In my thesis I strive to examine organizational strategy-making in a manner that both takes into account the historical and political conditions of possibility, and avoids slipping into micro-isolationism. To do this, I take Knights and Morgan's (1991) study as a starting point and approach organizational strategy-making from the perspective of productive power (Foucault 1969, 1972, 1979, 1980). Using Foucauldian thinking to examine organizational strategy-making is not novel per se since strategy scholars also after Knights and Morgan (1991) have applied Foucauldian analysis to examine the role of power in strategy discourses. In particular, Foucault-oriented studies have already contributed to strategy research by examining questions related to power, such as inclusion and exclusion (Knights & Morgan 1991, Laine & Vaara 2007), the constitutive nature of strategy discourse (Ezzamel & Willmott 2008, Grandy & Mills 2004, Samra-Fredericks 2005), and the role of resistance (Dick & Collings 2014, Hardy & Thomas 2014, McCabe 2010).

With my thesis I wish to extend the abovementioned stream of literature in two ways. First, I focus on relational nature of power and second, I build an integrative theorization of organizational strategy-making. In the elaboration of relationality I draw on the notion of becoming (Chia 1999, Tsoukas & Chia 2002) that gives primacy to relationality and processuality over individual agents or intention. In organization studies in general and in change literature in particular, the notion of becoming has already been widely accepted (e.g. Carlsen 2006, Clegg, Kornberger & Rhodes 2005, Thomas, Sargent & Hardy 2011). However, in strategy literature the explicit elaborations of the notion of becoming has (with only few exceptions, see e.g. Chia & Holt 2006 and MacKay & Chia 2013) stayed in the margins. Hence, distinctive in my view is the given emphasis on the processual nature of productive power (Foucault 1969, 1972, 1978, 1980). With this approach I strive to continue the poststructural perspective on strategy process and practice research (Dick & Collings 2014, Ezzamel & Willmott 2008, Hardy & Thomas 2014, Knights & Morgan 1991, Laine & Vaara 2007, McCabe 2010, Samra-Fredericks 2005). By giving special emphasis on the relational and processual nature of power enables me to better understand how power relations, namely power and resistance, produce organizational strategy-making.

To address this gap in literature shown in the previous section, I adopt the concept of *dispositive* that is seen as central in Foucault's thinking of power (Foucault 1980, see also Agamben 2007, Bussolini 2010, Raffnsøe, Gudmand-

Hoyer & Thaning 2016). In my view I define dispositive as an artificial rationality through which relations between power, discourse and subject are intensified into material and social practices. To define strategy as an artificial rationality allows us to draw attention to the functionalistic assumptions of strategy research, and furthermore to unpack these assumptions. In this definition, with artificial I refer to social phenomena that are seen as hyperreal (Baudrillard 1988) and are thus considered to be continuously reproducing itself through discourses of knowledge and different social and material arrangements (Knights & Morgan 1991). Furthermore, hyperreality is seen as a form of simulation, that Baudrillard (1988) described with the concept of simulacra. This means that strategy and strategic management has attained a level of representation, where strategy is taken as a 'natural' truth (Grandy & Mills 2004), even though it is impossible to '*isolate the process of the real, or to prove it real*' (Baudrillard 1983: 41)

However, to treat strategy as an artificial rationality does not mean that strategy would not have an impact on actual organizational life such as objects, practices, events and experiences, Instead, the function of organizational strategy can be seen to 'create' organizational problems that can only be 'solved' by the strategists (Alvesson & Willmott 1995). In their study of strategy as simulacra, Grandy and Mills (2004) paraphrase the actual effects of artificiality through Baudrillard's (1995) notion of the war on Iraq: "... *although real people were killed and injured, the 'war' on Iraq was primarily a media event about strategy.*" (Grandy & Mills 2004: 1165). Even though Baudrillard's notion above can be seen as grotesque, it metaphorically illustrates why it is important to examine the intersections between the artificial and the actual.

In sum, the purpose of my thesis is to show that even though organizational strategy can be seen as a taken for granted rationality that has no immediate substantial nature to take hold of (cf. Raffnsøe *et al.* 2016), strategy as an artificial rationality produces actual social and material effects both on an organizational and on a societal level. In particular, I argue that with the concept of dispositive we can theorize this continuous reproduction between artificial rationalities and actual social and material effects in the context of organizational strategy-making. In this way the concept of dispositive enables me to pinpoint to the intersections between discursive and non-discursive practices (Foucault 1978, 1980).

In my thesis I define strategy as an organizational dispositive. This means that in organizational settings strategy is given a function that can be seen as hyperreal. In other words, from a managerial perspective strategy represents a necessity of condition without which organizations can not survive. Defining strategy as an

organizational dispositive holds a twofold implication. First, it enables me to examine how power relations can be seen as productive in relation to organizational strategy-making. Second, the concept of dispositive enables me to theorize the interrelations between three substantive elements of analysis: power, discourse and subjectivity. In this way I can examine how underlying and less-obvious practices of organizational strategy-making become explicit through speech, actions and generally accepted modes of operation, such as administrative practices (Foucault 1980, 1972: 96-72).

The focus on the less-obvious practices of organizational strategy-making, enables me to unpack broader underlying assumptions related to strategy research. Striving to unpack underlying assumptions in existing literature can be seen as relevant at least for two reasons. First, challenging prevailing assumptions is argued to be a central feature in the creation of impactful theorizations and knowledge building (Alvesson & Sandberg 2011, Bartunek, Rynes & Ireland 2006, Davis 1971). Second, it enables researchers to avoid lapsing into ‘dustbowl empiricism’ (Whitehead 1925/1967) that can be seen as one of the results of implicit and unquestioned theorizing (Suddaby 2014).

The guiding research question in my thesis is: *How do power relations produce organizational strategy-making?* In particular, the concept of dispositive allows me to re-examine following assumptions related to conventional strategy research. First, by defining strategy as an artificial rationality enables me to challenge the notion of strategy as a form of rational planning. Second, by treating strategy as dispositive as a system of power relations, I can theorize how subject positions are formed and renewed in this system of power relations. This is relevant since in dispositive analysis, the system of power relations is seen as a context for building subjectivity (Foucault 1980). In particular, subjectivity is bound to the privileging of certain contextual conditions that reflect organizational strategy-making (Ezzamel & Willmott 2008). Through this notion of subjectivity, I can re-examine strategy agency and open up the definition of a strategist. Third, by defining strategy as an organizational dispositive and by broadening the notion of subjectivity in relation to organizational strategy-making, I can challenge the last underlying assumption of strategy research, namely, what kinds of organizational practices are seen as strategic practices.

However, using dispositive analysis does not mean that I would strive for revealing either the ‘one truth’ or any ‘core understanding’ of strategy realization by peeling off the layers of its social construction to finally unmask its true origins. Instead, I am interested in the emergence of strategy in a Foucauldian sense. With

emergence I refer to how Foucault drew on Nietzsche's concept of *Entstehung* in *The Gay Science* (Nietzsche 1974). Based on this Nietzschean reading, Foucault defined emergence as the moment of arising that is produced through a particular stage of forces (Foucault 1994: 148-149). However, distinctive in this view is, that “*no one is responsible for an emergence; no one can glory in it, since it always occurs in the interstice*” (Foucault 1994: 150). In this way, Foucauldian view on emergence highlights how also strategy emergence can be seen to unfold as an unowned process that occurs in the interstices of discursive and non-discursive practices. Methodologically, this leads to that I examine strategy discourse as an object of study per se, and proceed as if our knowledge of the object would exist separately from those discourses that further enable our ways of identifying and analyzing organizational strategy-making (Foucault 1994, Rasche & Chia 2009). To empirically carry out the dispositive analysis, I adopt a Foucault-oriented view of narrative analysis, that is antenarratives (Boje 1995, 2001, 2008) and narrative deconstruction (see essay III) that enables me to unpack the power relations of prevailing organizational strategy discourses and accounts.

In sum, with the concept of dispositive I theorize how power relations, namely power and resistance, can be defined as productive in relation to organizational strategy-making (Hardy & Thomas, 2014, McCabe 2010). I argue that with this focus on the productive nature of power and resistance in organizational strategy-making, we can better understand three key processes of organizational strategy-making that explain the emergence (as the moment of arising that is produced through a particular stage of forces) of strategy practices. These processes are: the realization of strategy discourses into social and material practices, the temporal effects of strategy discourse, and the role of resistance in strategy-making. These processes I discuss in a more detailed manner in the first essay.

My study consists of four interrelated essays, each of which enables me to elaborate how power produces organizational strategy-making. The first three essays are conceptual research papers, and in the fourth essay I empirically examine the productive nature of power. The role of the first essay is to introduce the concept of dispositive to strategy process and practice research. This essay has a twofold purpose. First, with dispositive I theorize how power, as relational and productive, produces organizational strategy-making. Second, we analyze the implications of a dispositive analysis to organizational strategy-making. This analysis leads to the second essay in which we conceptually elaborate the role of resistance in strategy-making. The purpose of this essay is to show that even though in organizational

researchers have already examined different productive effects of resistance, in strategy research the role of resistance is still seen a bit narrow.

The role of the third essay is to elaborate on narrative methods in process organization research. In terms of my thesis and dispositive analysis, the purpose of the third essay is twofold. First, in this essay we depict how narratives have been used in process organization literature, and based on this analysis we distinguish four perspectives on narrative analysis. Second, this analysis serves as a methodological basis for the empirical analysis for the fourth essay of this thesis. In the fourth essay, I examine empirically how individual self-actualization is produced in and through practices of participation in the context of organizational strategy-making. In this way the four essays together build a logical insight into how power and resistance produce organizational strategy-making.

1.3 Positioning of the study

I position my thesis in poststructural strategy research in general (Chia & Holt 2006, Grandy & Mills 2004, Lilley 2001, MacKay & Chia 2007, MacKay & Chia 2013, Rasche & Chia 2009) and Foucauldian strategy research in particular (Dick & Collings 2014, Ezzamel & Willmott 2008, Hardy & Thomas 2014, Knights & Morgan 1991, Laine & Vaara 2007, McCabe 2010, 2016). The central argument of poststructural strategy research is that deepening the understanding of the historically, socially and politically embedded and generated organizational strategy depends on paying attention to the rigorous use of practice theories, concepts and methodologies related to power, discourse and subjectivity (Carter *et al.* 2008, Chia & Holt 2006, Hardy & Thomas 2014).

Previous Foucault-oriented strategy process and practice research has stressed the importance of analyzing the internal power relations between different organizational actors and interests (Allard-Poési 2015, Dick & Collings 2014, Ezzamel & Willmott 2008, Hardy & Thomas 2014, Laine & Vaara, 2007, McCabe 2010). In particular, these studies have followed Foucauldian thought (Foucault 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980) by focusing on the mutually constitutive relation of discourse and power (Hardy & Phillips 2004) in organizational strategy-making. These studies consider power as the central force in the processes of forming and renewing organizational strategy-making (Foucault 1977). However, distinctive is, that these studies have mainly focused on how discourses produce different kinds of power effects, especially on subjects (Hardy & Thomas 2014, Knights & Morgan 1991).

However, in my analysis of the relation between power and strategy-making, I distinguish between studies that focus solely on the power effects of strategy discourses (Samra-Fredericks 2005, Knights & Morgan 1991, Kornberger & Clegg 2011) and the definition of relational power that considers power as a mutually constitutive force producing discourses. In other words, central in my view is to emphasize how power can also be understood as antecedent in relation to social phenomena such as discourses and practices (Foucault 1978). The relational approach to power leads to a more organizational perspective on strategy which stresses that also practices beyond management must be taken into account (Laine & Vaara 2007, Chia & Holt 2006, McCabe, 2010, Rasche & Chia 2009, MacKay & Chia 2013).

In sum, my conceptualization pays particular attention to examining strategy-making from two perspectives: Practices that shape the prevailing strategy discourse, and the role of resistance in relation to the prevailing discourse. In particular, I follow a Foucauldian definition of practice, according to which practices are established ways of formulating statements of discourse (Foucault, 1972). This notion of practice consists of three substantial elements of analysis: power, discourse, and subjectivity (Deleuze 1988). Previous Foucault-oriented strategy process and practice research has already addressed these elements of analysis by focusing on the role of power (McCabe 2010), discursivity (Ezzamel & Willmott 2008; Hardy & Thomas, 2014), and subjectification (Dick & Collings 2014, Laine, Meriläinen, Tienari & Vaara 2015). I continue this stream of strategy research and build a theorization that takes into account two aspects of strategy process and practice research that has not yet been properly conceptualized. First, how power operates relationally to generate organizational strategy-making at a level of the logic of practices (Bourdieu 2002, Sandberg & Tsoukas 2011). Second, how power relations can be defined as forces *ex ante* in relation to discourses and practices (Foucault 1978) of organizational strategy-making.

1.4 Key concepts of the study

In my thesis I use and refer to several concepts from poststructural thinking in general and from Foucauldian thinking in particular. Since none of these concepts are unambiguous *per se*, I explain and define the concepts that I regard as central to better understand the purpose and orientation of my study. The reason for that is two-fold. First, in Foucault-oriented research, the way to approach and treat concepts can differ almost fundamentally in comparison to how these concepts are

defined and used in more conventional views on strategy research. Second, giving explicit emphasis on the definitions below, enables me to elaborate how the concepts I use are linked with each other. In particular, I focus on how the key analytical concepts of this study (*power, discourse, discursive practice, practice, subjectivity, narrative*) are in relation to the integrative concept chosen in this thesis, namely the ‘dispositive’. In addition to the definitions below, I discuss each concept separately in relevant contexts both in the introductory part of the thesis and in the essays.

Dispositive

Dispositive (Foucault 1978, 1980, see also Agamben 2007, Bussolini 2010, Raffnsoe *et al.* 2016) is as an artificial rationality through which relations between discourses, power and subjects are intensified into material and social practices. Dispositive can be seen to become explicit at the intersection of power relations and the relations of knowledge (Agamben 2009: 3). Foucault himself used the concept of dispositive to describe the interrelations between different ensembles of practices of power and knowledge (Foucault 1980: 198). In previous organization research the concept of dispositive is usually translated into machinery or apparatus. However, in my view I stress the etymological nature of the concept, which can be seen to consist of two elements: ‘*dis*’ and ‘*positive*’ (Bussolini 2010). In this approach, ‘*dis*’ refers to ‘*something that is not*’ and ‘*positive*’ refers to something that is ‘*indisputable*’. In that way, dispositive can be seen to refer to artificiality.

Strategy

In this study I define strategy as an artificial rationality that functions as a body of knowledge by continuously reproducing itself through both discourses and different social and material practices (Grandy & Mills 2004, Knights & Morgan 1991). However, distinctive to this definition is, that even though strategy is seen as artificial, it has significant social and material effects on actual organizational and broader societal practices, both discursive and material. Thus, strategy functions as a modality according to which individuals in organizations think and act.

Strategy-making

In my thesis I conceptually distinguish organizational strategy from organizational strategy-making. While I treat strategy as an artificial rationality that can be seen to guide both organizational and individual practices (both discursive and non-discursive), with strategy-making I refer to practices in and around of intended strategy processes, as well as emergent strategy (Mintzberg & Waters 1985), namely strategy realization. This leads to my definition of strategy-making as an open-ended and continuous process of practical coping that results into actual decisions and acts that are retrospectively defined as deliberate and purposeful strategy (Tsoukas 2010).

Power

In my thesis I adopt Foucault's definition of power as the '*diversity of force relations constituting internally the order of its operating range.*' (Foucault 1978: 71) This means that power is a relation that is productive, and it entails resistance as something that is inherent. When power is defined as a relation, it is not something anyone can possess. Instead, power is an endless battle of interests, which is the implication of the strategic positions of the competing parties. Therefore, power cannot be used purely or simply as obligations or prohibitions against those who do not have power. Productive power is implicit, and it is actualized in resisting, which again is understood to make power explicit (Foucault 1979: 34).

Discourse

Throughout my thesis I follow Foucault's definition of discourses as '*practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak*' (Foucault 1972: 49). This definition enables me to unravel the continuous forming and renewing of both the objects, subjects, and practices of strategy (Hardy & Phillips 2004). However, following the abovementioned definition of discourse means that discourse is not seen merely as a linguistic construction (Hardy & Thomas 2014). Instead, discourse is seen to entail the non-discursive practices as inherent (Hall 2001: 72). The concepts of discourse and power are seen as mutually constitutive.

Discursive practice

Discursive practice is an established way of forming statements within a specific discourse (Foucault 1978: 194-195). Discursive practice resonates with the concept of episteme (Foucault 1980: 189-190), which can be seen as a generally accepted way of categorizing what kinds of statements are relevant and ‘truthful’, and which are not (Foucault 1978: 116–117).

Practice

In this thesis I define the concept of practice broadly as a historically and contextually determined way of thinking, knowing and acting that is seen as over-individual and pre-reflective. As Foucault himself used the concept of discursive practice, and thus did not explicitly define the concept of practice, in my view I follow other prominent practice theorists such as Schatzki (2001) and de Certeau (1984). Distinctive in this definition is that practices are seen to entail the notion of continuous change as inherent (Chia 1999).

Subjectivity

Subjectivity in my thesis is defined as a specific form of agency that is formed at the intersection of individual identity construction and social position within a specific discourse (e.g. Butler 1990). This means that subjectivity is closely related to the concept of discourse, and thus inherently entails the notion of mutually constitutive relations between discourse and power (Foucault 1978, Hardy & Phillips 2004).

Narrative

In my thesis I define narrative as a temporal discursive construction that provides the means for individual, social and organizational sensemaking (Vaara, Sonenschein & Boje 2015). However, central in this definition is, that narratives are not solely reduced to linguistic constructions. Instead, narratives can also entail other forms of semiosis such as visual presentations and bodily practices. Consequently, I treat narratives as multifaceted means of sensemaking and sensegiving that are not always complete stories with a clear beginning and end,

but are often articulated only in fragments as part of organizational discourse (Boje 2008).

1.5 Motivation for the study

“The final trait of effective history is its affirmation of a perspectival knowledge (savoir). Historians take unusual pains to erase the elements in their work which reveal their grounding in a particular time and place, their preferences in a controversy – the unavoidable obstacles of their passion. Nietzsche’s version of historical sense is explicit in its perspective and acknowledges its system of injustice.” (Foucault, 1994: 382)

This thesis is only one of the various and possible outcomes of a journey that initially started in autumn 2001 in Jyväskylä. I was first introduced to Foucault’s work during my bachelor’s seminar of political science, and his writings appealed to me immediately. Even though I did not understand half of what I was reading, something in the way Foucault wrote about the unfolding of social phenomena just made sense to me. There could be many reasons for this intuitive appeal to Foucault’s notion of power, and I don’t even try to argue that I would be able to recognize them all. However, there are some personal traits that I see as having an impact to this instant appeal to the theories of productive power.

During my life I have had an explicit experience of the logic of prevailing discourses. This is not exceptional, since we all are bound to different kinds of discourses. However, what might be exceptional, is my exaggerated tendency to adapt to different discourses. This tendency to adapt has had a major impact on how I observe social phenomena, and in this way it serves as a central perspective with which I approach research, too. While discourses are seen to form the objects of which they speak (Foucault 1972: 49), I see myself (at least partly) as a ‘product’ of variety of discourses. However, key in this view on discourse is that discursive practice of any specific discourse does not follow the logic of an individual subject (ibid: 72). Instead, discursive practice follows the logic and rules of its own. These notions of the nature of discourse entail the seeds for my personal interest to examine prevailing discourses. After too many years of trying to master prevailing discourses, mostly in order to change both myself and others, I learned that no one taking part of a specific discourse, really truly masters the discourse. This learning point has been pivotal for me for two reasons. First, it has taught me forgiveness.

Second, it has forced me to unpack illusions of my own ability to control the unfolding of events. Crudely speaking, discourse obeys only one master: 'Itself'.

To make an empirical metaphor, a prevailing discourse operates in a same vein as the logic of an addiction. The first thing to note is, that the practice (both discursive and non-discursive) of an addiction is not a personal matter. It always affects others, too. In other words, the 'addict', either in denial or acknowledging the addiction, draws surrounding people to position themselves to this discourse. This positioning can occur in various ways. Very common way to position is either to naturalize or to normalize the practices of the addiction – perhaps the addict is only having a bad day, a bad week that becomes a month, and soon years. Another way to position into the discourse of an addiction is to take the role of an interventionist. The interventionist can ask, plead or tell to the 'addict' to stop. Positioning can also occur in an 'understanding' way by trying to alter the conditions to help the addict to stop the practice. Last, positioning can occur through different modalities of resistance for example by being mad and condemning the practices of the addict, or on the other hand, silence. One way or another, all of these reactions above are forms of positioning, which again sustain the discourse of an addiction.

However, crucial in all these forms of positioning is how this discourse explicitly affects to constitute the 'identity' of all subjects taking part to the discourse. Regardless of the modality of positioning, this positioning both forms and sustains power relations between its subjects. The addict starts to define his or her identity through non-addicts. Also, the non-addicts form their identity in relation to the addict. Distinctive is, that those positioning themselves to the discourse start to legitimize their practices through this power relation. This can lead to reciprocal victimization, which can be harmful since it distracts the attention away from the basic logic of the discourse. In other words, neither the addict nor the non-addict longer questions the discursive practice of an addiction, instead they outsource 'their problems' to the counterparty of the discourse. In this way all those positioning to the discourse of an addiction continuously reproduce the discourse through their victimized identities.

Even though the discourse of an addiction as a metaphor can seem a bit radical, in my view it resonates with the discourse of organizational strategy. First, organizational strategy discourse is not solely a managerial matter, even though it still widely is spoken as a managerial act. In other words, all organizational members position themselves to strategy, either in a positive or neutralizing manner, or through negation. In addition, actors taking part to strategy discourse can

approach the discourse through interventionist methods. Last, positioning can occur through different modalities of organizational resistance. However, regardless of the method of positioning, strategy discourse, in one form or another, has an impact on how individuals in organizations perceive themselves as organizational subjects. Furthermore, through different forms of positioning, individuals are situated in the web of power relations through which they form their own individual identity. In this way organizational strategy discourse has a tendency to overcome the borders of a single organization. In sum, examining organizational strategy is significant since it affects organizational actors in a broad societal sense in a level of their identity.

Having said this, I admit to see power relations everywhere, even if I would not want to. It's inscribed in me. This 'seeing' has a major impact on my intake on theory. Central in my approach to social phenomena, such as organizational strategy, is that I see the use of power as the force that produces these social phenomena (Foucault 1969). This does not mean that I would strive for emancipation. On the contrary: While power is everywhere, there is no need to escape power. But this does not mean that we should not learn from it. What we should do, is to recognize that every power relation entails a possibility of resistance (Foucault 1978). This resistance rarely is grand or revolutionary, but instead, it is inconspicuous and gradual. It comes from margins.

Thus, I understand that due to my premises and the approach taken, this thesis is not without power effects of its own. Thus, even critical organization theory is not about solely unpacking prevailing power relations (see essay IV). Instead, it is also about building new ones through the masquerade of deconstruction. In terms of this thesis, it can mean two things (at least). First, I have given a strong emphasis to the role of resistance instead of incremental possibilities of strategic development. Second, while striving to reveal others' underlying assumptions regarding strategy research, I acknowledge that up to a certain extent, I regard myself as blind to my own personal assumptions. This thesis is no exception.

1.6 Outline of the study

My thesis is divided into two main sections. The first section is the introductory part, in which I explain the theoretical and methodological choices of my study. The second part of my thesis consists of the four essays.

The introductory part of my thesis is constructed as follows. First I provide an overview of the strategy process and practice research (chapter 2). In this chapter I

present the theoretical developments and basic assumptions of strategy process and practice research. This enables me to both position my approach within strategy research and build my contribution to the existing body of knowledge. This theoretical overview also guides the methodological choices made in my thesis. Second, I present my approach to Foucauldian thinking (chapter 3), which functions as the lens of this study. In particular, in this part I focus on the Foucauldian notion of productive power and discuss its implications on the understanding of the key concepts of this study, which are discourse, subjectivity and practice. Third, I outline the research design (chapter 4) of my thesis. This section consists of the philosophical and methodological choices made in this study, as well as the modes of data collection and analysis.

In the next section of chapter 5, I provide summaries of the essays. In introductory part of this chapter I explain how these four essays compose a logical entity for the purposes of my dissertation. The last part of my thesis consists of the discussion (chapter 6) and conclusions (chapter 7) of my thesis. This section enables me to elaborate on both the theoretical and practical implications of my study. In this last part I also propose a future research agenda, and discuss the limitations of my study.

2 Strategy process and practice research

In this chapter I provide an insight into strategy process and practice research. I have divided this chapter into three main sections. These main sections are: the development of strategy research, the poststructural strategy research, and my positioning to strategy research. The first main section consists of two different parts. In the first part I elaborate on the conceptual development of strategy process and practice literature. In the second part I examine how strategy process and practice research has been approached methodologically. In the second main section I present an insight into poststructural strategy research. This analysis provides a basis for how I aim to build my contribution to the strategy literature. Last, I present my own positioning to strategy research based on previous literature.

The key focus of my theoretical framework is on poststructural strategy research. However, I do not see poststructural strategy process and practice research as a unified body of literature. Instead, according to my view poststructural strategy research consists of two different streams of literatures drawing on two separate research traditions, namely critical discourse studies (Foucault 1978, Fairclough 2005, Lacan 1990) and process ontology (Chia 1999, Tsoukas & Chia 2002). I elaborate on these research traditions in more detail in this chapter.

2.1 Two perspectives on the development of strategy research

In this section I focus on strategy research from two different perspectives. First, I examine how strategy as a concept has developed from content analysis to process thinking, and then to practice. Second, I examine the methodological progress of strategy research.

2.1.1 *From content to practice*

Organization and management researchers have conceptualized strategy in different ways based on the ontological and epistemological approaches they draw on. In this section I distinguish three different approaches to conceptualize strategy as an object of research. These approaches are strategy as content, strategy as process, and strategy as practice.

Strategy as content

The conceptual origins of strategy as a business-related term has its roots in the Greek word 'strategia', which means 'generalship' (Kanter 1989). Several reviews of strategic management have been carried out in order to understand the historical and military tenets of the discipline (e.g. Bracker 1980, Mintzberg *et al.* 1986, Rumelt, Schendel & Teece 1994). These surveys note that strategic management as a subject for business research is seen to have developed in the United States soon after the Second World War (Rumelt *et al.* 1994).

As the first conceptualization I distinguish strategy as content. Distinctive to this approach to strategy is to stress the role of top management in providing goals, directions, guidelines, structures and control systems to other managers (Burgelman 1983). This approach is based on the functionalist paradigm and in relation to that the content approach draws on a mechanistic view of human beings (Burrell & Morgan 1979).

The conceptualization of strategy as content resonates with the ideas of corporate governance that focus on controlling the internal functions of the organization (Ouchi 1979). This approach draws on the Greek verb 'stratego', which means planning the destruction of one's enemies through the effective use of resources (Bracker 1980: 219). Strategy as content research has mainly focused on the effects of rational planning on corporate performance through the use of different kinds of quantitative methods (Govindarajan & Fisher 1990). These studies build on the assumption that with rigorous rational planning based on macro-level analysis, a top management team is able to produce an effective strategic plan through which the company can gain a competitive advantage in the future (Barney 1986, Peteraf 1993).

Thus, according to this approach, strategy is seen as decision-making by top management (Ansoff 1965, Hambrick & Mason 1984). More specifically, the content approach reflects the resource-based view of organizations (Chandler 1962, Penrose 1959), according to which the effective use of internal resources is seen as the key factor of strategy performance. Thus, studies of strategy as content have contributed to strategy research by developing an understanding of strategy as industry positioning (e.g. Prahalad & Hamel 1994, Eisenhardt & Martin 2000, Porter 1980, 1985). More recent research within this approach has focused on the microfoundations of strategy (Felin & Foss 2005, Felin, Foss, Heimriks & Madsen 2012) and behavioral strategy research (Gavetti, 2005, Powell, Lovallo & Fox 2011). However, what remains distinctive to this approach is, that strategy is mainly

seen as business- or unit-level decision-making (Kownatzki, Walter, Floyd & Lechner 2013).

Strategy as process

As the second approach I distinguish the strategy as process. Deviating from the content approach, studies of this approach has focused on processes through which strategy is practically formulated and enacted (Bourgeois 1980). I see the strategy as process approach to consists of two different streams of research. These streams are the planned process view and the emergence view on strategy. Distinctive to both of these streams of research is that strategy is examined as something that evolves over time. However, this approach can be seen to adopt a functionalist ontology in two ways. First, these studies take for granted the legitimacy of managerial preferences and the conditions under which this 'knowledge' is determined and enacted (Alvesson & Willmott 1995). Second, within this approach, the functional orientation becomes explicit in the way in which these studies treat the dynamics of stability and change. More specifically, this approach has the tendency to treat change from a teleological viewpoint.

The planned process view on strategy research draws on ideas of functionalist thinking (Burrell & Morgan 1979) in general and the resource-based theory of the firm (Penrose 1959) in particular. This means that processuality in strategy-making is seen as a movement towards something strategically desired. In other words, these studies entail an underlying assumption that change necessarily implies an object of change (Chakravarthy & Doz 1992, Johnson 1987, Johnson & Scholes 1999, Mintzberg 1994, Van de Ven & Poole 1995). This assumption of the necessity of the change object can be seen to reproduce the notion of that strategy process necessitates rational analysis of both current and objective state-of-affairs, as well as the analysis of how to achieve those objectives. Methodologically, strategy as process studies have had the tendency to divide organizational change processes into chronological stages (e.g. Lewin 1951, Porras & Silvers 1991, Weick & Quinn 1999, Van de Ven & Poole 1995). This way to examine processuality reflects synoptic thinking, according to which change can be depicted through a series of simplified causal relations and teleological notions.

In his seminal work, Mintzberg (1987, 1994: 23-29) made a distinction between intended strategy and realized strategy. His work led to the notion that strategy has been defined as emergent in nature. Studies that focus on the emergence of strategy (Bower & Gilbert 2005, Mirabeau & Maguire 2013), deviate

from the planned process perspective by adopting a more dynamic view on processes of strategy-making. Thus, the emergence approach highlights that strategy-making should be seen as a socially patterned action by taking into account the realized strategy also beyond top management intentions (Bower 1970, Burgelman 1983, Mintzberg & Waters 1985). Giving more emphasis on the realization of strategies has led to that researchers have started to examine strategies from a more holistic perspective. This organizational view of strategy has been strongly influenced by the 'power school' of strategy (Mintzberg 1987, Pettigrew 1977, Pfeffer 1981), which again was mutually influenced by the ideas of strategy emergence. These views together have opened up paths for a more political accounts on strategy-making by focusing on the processes of bargaining, persuasion and confrontation among actors of power (Mintzberg & Lampel 1999: 4). Consequently, by giving emphasis on both the role of interpretation and the socially constructed nature of strategy, the emergence view has contributed to strategy research by opening up pathways to examine strategy as a social phenomenon.

Strategy as practice

Even though the strategy process approach has been criticized of overemphasizing rationality and the normative use of the concept of processuality (Tsoukas & Chia 2002, Rasche & Chia 2007), it opened up new ways of examining strategy as an organizational phenomenon. Drawing on Mintzberg's ideas, strategy scholars started to examine activities and practices of strategy-making. This led to a proliferation of studies that focus on the socially embedded practices of strategy (Whittington 2003: 2006, Jarzabkowski 2003, 2005, Spee & Jarzabkowski 2011, Vaara & Whittington 2012). In a widely accepted outline of Whittington's (2006), strategy as practice research is claimed to be interested in three key areas of practices in and around strategy. These areas are practices, praxis, and practitioners. First, by practices Whittington (2006) refers to the variety of tools, norms and procedures of strategy-making. Second, praxis is seen to consist of the broader activity involved in strategy-making. Third, as practitioners are seen as those individuals that are involved in strategy-making. The strategy as practice approach (Spee & Jarzabkowski 2011, Vaara & Whittington 2012) has quickly gained ground and has since institutionalized itself, especially within the European scholarly community (Carter *et al.* 2008). This approach to strategy has focused on the

socially embedded practices of strategy (Vaara & Whittington 2012) by defining '*strategy as something people do*' (Jarzabkowski 2005: 1).

Consequently, the definition of strategy as 'something people do' opened up opportunities to examine strategy as an organizational practice. However, a significant part of acknowledged strategy as practice studies (e.g. Whittington 2003, 2006, Jarzabkowski 2005) has focused on to examine both the formal and informal practices of strategy making from the perspective of both top and middle management (Ambrosini, Bowman & Burton-Taylor 2007, Balogun 2006, Balogun & Johnston 2004, 2005, Jarzabkowski & Wilson 2002, Rouleau 2005, Watson 2003). However, this tendency has not been taken without critique. On one hand, the critiques have claimed that in strategy as practice studies, the position of corporate executive as the source and prime mover of strategy has remained untouched, or has perhaps even been enhanced by attempts to contextualize their activities and authority sociologically (McKinlay, Carter, Pezet & Clegg 2010, McCabe 2010). On the other hand, those studies of strategy as practice approach that have explicitly examined strategy-making from the employee standpoint (Aaltonen 2007, Mantere & Vaara 2008), have examined how employees conceive strategy created by management, and how they see their own role in this predefined strategy work. Thus, within studies of strategy as practice, a notion remains that the role of employees is still defined through strategy implementation, and therefore it can be seen as quite narrow.

In spite of the criticism, the strategy as practice approach has contributed to strategy research by advancing the understanding of the socially embedded nature of strategy-making. According to Vaara and Whittington's review (2012), studies of strategy as practice have enriched strategy research in four ways. First, strategy as practice research has brought social theories, such as Abbott, Bourdieu, de Certeau, Foucault, Garfinkel, Giddens, Goffman, Habermas, Latour, and many others to the front and center of strategy research. Second, strategy as practice research has developed our understanding of what can be understood as the outcome of strategy-making. By this Vaara and Whittington (2012) mean that strategy as practice studies have expanded the notion of performance beyond purely economic variables. Third, strategy as practice approach has broadened the notion of the kind of empirical contexts that are relevant for strategy research. Thus, strategy as practice scholars have examined organizational strategy-making also in non-profit organizations, such as orchestras, universities, cities and public hospitals. Fourth, and perhaps the most crucial contribution of strategy as practice perspective,

is the shift from the use of quantitative analysis to qualitative methodology (Vaara & Whittington (2012).

However, in my study I don't treat strategy as practice as a unified approach. Instead, I divide strategy as practice approach into two different views according to their ontological underpinnings. These are the view of social constructionism (e.g. Balogun & Johnston 2004, Hendry 2000, Jarzabkowski 2003, Jarzabkowski 2005, Rouleau 2005, Whittington 2006) and the view of poststructuralism (e.g. Chia & Holt 2006, Hardy & Thomas 2014, McKinlay *et al.* 2010, Laine & Vaara 2007, MacKay & Chia 2013, McCabe 2010, 2016, Samra-Fredericks 2005). Studies that focus on the socially constructed nature of strategy ontologically draw from the interpretative paradigm (Burrell & Morgan 1979) and the principles of social construction (Berger & Luckmann 1966). On the other hand, the poststructural view on strategy as practice draws on two different streams of thought: critical discourse analysis (Foucault 1969, 1978, Lacan 1949) and the strong process philosophy (Bergson 1946, Whitehead 1957). I elaborate these views on strategy in a more detailed manner in section 2.2.

2.1.2 Rational and interpretivist analysis of strategy

To be able to examine some of the underlying assumptions of strategy research, it is important to elaborate what kinds of methodological pathways prevail in strategy process and practice research. In my elaboration I draw on Ezzamel and Willmott's (2010) view that divides strategy research into three methodological perspectives. These perspectives are rationalist, interpretivist and poststructural. However, I add my elaboration of the more recent Foucauldian studies of strategy to this categorization.

Rational analysis of strategy

The rational analysis of strategy has mainly been applied in two approaches of strategy research: strategy as content and strategy as planned process. On the one hand, the strategy as content studies have methodologically drawn on both the macro-economic perspective (Porter 1985) and the behavioral perspective (Gavetti 2012) on organizations. This can be seen as linked to the underlying assumption of rational thinking according to which the content of effective and profitable strategy can be calculated through analyzing impersonal forces and the use of available resources (Ezzamel & Willmott 2008). In other words, rational analysis postulates

strategy as an object of research that can be analyzed as separate from its social context.

On the other hand, studies that have examined the planned processes of strategy-making have applied rational methods to better understand the chronological temporality of strategy processes, and through that to reveal causal phases of strategy implementation. In his seminal study of rhizomic nature of organizational change, Chia (1999) labelled these studies as the teleological view on strategic change (e.g. Chakravarthy & Doz 1992, Johnson 1987, Johnson & Scholes 1999, Van de Ven & Poole 1995). The teleological view has contributed to strategy literature by advancing our understanding of how strategies are formulated over time. However, despite of that these studies have advanced strategy research by opening up the temporal nature of strategizing, these studies can be seen to reproduce functionalist thinking in strategy research. More specifically, even though these studies regard strategy as evolving over time, processuality in strategy-making is seen as a direction towards becoming something strategically desired. This kind of analysis necessitates analysis of the accurate definitions of future objectives and strategic positioning, which resonates with both traditional and resource-based viewpoints of strategy research (e.g. Porter 1985).

In their early critique of rationalism Smircich and Stubbard (1985) note that rationalist analysis incorporates an assumption that 'organization' and 'environment' can be seen as essentialistic objects of analysis. This means that organizations are seen as 'real, material, and separate' and that they are presupposed to exist 'out there' (Smircich & Stubbard 1985). Ezzamel and Willmott (2010) supplement Smircich and Stubbard's notion by arguing that rationalist analysis in terms of both the content and process approaches of strategy research necessitates excluding the consideration of actors in the practical (re)production of its object of analysis. In addition, align with both Smircich and Stubbard (1985) and Ezzamel and Willmott (2010), Chia (2014) argues that rationalist approach to change can be seen to entail a philosophical assumption of that stability and equilibrium are fundamental features of reality. Thus, in this way conventional content and process approaches can still be seen to contribute to ideas of functional thinking by striving to constitute a world that is reducible to dependent and independent variables.

Interpretative analysis

Mintzberg's (1978) work can be seen as pivotal in the methodological shift from the rational school of thought to using interpretative methods in strategy research. The cornerstone in this shift is based on the notion of that strategic decision-making is based upon imperfect information and informed guesswork (Ezzamel & Willmott 2010). According to my view, the interpretative approach to strategy research has had a significant impact on two streams of strategy literature: the emergence perspective on strategy processes (Mintzberg 1987, Pettigrew 1977, Pfeffer 1981), and the constructivist strategy as practice research (Jarzabkowski 2005, Whittington 2006). Ontologically this approach to strategy research draws on interpretational ontology (Burrell & Morgan 1979) by examining those processes through which strategy is practically formulated and enacted.

The interpretative approach to strategy draws on different methodologies based on social construction, such as different views on cognition (Hodgkinson & Healey 2008), sensemaking (Weick 1995), activity theory (Engeström, Mietinen & Punamäki 1999; Vygotsky 1978), general practice theory (Schatzki 2005), anthropology (Bourdieu 2002), structuration theory (Giddens 1984), rhetorics (Aristotle 1984), and communication theory (Cooren 2004). The interpretative account also entails studies that have adopted different modes of discourse analysis to examine the socially constructed nature of strategy-making (Vaara, Sorsa & Pälli 2010). With the use of social theories in general, studies of strategy as practice have built an understanding of different aspects of strategy-making. However, characteristic to the interpretative accounts of strategy research has been to examine the ways in which individuals make sense in relation to shared cognitions of strategy-making in organizations (e.g. Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, Rouleau 2005). These studies have built on cognitive psychology (Hecker 2012, Thompson & Fine 1999, Walsh 1995) to understand how individual strategizing takes place in relation to broader strategy practices (Hodgkinson & Clark 2007).

One of the key methodological approaches within the interpretative account on strategy is sensemaking (Weick 1995). Sensemaking has been used to better understand individual cognition and how individuals construct and negotiate a shared understanding of strategy. Sonenshein's (2010) study of strategic change processes can be seen as an exemplary study of this view. In his analysis, Sonenshein (ibid) followed Weick's view on sensemaking (Weick 1995) that focuses on the individual engagement in the retrospective and prospective interpretation of reality. In addition, sensemaking has been used as method to

examine how individuals respond to strategic change by developing thoughtful resistance (Ford, Ford & D'Amelio 2008). Other studies using sensemaking as a method are for example Stensaker and Falkenberg's study of corporate change (2007) in which they examined how individuals in three different business units responded to change. Also, sensemaking has been linked to studies that use framing as a method to understand the legitimization of strategic change (Cornelissen, Holt & Zundel 2011) and the forming of strategies (Kaplan 2008). On his part, Mantere (2005, 2008) focused on the role of middle management as creators, interpreters and communicators of strategy in organizations. In his studies Mantere examined how individuals interpret their role in strategy-making and what kinds of practices enable individuals to move or prevent them from going beyond their operational responsibilities in influencing strategic issues. In addition, studies of strategy as practice have examined how strategy-making is embedded in socio-material practices such as strategy meetings and workshops (Jarzabkowski & Seidl 2008), the role of different technical solutions (Kaplan 2011), the ambiguous nature of strategy-making (Jarzabkowski, Sillince & Shaw 2010, Aggerholm, Asmuss & Thomsen 2012), and failed attempts to form a strategy (Maitlis & Lawrence 2003).

In these abovementioned ways, the interpretative approach to strategy has mostly focused on the formal processes of strategy-making (for an exception, see Balogun, Best & Lê 2015). Conceptually, the interpretative analysis is linked to streams of research that approach strategy as a process and also partly as a socially constructed practice. Thus, this kind of methodological approach requires analysis of how these cognitive frameworks created by strategists influence organizational activity by slowing down or by legitimizing these ostensibly rational calculations of strategy (Vaara, Kleymann & Seristö 2004). However, according to Ezzamel & Willmott (2008, 2010), two main questions remain open concerning the interpretative analysis of strategy. First, is it possible for researchers to reposition themselves in a place from which they can reflect on the processes and mechanisms through which strategic changes are either legitimized or delegitimized? Second, can this kind of hypothetical positioning of an outsider lead to circulative argumentation, where the interpretative approach only strives to buy accountability by appealing to the tenets of the rational tradition.

In sum, the interpretative approach to strategy has focused on to examine the social construction of strategy-making. However, distinctive for interpretative analysis is, that even though this approach acknowledges the socially constructed nature of strategy, this approach has been criticized of falling into methodological individualism (Chia & MacKay 2007, Rasche & Chia 2009). The challenge in

methodological individualism is that it sees individual as a discrete, bounded entity that relates to its environment along line of contact that *'leaves its basic, internally specified nature unaffected'* (Ingold 2000: 3) In this way, methodological individualism can be seen as one form of reducing qualitative analysis into tenets of functionalist thinking.

Foucauldian strategy analysis

As the 'last' methodological approach to strategy research, Ezzamel and Willmott (2010) present Foucauldian methodology. However, notable in Ezzamel and Willmott's (ibid) view is, that to some extent they use Foucauldian analysis interchangeably with poststructural thinking. In particular, they follow Dreyfus and Rabinow's (1982) interpretation on Foucault by arguing that strategy is an articulation of specific discursive practices that exert constitutive effects. This interpretation resonates with Knights and Morgan's (1991) view of that strategy discourse is treated as a body of knowledge (Foucault 1969) which conditions our ways of relating to, and acting upon, a particular phenomenon. By stressing that strategy discourse can be seen as a body of knowledge, Ezzamel and Willmott's methodological approach enables that strategy as a discourse per se can be examined. However, in their categorization Ezzamel and Willmott (2010) highlight that the function of Foucauldian analysis is not to abolish either the rational or the interpretative analysis of strategy. Instead, strategy scholars should focus on the performative effects of both approaches to strategy research. In other words: What kinds of truth effects the rational or interpretative studies produce.

In the next chapter I focus on poststructural approaches to strategy research. However, I deviate from Ezzamel and Willmott's (2010) categorization by distinguishing poststructural strategy research into two streams of literature. These streams are the Foucault-oriented critical discourse approach to strategy and strategy as becoming. I acknowledge that this categorization is analytical and it is not to be understood as fixed.

2.2 Poststructural approaches on strategy

In contrast to the interpretative approach, the guiding thought of poststructural methodology is to challenge the foundations of social phenomena that usually seem self-evident or obvious in a surface level observation. In terms of strategy research it can mean that even though organizational strategy-making is spoken as a

necessity of a condition, the basic task of research is to challenge the assumption of the existence of strategy per se. Poststructural approaches have drawn on political and sociological practice theories that has enabled scholars to examine organizational strategy-making at a deeper level of interaction, namely through discourse analysis (Knights & Morgan 1991) and relational ontology (Chia 1999, Cooper 2005). For strategy research it has meant that scholars have started to examine strategy and its practices as a relation between different internal actors and interests (Rasche & Chia 2009).

Poststructural strategy as practice research deviates from rational and interpretative accounts on strategy research by challenging the objectivist view on strategy. In comparison to interpretative approach, poststructural strategy research is neither interested in managerial micro-activity (Jarzabkowski & Seidl 2007, Rouleau 2005) per se, nor what practitioners do when they are doing strategy (Jarzabkowski & Spee 2011). Instead, poststructural strategy research acknowledges that 'agency', as well as 'structure' are articulations of broader social practices (Ezzamel & Willmott 2010). Methodologically, poststructural strategy research strives to go beyond methodological individualism, which focuses on unraveling actors' intentions and motivational factors (e.g. Watson 2003).

In my view, poststructuralist strategy research draws on two theoretical viewpoints: Foucauldian discourse analysis (Foucault 1972, 1978), and practice theories drawing on strong process philosophy (Bergson 1946, Whitehead 1957). Based on this I argue that poststructural strategy research consists of two interrelated streams of research that follow the tenets of these two theoretical underpinnings. These streams of research I refer as strategy as discourse and strategy as becoming.

Even though I define both strategy as discourse and strategy as becoming as poststructural, these streams of literature mainly differ from each other in two ways: How these studies treat the relation between agency and structure, and, how these studies treat to the concept of power. First, studies of strategy as discourse have focused on to unpack prevailing structures in order to better understand the power effects hidden 'underneath' these structures. Second, studies of strategy as becoming have not been interested in the concept of power per se in the way studies drawing on critical discourse analysis have. Instead, studies of strategy as becoming emphasize the relational ontology (Cooper 2005) and the inherent logic of practices (Bourdieu 2002, Sandberg & Tsoukas 2011). I discuss the characteristics of these approaches in a more detailed manner below.

2.2.1 Strategy as discourse

The discursive approach to strategy (Vaara 2010) is seen as a part of the broader linguistic turn in organizational research (Alvesson & Kärreman 2000, Grant et al. 2004, Boje 2008). In his review, Vaara (2010) argues that the discursive approach allows strategy researchers to examine the processes in and through which organizational and managerial phenomena are reproduced and transformed, how specific organizations and management practices are discursively constructed, and how micro-level linguistic processes such as conversations or rhetorics are in the core of organizational and managerial activity.

The proliferation of discursive approaches to strategy research can be seen to have started from Knights and Morgan's (1991) study of the power effects of strategy discourse. As mentioned previously, Knights and Morgan adopted the Foucauldian view on discourse to examine strategy discourse. In particular, they examined how strategy discourse constitutes both the strategists and the problems for which strategy claims to be a solution (ibid: 255). In this way, Knights and Morgan strived to challenge the position of organizational strategy as a taken-for-granted discourse that forms the identity of both managers and other organizational members. In my view, Knights and Morgan's (1991) study is pivotal for strategy research for two specific reasons. First, it raised the concepts of discourse and subject to the front and center of strategy research. This can be seen as a point of departure for the broader launch of poststructural methods in strategy research. Second, it presented the concept of genealogy to analyze the constitutive role of power relations in forming and renewing of strategy discourse. Thus, Knights and Morgan's (1991) study methodologically paved the way for the Foucauldian approach in general (e.g. Halford & Leonard 2006, Rasche & Chia 2009, Laine & Vaara 2007).

Since Knights and Morgan's (1991) study, strategy has been examined from several discursive perspectives. I see the poststructural discourse studies of strategy consisting of three main parallel perspectives that each focus on different aspects of discourse. First, there are studies that focus on strategy as a meta-level discourse. These studies can be seen as directly following Knights and Morgan's (1991) analysis by focusing on societal effects on strategy. As a second perspective on strategy discourse I define studies that have examined strategy through different narrative methods. Third, studies that epistemologically build on Knights and Morgan's (1991) thoughts, but which have mainly adopted Fairclough's (1989, 2003) and Wodak's (2004) views on critical discourse analysis (CDA) to better

understand the dynamic nature of strategy discourses in organizations. These studies emphasize the linguistic aspects of strategy by focusing on how language is used in speech and in writing (Vaara 2010). Below, I elaborate on these three perspectives in a more detailed manner.

In the spirit of Knights and Morgan (1991), the meta-level studies have focused on unraveling the ideological and hegemonic nature of strategy discourse (Levy *et al.* 2003, Grandy & Mills 2004, Seidl 2007). These studies have examined how strategy as a discourse has power effects as well as continuously (re)producing its own conditions of existence. This means that strategy discourse can be treated as an ideology, or a certain kind of meta-discourse (Alvesson & Kärreman 2000). For example, Rose and Miller (1992) examined the interconnections between managerial strategy discourse as a rationality and calculative technologies, such as accounting. In addition, this broad definition of strategy discourse has been adopted by Miller and Leary (1993) to better understand the societal impacts of different calculative regimes on management-labor relations. Ezzamel & Willmott (2004, 2008) continued this work by examining strategy through practices of accounting. These studies have contributed to strategy research by elaborating on the performative effects of strategy discourse. Through examining the performative effects of strategy discourses, these studies have broadened the understanding of how agency is formed through discursive practices of strategy.

As part of the linguistic turn in social sciences in general (Bakhtin 1981, Greimas 1987, Propp 1928, Ricouer 1984) and organization research in particular (Boje 2001, 2014, Czarniawska 2004, Gabriel 2004), narratives and storytelling have had a significant impact on the ways in which strategy can be understood and studied. By inherently entailing the notion of temporality, the narrative approach is argued to provide richness and detail to the understanding of processuality in general (Langley 2007, Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas & Van de Ven 2013) and strategy research in particular (Fenton & Langley 2011). In their seminal analysis of strategy as narrative, Barry and Elmes (1997) examined strategic management as a form of fiction. They showed that in organizations, ‘strategists’ face challenges that are similar to those of writers of fiction, which is: how to tell a compelling account that ‘readers’ can willingly buy and implement. Thus, Barry and Elmes (*ibid.*) challenge the position of strategy in organizations by arguing that strategy should be ranked as one of the most prominent, influential, and costly stories told in organizations.

Other strategy scholars have continued Barry & Elmes’s (1997) notion of the narrative nature of strategy-making. In a rare example, Abdallah (2007) examined

narrative texts to explore how and why these texts are consumed by organizational members. In a more recent analysis, Boje (2008) argued that strategy literature provides specific conditions of existence to the construction of strategy narratives. In their article on strategy and chronotopes, Vaara and Pedersen (2014) follow Boje's (2008) work by focusing on the processes through which understanding of time and space are constructed in strategy narratives. They argue that strategy narratives need to be linked to the conditions of their production, and suggest a Bakhtinian notion of chronotopes to elucidate the temporal dimension of strategy narratives in their textual form. Thus, Vaara and Pedersen (2014) argue that with the concept of chronotope strategy scholars can elaborate on spatio-temporal conditions in different types of narratives and genres, as well as the links between literary forms of presentation and enabling and constraining features of strategy.

Studies drawing on critical discourse analysis can be seen as parallel to studies examining strategy discourses at a meta-level and studies adopting narrative methodology. However, these studies have a specific interest in forms of the use of language in strategy-making in a micro level. By examining the discursive practices of strategists, these studies have positioned themselves under the critical stream of strategy as practice research. The examination of the ways in which actors appropriate and mobilize particular discourses for strategic purposes is distinctive to this body of work (e.g. Hardy, Palmer & Phillips 2000). Furthermore, by identifying how strategists make use of discourse in strategy-making, this stream of research has contributed to strategy research in a variety of ways (Vaara *et al.* 2004, 2010). For example, in their study of the strategy-making of an engineering group, Laine & Vaara (2007) focused on the discursive construction of subjectivity. This study presents a perspective of a discursive struggle to better understand the subjectification and empowerment/disempowerment effects of strategy discourse. On the other hand, Samra-Fredericks (2003, 2004, 2005) used conversation analysis to elaborate the constitutive role of language in strategy-making, as well as to unravel the power effects of everyday language use. In addition, others have focused on the role of strategy texts such as strategic plans and other strategy documents (Phillips, Sewell & Jaynes 2008; Pälli, Vaara & Sorsa 2009).

Although a significant number of studies within the field of strategy as practice have focused on the discursive practices of strategists (Cornelissen *et al.* 2011, Mantere & Vaara 2008, Vaara, 2010, Vaara, *et al.* 2004, Vaara *et al.* 2010), these studies have still mainly adopted a management-centered approach to strategy-making (Hardy & Thomas 2014). In this way, the critics of strategy discourse studies

have argued that there remains a tendency to place senior managers center-stage in strategy-making (Carter *et al.* 2008). In other words, strategy discourse studies can be seen to have overstated the ability of managers to control others and thus simultaneously understated the significance of organizational resistance in strategy-making. This criticism has led to increasing interest in understanding the interrelations of discourse and power.

To deepen the understanding of the constitutive relation between discourse and power, recent studies have raised the question of the role of resistance in the front and center of strategy research. Broadening both Laine and Vaara's (2007), and Ezzamel and Willmott's (2008) views, McCabe (2010) highlighted the role of resistance in revealing the unequal context through which strategies emerge and what they serve and reproduce. On their part, Hardy and Thomas (2014) focused on how power-resistance relations shape the constitution of strategy by examining how multiple discourses incorporate practices in the production of strategy objects and subjects. Also, Dick & Collings (2014) showed how resistance can be seen as inherent to the notion of that managerial strategy discourse is highly occasioned and takes place in a local level of mundane interaction, even though it is often seen as a hindrance. In these ways, the critical studies of strategy discourse have advanced our understanding of the subtle but nonetheless pervasive ways in which power relations shape the constitution of strategy without necessarily being deliberately exercised by particular individuals (Ezzamel & Willmott 2008, Kornberger & Clegg 2011).

Consequently, the analysis of the discursive structures in and around strategy-making (Hendry 2000, Knights & Morgan 1991, Vaara 2010, Vaara *et al.* 2004) has gained ground in more traditional strategy research. As Laine and Vaara (2007) argued in their study of discursive struggles of strategy-making, using discursive methods enables strategy researchers to provide answers to questions such as why some strategies take off while others do not. However, even though the discursive perspective has opened up new possibilities to examine strategy through practice theory, there is still a shortage of empirical studies in this field.

2.2.2 Strategy as becoming

I define the second stream of studies within poststructural strategy research as the strategy as becoming. This approach draws on two theoretical traditions to better understand strategy-making. First, these studies draw on strong process philosophy (Bergson 1946, Whitehead 1925/1957) to understand the unfolding of strategy as a

continuous process. Second, they draw on pragmatist and Heideggerian practice theories to understand the logic of practices. While this stream of research has focused on to examine strategy through concepts of change, flux, creativity, disruption and indeterminism (Langley & Tsoukas 2010), strategy as becoming strives to understand strategy-making by emphasizing the logic of movement and practices instead of individual intention. This means that organizational strategy-making is examined from the perspective of an ongoing state of becoming and flux (Chia 1999, Tsoukas & Chia 2002). By drawing on these two streams of literature, strategy as becoming strives to understand strategy from a perspective of on-going change, according to which change is inherent in human action, and organizations are sites of continuously evolving human action (Tsoukas & Chia 2002).

Strategy as becoming follows anti-representationalist thinking (Rorty 1991) and Heideggerian pragmatology (Heidegger 1962), by arguing that most of our 'doings' can be seen as pre-reflective and beyond individual intention. This kind of thinking resonates with both Foucault's (1969) and Bourdieu's (2002) ideas on the inherent logic of practices. Thus, I regard the strategy as becoming approach to consist of a few key studies that can also be defined as the unowned approach to strategy (Chia 2014, Chia & Holt 2006, Chia & MacKay 2007, Chia & Rasche 2015, MacKay & Chia 2013, Tsoukas 2010, Rasche & Chia 2009). In addition, studies such as Gomes and Bouty's (2011) Bourdieusian view of the emergence of strategic practice can be seen to resonate with this approach.

In their study of strategy as practical coping, Chia & Holt (2006) challenge the notion of strategy as intentional activity and examine strategy through relational ontology. They define intentional strategy-making as the building mode of strategy. To provide an alternative account, Chia and Holt adopt a Heideggerian (1962) view on practice and propose a concept of dwelling to better understand the interrelation of agency, action and practice in organizational strategy-making. Chia and Rasche (2015) delineate this notion further. They argue that in the dwelling mode of theorizing, individuals are intimately immersed and inextricably intertwined with their surroundings in all its complex interrelatedness. Thus, an individual and the world (e)merge in the concrete activities of dwelling where skills are acquired and developed 'without necessarily passing through consciousness' (Dreyfus 1991: 27). In the dwelling mode, the efficacy of action does not depend upon preconsidered plans of action but instead, it results from internalized predispositions that facilitate continuous, timely, and ongoing adjustment as well as adaptation to local circumstances (Chia & Rasche 2015).

By rejecting the necessity of intention in strategy-making, the dwelling mode of strategy challenges the constructivist strategy as practice research (e.g. Whittington 2006, Jarzabkowski 2005, Rouleau 2005). The main critique is posed against the use of the concept of practice (Chia & MacKay 2007, Chia & Rasche 2015). Studies of strategy as becoming argue that strategy as practice literature has not dealt with the concept of practice in the way it has been understood in sociological literature, and that these studies have not used the full potential existing in the relational ontology of sociological phenomena (Rasche & Chia 2009). According to Chia and Holt (2006), the dwelling mode of strategy enables researchers to better understand how actions may be consistent and organizationally effective without the existence of purposeful strategic intentions. I regard Chia & Holt's (2006) study as groundbreaking, because they stress strategy-making from the perspective of contextual agency and relationality. Thus, practices are seen as modifying identities and subjects at the same time when they define organizational strategies. This leads to the notion of that the concepts of identity and strategy can be seen as inseparable, because individual action modifies one's identity towards specific strategic preferences.

In a related study, Chia and MacKay (2007) provide a critique of conventional strategy process research, which in this study I have defined as the planned process perspective on strategy. They adopt Foucault's conceptual method of genealogy to elaborate the unfolding of strategy as practice research. In this study, Chia and MacKay (2007) propose a 'post-processual view' to enhance the strategy as practice view. They suggest the concept of 'post-processual' to elaborate on the inherent logic of practices (Bourdieu 2002), instead of examining on actors and agency through methodological individualism. Thus, according to Chia and MacKay (2007), strategy practices can be seen as discernible patterns of action arising from habituated tendencies and internalized dispositions rather than as deliberate and purposeful goal-setting initiatives. In their genealogical analysis of strategy, Rasche and Chia (2009) continue this critique by arguing that social practice still requires more contextual, detailed, profound and distinctive study of strategic practice.

However, even though strategy as becoming studies have provided philosophically grounded critiques towards more conventional accounts of strategy process and practice research, a shortage of empirical studies elaborating these notions remains. In one of the rare empirical studies of strategy as becoming, MacKay and Chia (2013) present a longitudinal case study of an automotive company's efforts to adapt to relentless change. In this study, MacKay and Chia

(2013) show that ‘black swans’, i.e. unexpected, uncontrollable happenings, had a crucial impact on strategic change. More specifically, MacKay and Chia argue, that in addition to human agency and environmental selection, the role of “unowned” change processes also needs to be recognized to better understand organizational strategy-making. This notion of unowned processes can be seen as crucial in advancing process ontology accounts in strategy research (Chia 2014).

In sum, in spite of the theoretical developments of the strategy as becoming literature, this stream of research has remained in the margins of strategy research, since the conventional view of strategy still stresses individual intention over the logic of practices. However, I see this approach to strategy as highly relevant for two reasons. First, strategy as becoming has been able to theorize continuous movement (Nayak 2008, Tsoukas & Chia 2002) in the context of organizational strategy. Second, by adopting a relational ontology (Cooper 2005), this stream of research has been able to illustrate the emergent and unintentional nature of everyday practices in the context of an organization’s strategy (Chia & Holt, 2006, MacKay & Chia, 2013). This approach enables strategy researchers to examine human action as something that is seen as preconscious and reflective, and which can be seen to recur within overly individual practices (Rasche & Chia 2009). This has opened possibilities to define and examine organizational strategy-making as an open-ended and continuous process of practical coping that results in actual decisions and acts that are retrospectively defined as deliberate and purposeful strategy (Tsoukas 2010).

2.3 My positioning on poststructural strategy research

In the previous sections I have outlined the developments of strategy process and practice research. In particular, I focused on elaborating the recent poststructural strategy research. To summarize, I argued that the previous poststructural perspectives have developed strategy research in two fundamental ways. First, the critical stream of strategy as discourse has advanced strategy research by enhancing our understanding of the constitutive role of language in strategy-making. This has meant that studies have broadened our understanding of the different aspects of discourse, such as power and subjectivity, in strategy-making. Second, studies drawing on process philosophy have brought into focus the relational ontology by placing emphasis on the logic of practices over individual intention in strategy. However, notable is that these streams of strategy research have still remained quite separate.

In my thesis I draw on the strategy as discourse approach by putting explicit emphasis on the Foucauldian notion of productive and relational power. Unlike rational or interpretational approaches to strategy research, Foucauldian analysis does not strive to find any kinds of core truths of organizational strategy-making (Ezzamel & Willmott 2008). Neither does it try to create any superior interpretations of the strategic events or effects taking place in an organizational context. This is because for Foucault, the questions of who benefits or what the motivation of decision-makers is are irrelevant. Instead, Foucauldian analysis is interested in the 'how' of power. This is particularly relevant for strategy research because with the notion of productive power scholars can examine the logics and practices, as well as the administrative imaginations through which our experience of institutions and our identities are produced in organizational contexts (McKinlay *et al.* 2010). In this way, with Foucauldian analysis we can enlarge the awareness of how both the individual identification and the privileging of certain contextual conditions are nothing more than products of the contingent and discursive ways through which it is possible to reflect on organizational strategy-making (Ezzamel & Willmott 2008). However, this means that the practices and discourses of organizational strategy-making need to be treated as an object of study *per se*. Hence, the key focus is to examine strategy discourses and practices and proceed as if our knowledge of the object would exist separately from those discourses, which further enable our ways of identifying and analyzing organizational strategy-making (Foucault 1994, Rasche & Chia 2009).

Consequently, previous poststructural and Foucauldian-oriented strategy research has already shown that organizational strategy-making can be seen as a one form of organizational discourse of truth (Ezzamel & Willmott 2008, Knights & Morgan 1991). This means that organizational strategy-making should not be solely proportioned to creating competitive advantage for organizations. Instead, treating organizational strategy-making as a discourse of truth leads to that strategy-making is seen to consist of techniques that produce this particular form of knowledge (Foucault 1980). According to Foucault, central in this notion is that knowledge production is always bound to attempts to objectify power (Foucault 1972). In other words, while strategy is seen as an organizational discourse that in the continuous process of creating and reproducing a specific organizational knowledge (Knights & Morgan 1991), strategy discourse and its production needs to be examined as objectified.

The objectification of strategy discourse can be seen to become explicit in two ways. First, strategy discourse can be seen as objectified, since strategy-making is

portrayed as a certain kind of organizational knowledge-based resource presented without any personal interests, for example through different scientific and economic variables (e.g. Ansoff 1965, Prahalad & Hamel 1994, Porter 1985). Second, strategy discourse can be seen as objectified since it produces its objects, subjects and practices through self-constitutive and even tautological techniques. This can be shown for example in the circular definitions of a strategist and a strategic practice according to which individuals who take part in practices of strategy-making are defined as ‘strategists’ (Spee & Jarzabkowski 2011, Vaara & Whittington 2012).

In his essay Lilley (2001) offers an in-depth analysis of the objectified nature of strategy discourse. In his elaboration he draws on Deleuze to illustrate strategy as a formalized intention. According to Lilley (2001), this formalized intention is a regime of knowledge that can be defined as a combination of ‘the visible and the articulable’ (Deleuze 1986: 51). This means that we can identify ‘strategy’ only when we see it and speak of it. However, this seeing and speaking actualizes only when we create or transform strategy through ‘sets of techniques’ that are articulated as strategy-making. Thus, without these acts of forming and articulating, organizational strategy can be seen as non-existent. This view on objectification resonates with Baudrillard’s notion of simulation and hyperreality (see p. 17), as well as with what Foucault called non-existence, or, as a non-place (Foucault 1981). In this way Deleuze, Baudrillard and Foucault, all from their own viewpoints, strived to explain the conjunctions between the discursive practice and the non-discursive practice. In other words, how discourse is more than a linguistic construction, and thus has actual social and material implications. These implications emerge since the sets of techniques are materialized in other social practices, as well as in material arrangements such as technical and architectural choices. This leads to that a ‘strategist’ is created through a different set of techniques, which on their hand tautologically turns these techniques into a ‘thing’, an organizational strategy, that we can represent in words and/or pictures. In other words, these techniques are treated as a form of knowledge that creates a strategic agent and provides this agent the ability to talk about and see strategies in organizations (Lilley 2001: 67).

In my thesis I regard this ability to talk and see strategies in an organization as a discourse of strategy. Align with this notion, my starting point is, that the discourse of strategy should be treated as objectified. Treating strategy discourse as objectified has one main implication: Analysis of strategy discourse does not strive to reveal the objects of discourse, or to understand how strategy is conceived

in a particular time and space. Instead, the object of analysis is to focus on the modalities and practices that enable us to speak about strategy and make it visible. Thus, while previous strategy discourse research has examined the objectification of strategy, I argue that strategy scholars need to go further than to merely examine the objectification of strategy discourse (Lilley 2001, Grandy & Mills 2004) or to examine the power effects this objectified discourse produces on subjects (Knights & Morgan 1991, Samra-Frederics 2005).

In my analysis I draw both on studies of strategy as discourse and strategy as becoming. In particular, I add to studies of strategy as discourse by arguing that current strategy as discourse research needs to engage more deeply with the ontology of becoming by putting more emphasis on the aspects of ongoing change (Chia 1999, Tsoukas & Chia 2002), relationality (Cooper 2005), and the unintentional nature of practices (Chia & Holt 2006, MacKay & Chia 2013). This view enables us to enlarge the discourse perspective on strategy by examining on how strategy discourses realize into social and material practices of strategy. Also, by stressing the notion of relationality (Cooper 2006) and especially relational power (Foucault 1978), we can better understand how power relations can be seen as continuously producing organizational strategy discourse, instead of solely emphasizing the understanding of the various power effects that strategy discourses produce.

With my thesis I continue Foucauldian strategy process and practice research (Dick & Collings 2014, Ezzamel & Willmott 2008, Hardy & Thomas 2014, Knights & Morgan 1991, Laine & Vaara 2007, McCabe 2010). However, I add to this stream of research in two ways. First, I present the concept of dispositive to conceptualize the interrelations between power, discourse and subjectivity. Second, I adopt the notion of becoming to better understand organizational strategy-making from the perspective of continuous change and relational practice theories. I argue that in this way we can better understand how power produces organizational strategy-making also at an organizational level.

In sum, I argue that the concept of dispositive allows us to theorize power as productive and relational in the context of organizational strategy-making, and at the same time to take into account that reality is processual by nature (Chia 2014). This means approaching organizational strategy-making from two directions. First, we need to examine the objectified and prevailing organizational strategy discourse. This involves analysis of how individuals as objects of prevailing strategy form themselves as subjects of this strategy discourse. Second, the process of subjectification does not occur merely in relation to the prevailing strategy. Instead,

subjectification involves identification in relation to other subjects of strategy in a web of power relations. In other words, subjectification is entangled in the process of individual identification occurring in the context of power relations between subjects. Consequently, to be able to build an integrative conceptualization, we will next discuss how power relations can be seen as productive. This I examine in a more detailed manner in the next chapter, where I present the Foucauldian conceptualization of productive power as the lens through which I approach organizational strategy-making.

3 Power, discourse and subjectivity

Even though Foucault himself denied being an analyst of power, his distinctive elaboration on the productive and relational nature of power (Foucault 1969, 1972, 1978, 1980) is the key to understand Foucauldian thinking in general and his methodology in particular. In this chapter I present the Foucauldian conceptualization of power as the lens through which I analyze strategy research in the four essays of this thesis. In my view I draw primarily on Foucault's original work (oeuvre), and secondarily on Foucault-oriented organization research. However, I stress that even though Foucault's ideas of productive and relational power have already been highly developed in organization research in general, only few studies in strategy research (Ezzamel & Willmott 2008, Hardy & Thomas 2014, Laine & Vaara 2007, McCabe 2010) have been able to apply these ideas into empirical analysis.

It is argued that Foucault's work consists of three basic elements of analysis: power, knowledge and the self (e.g. Deleuze 1986, Lilley 2001). Foucault called these elements as the modes of being (Foucault 1979). Thus, to understand the implications of productive power, I will next elaborate how Foucault linked his conceptualization of power to these other two closely-related modes of being. For Foucault, these three modes of being constitute the irreducible and historical elements of analysis (see Deleuze 1986: 114).

Thus, in this chapter I outline Foucauldian philosophy and present how it has been dealt with in organizational research. First, I elaborate how Foucault used the concepts of power and resistance by defining the, as productive by nature. Second, I examine on how Foucault's definition of power is intertwined with the two other abovementioned modes of being. However, I have chosen to use the concept of discourse instead of knowledge. The reason for my choice is twofold. While Foucault used the concepts of discourse and knowledge interchangeably, in organizational research the concept of discourse is widely adopted to elaborate Foucauldian thinking. On the other hand, adopting the concept of discourse enables me to make explicit the link between conceptual analysis and the methodological choices. In other words, using the concept of discourse instead of knowledge enables me to connect with the methodological tenets of strategy discourse research in an explicit manner. In the third section of this chapter, I focus on the remaining element of Foucauldian analysis, namely the 'self'. The concept of self I elaborate through Foucault's notion of subjectivity. In sum, these three elements of analysis

serve as a lens through which I look at organizational strategy, presented in chapter 5.

3.1 Power and resistance as productive forces

Foucault's (1972, 1977, 1978, 1979) distinctive conceptualization of power has been used extensively in social sciences in general (Agamben 2009, Dean 1999, Dreyfus & Rabinow 1984, Hardt & Negri 2001) and in organization studies in particular (Barratt 2001; Burrell 1988, Knights 2002, Raffinsoe *et al.* 2016, Townley 1995). In my thesis I draw on Foucault's work and define power as productive (Foucault 1987: 73). This means that power is not only seen as a repressive or limiting force (Ahrens & Chapman 2007, Hoskin & Macve 1986) possessed by some actors and not others. Instead, power is defined as a constitutive relation between actors (Foucault 1980: 198).

Recent Foucault-oriented organization research has raised the notion of productive power as the outcome of 'late Foucauldian analysis' (e.g. Bardon & Jossierand 2010, Barratt 2008, Fleming 2013, Kosmala & McKernan 2011, Munro 2012, Raffinsoe *et al.* 2016, Skinner 2013). These studies have drawn heavily on Foucault's lectures in Collège de France during years 1975-1983 that have only quite recently been translated to English (Foucault 2003, 2008, 2009, 2010). In these lectures (and translations of them) Foucault explicitly explained his earlier writings on the notion of productive power, governmentality and the self-governing subject. These lectures have had a major impact on how the organizational scholars have started to broaden Foucauldian analysis also beyond disciplinary practices and static discursive domination towards more 'positive' and process oriented interpretations of power (Thomas, Sargent & Hardy 2011).

According to Foucault, productive power means that in a conceptual level, power must be separated from violence (Foucault 1979). This differentiation is crucial because, while violence is utterly destructive, productive power entails the 'freedom' of all parties (Miller 1987: 2; see also Chan 2000). Thereby, rather than seeing power as suppressing activity, power is seen as a force that produces discourses, practices and subjects. Seen in this way, power can be defined as antecedent to social phenomena. In other words, power is not defined solely as an effect of discourses or other social practices, but it can be examined as precontextual, as a force that produces and guides human action.

'We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it "excludes", it "represses", it "censors", it "abstracts", it "masks", it "conceals". In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge gained of him belong to this production' (Foucault 1979: 194).

Foucault elucidates this antecedent and contextual nature of power in his definition according to which power can be seen as the '*diversity of force relations constituting internally the order of its operating range*' (Foucault 1978: 71). In this way power produces the contextual conditions for both discourses and social practices. Seen in this way, power can be treated as an inherent element of any social phenomena (Foucault 1987, Jorgensen & Boje 2009), and thus it can not be separated or seen as external to organizing either (Clegg 1989, Clegg, Courpasson & Phillips 2006, Foucault 1987).

Consequently, defining power as productive has two main implications. First, power is first and foremost defined as a constitutive relation that can not be possessed by anyone. This means that conceptually productive power should not be examined simplistically as an obligation or a prohibition against those who 'do not have' power. Instead, productive power is implicit, and it realizes in resisting, which again is understood to make power explicit (Foucault 1979: 34). Therefore, with the concept of power Foucault claimed to mean those strategies through which force relations become operant and whose larger objectives are personified in social hegemonies (Foucault 1987: 71-72). This leads to that power does not operate unidirectionally. In other words, while productive power is seen to inherently entail relational ontology (Foucault 1978, see also Chia & Holt 2006, Cooper 2005), it should be examined only as a more or less organized and hierarchical relation between forces – namely power and resistance (Foucault 1980: 198; Raffnsøe *et al.* 2016). More specifically, the essential prerequisite for the existence of power relations is reciprocity. Within this reciprocal relation, opposite parties continuously change their actions through reflecting their counterforces. Foucault defined this relationality of power as the power-resistance relation (Foucault 1978, 1980).

The second implication of productive power is that power always entails resistance as an inherent. This means that resistance is not only an effect of, or a response to power, but simultaneously productive and inherent in power (Foucault 1980: 142, 1978). More specifically, power necessitates resistance because '*where there is power, there is also resistance*' (Foucault 1978: 75). The reason why

Foucault stressed the importance of examining resistance is that productive power always strives for immanence and implicitness by nature (Foucault 1978). This implicitness and immanence leads to objectification. Furthermore, objectification functions through the webs of practices that guide human action, but which at the same time are produced by power. Thus, while according to Foucault (1978, 1980), power becomes explicit only through resistance, the examination of resistance enables researchers to unpack the objectified nature of power.

Central in this notion is that while power functions through reciprocal relations between forces, resistance as part of this relation occurs from within rather than from outside. Furthermore, a single power-resistance relation is never a definitely established position, but instead, power-resistance relations are understood as an ongoing struggle between various actors (Fleming & Spicer 2008, Jorgensen & Boje 2009). In other words, power is seen as a play that modifies, strengthens and turns power relations through endless contradictions and struggles (Foucault 1978). This implication of productive power highlights that power relations are in a continuous state of becoming since they continuously emerge through reciprocal points of resistance (Foucault 1987, 1994). In other words, power-resistance relations are not static, and it is especially the resistance aspect that is the dynamic force challenging the prevailing power imposed upon the actors in question (Foucault 1994).

To be able to define both power and resistance as productive, both need to be understood as ontologically conditioned. Consequently, Foucault (1987: 74) argued that to examine how power produces discourses and other social practices, we need to focus on the strategic encoding of resistance points. In resistance lies the productive nature of power relations, since resistance produces new ruptures on different sides of society. This means that while resistance destroys prevailing structures, at the same time it builds new groupings, tears down individuals and modifies them by drawing new undefeated spaces into their souls and bodies.

3.2 Power and discourse

According to Foucault, *'discourses are practices that form the objects of which they speak.'* Central to this definition of discourse is that power and discourse are seen as mutually constitutive (Hardy & Phillips 2004, Foucault 1972). More specifically, power is seen as productive in relation to discourse, which is seen to mediate in and through power relations (Hardy & Phillips 2004, Hardy & Thomas 2014). This means that productive power operates in and through discourse (Foucault 1980:

199, Hardy & Phillips 2004). Foucault argued that '*... relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated or implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse*' (Foucault 1980: 93). This leads to power is not defined solely as an effect of discourse, but instead as a force producing and guiding it.

The mutually constitutive nature of power and discourse is shown in how Foucault used the concepts of power and knowledge (also commonly referred to as power/knowledge) (Foucault 1978). In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault stressed that it is within discourse where power and knowledge intersect. In this way, neither discourse nor silence is subordinate or contradictory to power.

However, it is crucial to note that there is no essential discourse of power per se and no discourse of resistance as a counterforce to the discourse of power (Foucault 1978: 78). Instead, both power and resistance co-exist within the same discourse. This leads to that discourses should be approached from two different directions. First, what kinds of reciprocal forces of power and knowledge are ensured by discourse, and second, what kinds of force relations necessitate the use of a specific discourse in certain historical struggles (Foucault 1978: 78).

According to these above-mentioned definitions, discourse can be seen to consist of a web of statements for which language functions as a means to represent knowledge. However, a statement is not a single element among other elements of discourse. Instead, a single statement is a practice that works vertically in relation to other elements of discourse by defining what is relevant in certain discourses and what is not (Foucault, 1978: 194-195). Therefore, statements are not solely reducible to structures of language. Instead, statements can be understood as pre-conceptual, whereas discourse is considered as a space in which new concepts can emerge (Foucault 1978: 85, Halford & Leonard 2006). In this way, a statement is an episteme that makes both the meaning and subjects of language possible (Foucault 1978: 116–117). By episteme, Foucault (1980: 197) refers to a purely discursive form of dispositive.

This definition of discourse has two ontological implications in terms of organization research. First, when statements are presented referring to and within a specific organizational discourse, this discourse enables seeing the organization in a certain way. Second, the form of a statement limits the possibility to present the organization and its purpose in another way. In other words, organizational discourse is not interpretive or indefinite but instead, it is always local and finite. This leads to that the events of statements should not be proportioned according to methodological individualism into any intention, state of mind, limitation of

thought, or other clearly psychological function (Foucault, 1978, cf. Chia & Holt 2006). Furthermore, the unity of an organizational discourse is not dependent on a single origin, such as one subject (MacKay & Chia 2013). Instead, anyone taking part in a specific discourse must position themselves within the discourse by following the logic of statements (Hall 1996: 99-100).

Consequently, any activity inside the organizational discourses is possible only through subjects that position themselves to the discourse. In other words, discourses realize only through the subjects positioning themselves within it. In this way subjectification is a central function in the realization of discourse – when subjects both produce and renew practices of knowledge – but also when they enact their own individual identities into discourses. Therefore, when examining organizational discourses through relations of power, it is insufficient to focus on merely to describe the discourse or its objectified nature; it is also crucial to analyze the process of subjectification, namely how the objects of this discourse reflect and position themselves in it (Laine & Vaara 2007). Consequently, when the webs of statements form the discursive practice of strategy, the discursive practice further defines the variety of forms in which an individual can position him or herself to this specific discourse and become its subject.

To summarize, adopting the Foucauldian notion of discourse means that discourse is not seen merely as a linguistic construction. Instead, discourse entails both the social and material dimension (Hardy & Thomas 2014). Therefore, it is impossible to draw boundaries between linguistic discourses and different social formations in a coherent way. Rather, these phenomena should be examined simultaneously.

3.3 Power and subjectivity

As argued earlier (p. 41), the last basic element of Foucauldian analysis is ‘the self’ (Deleuze 1986, Lilley 2001). According to Foucault (1979), power relations are intertwined with practices of self-formation. Foucault referred to the interlinkages of power and subjectivity as the ‘technologies of the self’ (Foucault 1988). These technologies of the self are seen to ‘*determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to a certain end or domination*’ (Foucault 1988: 18). Thus, while power relations function as a contextual setting for subjects, simultaneously, practices are continuously shaped through subjects that take part to these practices. This dynamism forms and sustains web of power relations that entails what can be thought and known within a certain practice (the episteme of a particular practice)

and the conditions of possibility of how an individual can act within this certain practice (Pulkkinen 1996). In other words, practices are understood to form a platform of prevailing power relations, which means a specified variety of possible subject positions according to which an individual can position itself. From this perspective, power relations are understood to precede subjectivity.

Foucault explicitly raised up the questions of subjectivity and technologies of power in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1977). In this elaboration on the technologies of power, Foucault used impressions such as ‘disciplinary mechanisms’, ‘disciplinary institutions’, ‘mechanisms of power’, and ‘state-control’. Among organizational scholars this elaboration was largely interpreted as a deterministic view on agency (Fournier & Grey 1999). However, more recent research of organizations has started to challenge this notion of the Foucauldian subject as deterministic (Bardon & Josserand 2010, Fleming 2013, McKinlay *et al.* 2010, Skinner 2013). These studies have shown that individuals are not only reactive agents who display resistance against management practices. Instead, as Bardon & Josserand (2010) argue, Foucauldian analysis allows subjects to be examined as ‘free’ and active.

Foucault examined subjectification in relation to the contextual conditions it produces. According to Foucault, this mutually constitutive relation results in the objectified discourses that are treated as an established knowledge (Foucault 2000a: 459). In organization literature this established knowledge is often examined through the relation between discourse and subject (Halford & Leonard 2006, Laine & Vaara 2007), and in this way bound to the mutually constitutive relation between discourse and power.

Thus, subjectification can be understood to consist of what the subject must be, of which kinds of discursive conditions (s)he is a subject, and what kind of position (s)he must occupy in this discourse to legitimize him(her)self according to the practices of this discourse. In this way, subjectification is a process of internalization that involves continuous decision-making of one’s own individual subjectivity (McNay 1994: 134).

To build subjectivity, an individual needs to participate in a specific discourse through positioning. Thus, it is only through positioning, an individual can form him(her)self as subject of discourse. However, what is important in positioning is that subject positions are in the continuous state of emergence and thus they should not be seen as static or unified (Jorgensen & Boje 2009). Neither subject positions are representations of organizational reality. Instead, subject positions can be seen as secondary effects of the practices that form and sustain the contextual power

relations. Thus, once subjectivity is formed, subjects continuously sustain and renew this mutually constitutive web of power and discourse through discursive and non-discursive practices. Subjects are then both products and agents of discourses. Consequently, when an individual has positioned him or herself in the existing discourse, this duality of subject leads to the act of positioning creating a collection of separate power relations between the subject and every other subject in that particular discourse.

This continuous unfolding of subjectivity is based on a Nietzschean reading on power, according to which people have always lived inside different battlefields of interests (Foucault 1980: 208, 1994, 1978: 74). The battlefield of interest functions as the social and material context for positioning. Thus, an individual agent is not a unique exceeding this form of power, but instead, (s)he is the result of this power, and at the same time while trying to prove his/her own authenticity, (s)he is the means of power (Ojakangas 1998: 29). Thus, power should not be examined only as a relation between two individuals, since power is inscribed in the contextual setting of subjectivity. Instead, power seen to precede individuals by producing individuals as subjects with preferences and interests (Pulkkinen 1996: 98-99).

However, to understand processes of subjectification, it is important to understand how Foucault treated the concept of identity. My reading on identity resonates with Hall's (1992, 1993, 1997) interpretation of subjectivity and identity. Drawing on Foucault, Hall (1992) defined identities as fragmented in time and space, which are formed through those points at which we adhere ourselves to different subject positions by applying different discourses (Phillips 2002: 84). Thus, identity is seen as something that is continuously produced in and through relations of power (McKinlay *et al.* 2010), whereas subjects are seen as carriers of this power. Seen from this perspective, individual identity is not to be found either in behavior or in the reactions of others, but instead in the individual's capacity to keep a coherent narrative going (Ezzamel, Willmott & Worthington 2001). This means that individual identity can be seen as paradoxical by nature (Ainsworth & Hardy 2004, Hall 1992). This view resonates with Freudian thinking (1950), according to which the subject is inherently destroyed and divided. This division of subject is paradoxical, since the subject has the need to see her/his own identity as unified. Thus, identity should not be examined as a coherent entity, but instead as fragmented and performative (Laine, Meriläinen, Tienari & Vaara 2015), as a process that continuously reproduces itself through discourse, even though it is always striving to uphold inner coherence (see also Davies & Harré 2009).

Although individual identity is commonly related to the pronouns of ‘me’ and ‘I’, according to Foucault (1994), it can only be defined through the concept of the ‘other’ (see also Chia 1999, Dalglish 2009, Derrida 1979, 1981, Hall 1993, Knights 2002). According to Hall (1997), the ‘other’ is not only ‘different’, but it is something that is regarded as less desirable, less acceptable, and less powerful. This means that, in the process of identification, central is that an individual differentiates oneself from other subjects that take part to the same discourse (Wodak 1996). In other words, individual identity becomes visible only in the process of differentiation, or according to Hall (1993), through the process of negation. In this way, the process of negation occurs when an individual recognizes his/her own identity in relation to those significant others with which the individual does not want to be identified.

Consequently, subject-other relations are formed, but also governed by the actors themselves in spaces devoid of power. In addition, subject-other relations uphold rules that guide and correct the others’ practices by the subject via politics that keep watch over the conditions necessary for undistorted recognition (Dalglish 2009). Thus, while identity can be seen both as an objectified narrative through which subjects uphold coherence in their lives, at the same time it is a way of governing subjects (Dean 1999). Thus, this way of defining subjects as formed through difference through the process of negation and otherness (Dalglish 2009, also Hoedemaekers & Keegan 2010) has one major implication in terms of analysis: The objectified ‘identities’ formed by subjects can be read only against the grain, not as an entity of the stable play of differences, but as something that is continuously constituted in difference. In other words, those units manifested as ‘unified individual identities’, are actually only one part of the grid of power relations (Hall 1999: 252).

In sum, subjectivity that is built through individual's own perception of coherent inner identity, can be seen as ostensible. As Laclau (1990) has argued, the process of identification is an action of exclusion, and individual's own perception of coherent inner identity is a constructed form of closure. In other words, the ostensible coherence of identification is formed through the process of negations, namely through suffocating the things it sees as threats. This process of suffocating bases to building hierarchy of force relations in between of two polarities produced by power.

Consequently, I argue that the most significant implication of defining subjectivity and identity through difference is, that it turns the direction of analysis from positivistic objectives to the relation between this difference is made. In the

next chapter I elaborate on how these notions regarding the three elements of analysis, namely power, discourse, and subjectivity, impact on the research design of my thesis.

4 Research design

In this section I describe the research design of the thesis. My research design consists of four key elements. First, I elaborate the ontological and epistemological foundations of the study (Burrell & Morgan 1979). This part enables me to make explicit, and reflect on the underlying assumptions of my own approach to research. Giving explicit emphasis on the underlying assumptions (Alvesson & Sandberg 2011, Davis 1971) is distinctive to qualitative approaches (see also Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008) but can be seen particularly relevant in Foucault-oriented research.

More specifically, to recognize the ontological and epistemological foundations, as well as different paradigms of research is crucial since these choices affect the manner in which the researcher understands the world and acts in it (Guba & Lincoln 1994: 107). After presenting the ontological and epistemological foundations of my study, I describe my reading on Foucault. In particular, I elaborate how I have approached Foucault's work in comparison to other accounts within the field of organization research in general and strategy research in particular. In the third section of this chapter I explain my view on methodology. In particular, I focus on how dispositive analysis can be seen as integrative in relation to two key methodological approaches in Foucault's thinking: Archaeology and genealogy. Last, I present my methodological approach in relation to collecting and analyzing empirical data.

4.1 Ontological and epistemological foundations

In the evaluation of my research philosophy I follow Burrell and Morgan's notion that '*all theories of organization are based upon a philosophy of science and a theory of society*' (ibid. 1979: 1). In their seminal work Burrell and Morgan (1979) conceptualized paradigms of social science based on four sets of assumptions related to ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology. Based on these sets of assumptions they distinguished four different paradigms in organization research. These paradigms are: functionalism, interpretative paradigm, radical humanism, and radical structuralism¹.

² There will be revised edition by Burrell and Morgan's book on organizational paradigms that take into account especially Foucauldian accounts on organization research. However, the revised edition of the book was not available in time writing this thesis.

However, later categorizations have been formed that have had a major effect on evaluating the underlying assumptions of organizational research. For example, Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) have provided a broadly used categorization of three perspectives on organizational theory. In their categorization, Hatch and Cunliffe (ibid) distinguished three perspectives on organizational theory. These perspectives are modernism, symbolic interpretivism and postmodernism. In this chapter I acknowledge both Burrell and Morgan's (1979) and Hatch and Cunliffe's (2006) ways of depicting the theoretical foundations of organizational research. However, I deviate from these two categorizations and define my approach as poststructural. Next I elaborate this in a more detailed manner.

As presented in chapter two, I follow poststructural thought in general and Foucauldian philosophy in particular (Foucault 1969, 1977, 1978). I draw from two interconnected theories on social practice: The discursive approach (Foucault 1978, 1979, 1980) and the process ontology approach (Chia 1999, Tsoukas & Chia 2002). In my reading on poststructural thought I acknowledge that in social sciences in general, poststructuralism and postmodernism have to some extent been used interchangeably. However, I have chosen to use the concept of poststructuralism since it has been commonly associated with Foucauldian thought in organizational research.

When adopting poststructural ideas it is important to note that poststructuralism per se cannot be defined as a unified theoretical framework. However, there are some commonalities that different views on poststructural thinking share. Poststructuralism in general is seen to build on the ideas of social construction, according to which reality is formed socially through multiple mental constructions, which are local, specific, and always in continuous change (Berger & Luckmann 1966). This means that social constructions are not essential or truthful per se. Instead, social constructions are continuously formed and redefined in social encounters.

Even though poststructural thinking draws on the ideas of social construction, according to my view these two paradigms differ from each other in two fundamental ways. First, with their notion of power, and second, with their notion of relationality. While theories that build on social construction focus on how these constructions are formed through revealing their elements, poststructural theories strive to unpack the assumption that there underlying coherence in these constructions could be found and examined. This first central difference has a major impact to the focus and locus of analysis. While theories of social construction in their simplest way can be seen as interested in the elements of which these

constructions are formed, poststructural theories focus on the deconstruction of social phenomena (Derrida 1984). The second central difference is in how these theories treat the notion of relationality. Theories of social construction are interested in 'the building blocks' of different social relations. This means that the primary purpose of analysis is to elaborate the different elements of these constructions, and the secondary purpose to analyze the relations between these elements.

However, I acknowledge that this categorization is analytically simplistic and it should not be taken as a 'black and white'. However, simplifying the differences allows me to build comparison that highlights the nature of poststructural accounts. Thus, in comparison to the ideas of social construction, poststructural theories aim to show that there are no essentialistic elements per se in social constructions to be revealed. Instead, poststructural theories give primacy to the constitutive nature of social relations. This means that the relation between individuals defines the nature of the social phenomenon.

Consequently, poststructural ontology denies the existence of social constructions as essential elements. More specifically, poststructural theories are not interested in finding core truths or generalizable theoretical models. Instead, poststructuralism emphasizes the processual nature of social phenomena and sees the world as a continuous state of becoming (Tsoukas & Chia 2002). In addition, poststructural theories strive to understand the fragmented and contextual nature of social phenomena by focusing on conceptualizations such as discourses (Foucault 1969), practices (Bourdieu 1990, Heidegger 1962) stories (Boje 2008), dialogism (Bakhtin 1981), and carnival (Nietzsche 1887). However, distinctive is, that poststructural theories give emphasis on to unpack the underlying assumptions within generally accepted theorizations and to create understanding of the polyphonic and polysemic nature of social constructions. More specifically, social phenomena are understood to consist inherently of power, dissensus, conflict, and marginalization of other possible accounts (Hatch and Cunliffe 2006). Consequently, while theories of social construction strive to reveal the core truths of socially constructed phenomena by 'peeling off the layers' of the social constructions, theories of poststructuralism build on the assumption that there are no core truths underneath the layers to be exposed. Instead, poststructural theories are interested in the layers per se within the specific context (Pulkkinen 2003: 46).

From the epistemological viewpoint, poststructural theories approach knowledge in relation to power (Foucault 1980). This means that knowledge is not examined as detached from different kinds of individual and social interests and

aspirations. In other words, power is seen as constitutive of knowledge (Foucault 1978). This leads to the notion that any knowledge is never ‘truthful’ per se since different interests and power struggles are not stable. Instead, knowledge should be seen as historically developed, subjective, and in the process of continuous change.

Based on the ontological and epistemological foundations, poststructural theories do not treat organizations as ‘taken-for-granted’ entities per se. Instead, organizations can be seen as ostensibly stabilized arenas for subjectivity, a certain forms of forcefully stabilized patterns of relations build upon the reality of continuously fluxing change (Chia 2014). From a methodological perspective, poststructural analysis strives to unpack the textures and structures of these patterns of relations, and in this way to examine the ideologies and relations of power underneath the surface-level organizing (Hatch & Cunliffe 2006: 3-23). This leads to that poststructural theories can be seen as drawing on the ideas of social constructions, according to which reality is inherently subjective. However, poststructuralism deviates from theories of social construction by adding the dimension of relational power.

However, even though poststructural theories highlight the role of power in organizing and other social constructions, poststructuralism does not deny other ontological accounts such as functionalism, or interpretational analysis of social construction (Ezzamel & Willmott 2010). Instead, poststructural analysis gives emphasis on how these different kinds of rational models and social constructions are formed and renewed. Thus, poststructural theories have contributed to organizational research by raising the concepts of identity and subjectivity in the front and center of analysis. In other words, according to poststructural theories, neither identity nor subjectivity are treated as stable, coherent or unified entities. Instead, these concepts are seen as fundamentally fragmented and constructed in and through relations of discourse and power (Hardy & Phillips 2004). In this way meanings can be seen as polysemic and in a continuous state of becoming.

4.2 My reading of Foucault

The theoretical foundations of my thesis is strongly inspired by Foucault’s analysis of the unfolding of social ‘order’. However, my reading on Foucault is influenced by my background in studies of political science. This has affected on how I approach both Foucault’s work and Foucault-oriented organization research. In particular, I deviate from the previous organization scholars that have followed the late Foucauldian analysis (e.g. Bardon & Josserand 2010, Barratt 2008, Fleming

2013, Kosmala & McKernan 2011, Munro 2012, Raffinsoe *et al.* 2016, Skinner 2013) in one point of view. While these studies have mainly based their arguments on Foucault's lectures in Collège de France (Foucault 2003, 2008, 2009, 2010), I have chosen to give emphasis in my reading of Foucault on the *oeuvre* (original edited production) (Foucault 1972, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980) of Foucault.

The reason for emphasize Foucault's *oeuvre* is two-fold. First, without discarding the significance of the lecture translations, I regard that in the lectures (or the translations of the lectures) Foucault strived to explain the points that he already made in his seminal edited volumes. Thus, I give primacy to the written instead of spoken, even though it can be seen as a minor detail, or regarding Foucauldian analysis, even an issue of irrelevance. In other words, according to my interpretation, the productive nature of power is inherently inscribed in Foucauldian analysis throughout his production (Hoskin & Macve 1986). Second, the emphasis on the Foucault's *oeuvre* enables me to pinpoint more accurately to the original French editions when needed.

Giving emphasis to Foucault's *oeuvre* is particularly relevant when referring to the concept of dispositive, because this concept has had various English translations, as well as contested interpretations regarding on how Foucault himself used the concept. In my view I draw heavily on *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir* (History of Sexuality, vol I: An Introduction), since in this volume Foucault first and most extensively develops the concept of dispositive in the fourth chapter 'dispositive of sexuality'². While this book is mostly known on the repressive analysis on power, it has been argued that it is the dispositive chapter in particular that can offer the crucial link between the analysis of productive power and the biopolitical analysis (Bussolini 2010).

In addition, the relation between the discursive and non-discursive is inscribed in Foucault's *oeuvre* in earlier writings. For example, even though the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) is commonly seen as an analysis of the discursive level, a close reading of it reveals how already in this volume Foucault pinpointed to the productive interrelation of discourses and other social and material practices. This can be shown for example in chapter four, *The Formation of Enunciative Modalities* in *Archaeology of Knowledge*, where Foucault states, that to understand how statements within one discourse emerge, we need to examine both the interconnectedness of statements and the necessity that binds these

² Original French title of the chapter in *The History of Sexuality, Vol 1* (Foucault 1976) 'le Dispositif de Sexualité'.

interconnections together (Foucault 1972: 50). This necessity is bound to the non-discursive level of analysis, as well as a reference to the relational and reciprocal nature of discourses. Also, even though *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1979) is widely interpreted as a manifestation of the suppressing nature of power, in this analysis Foucault explicitly discusses how (bio)power produces individuals and practices.

4.3 Foucauldian methods of analysis

While using the concept of dispositive (Agamben 2007, Raffinsoe *et al.* 2016) theoretically pinpoints to the interrelations between three substantial elements of analysis: power, discourse and subjectivity, the usage of this concept has also implications for empirical analysis. First, in the concept of dispositive Foucault integrated two of his key methods: archeology and genealogy. Both of these methods are intertwined in Foucault's definition of practice, according to which '*practices are established ways of formulating statements of discourses*' (Foucault 1972). Second, these practices are regulated by a certain discursive practice, which means a set of anonymous, historical regulations, which are always temporally and spatially determined (Foucault 1972). This means that discursive practices define what, how, when and on what basis somebody can say something (Foucault 1972).

However, in the dispositive analysis, central is that practices are not examined only from their discursive viewpoint. Instead, the concept of dispositive enables to examine discourses and subjects in the context of broader social and material practices. More specifically, social practices function as a common denominator for the process of subjectification as well as to examine how different discursive practices locate into their historical and spatial relations.

Having said this, earlier interpretations in organization research have compartmentalized Foucault's work into archaeological, genealogical and aesthetic (or ethical) phases (Knights 1992, Starkey and Hatchuel 2002, Välikangas and Seck 2011). According to this distinction, archaeological analysis stresses the hegemony of discourses over other practices (Foucault 1972), genealogy is seen as the historical analysis of subjectivity (Foucault 1979), and the ethical phase is seen to focus on the formation of self-governing individuals. However, central in the concept of dispositive is that Foucault strived to explain the interrelations between his own concepts. Thus, dispositive can be seen as an integrative concept through which the relations between power, discourses, and subjects can be examined. Since I discuss the

implications of using the concept of dispositive in a more detailed manner in my first essay, I will not elaborate these implications here in detail.

To conclude, the advantage of dispositive analysis is that it enables me to locate the emerging discursive practices and subjects formed in and through relations of power into their historical and spatial context. Next I elaborate on the archeological and genealogical methods in a more detailed manner, since these two methods are seen to form the basis of dispositive analysis (Foucault 1980, see also Bussolini 2010).

4.3.1 An archeological approach to discourse analysis

As I have previously argued, to Foucault (1972, 1978, 1980), discourse is not solely a linguistic structure (Hardy & Thomas 2014). This definition of discourse has two main empirical implications. First, discourses are intertwined with other social practices. Methodologically this means that in the empirical analysis also the socio-material and bodily practices should be taken into account (Foucault 1979). Align with this notion, the autonomous layers of discourse need to be proportioned into the layers of practices, institutions and social relations (Foucault 1981: 284–285). This leads to that discourses should not be examined only in relation to the individuals (re)producing it, but instead in relation to the arena of practices where these discourses happen (Foucault 1969: 61, also Halford & Leonard 2006).

Second, discourses produce subjects as objects through positioning. In our analysis I follow Hall's (2001) interpretation of positioning through otherness. This has two implications. First, it enables us to examine how in power relations, particularly resistance can be understood as the force that produces and renews discourse. Second, through otherness we can examine resistance through the ontology of becoming (Clegg, Kornberger & Rhodes 2005, Jorgensen & Boje 2009, Tsoukas & Chia 2002).

However, while Foucault's definition of discourses entails the notion objectification (Lilley 2001), I acknowledge that the one of the main functions of discourses is to attempt to hide the appearance of individual agency through practices of objectification (Ezzamel & Willmott 2008). In other words, discourses are not formed and reproduced outside individual interests. However, this does not have to lead to that individual interests would be analyzed with methodological individualism, namely, seeking explanations of social phenomenon in terms of actors' intentions and motivations (Chia & Holt 2006). Instead, even though individuals may draw on particular discourses in order to try to achieve their ends,

it does not mean that this ‘use of discourse’ would produce the intended effects (Hardy & Thomas 2014). Instead, by drawing on particular discourses, individuals refer to discourses as if they were rational essentialistic objects.

Thus, even though prevailing discourses are seen as objectified, it does not mean that discourses should be examined one-sidedly or linearly only from the perspective of those who strive for objectification. As Miller and Rose (2008) note, the realization of discourses (even though discourses are seen as objectified) does not occur simply through implementing strategic programs. Instead, the ‘actual world’ always resists different kinds of objectified programs. Objectified programs have two distinctive features. First, objectified programs are presented as rational truths to alter the thinking and/or behavior of individuals in a manner that they strive to conceal the traces of individual intention and interests of those who are behind the ideas. Second, objectified social programs entail explicit and planned implementation. Thus, central in this notion of resistance in relation to objectified programs is, that it is seen as productive. More specifically, resistance has two main functions in relation to discourses. First, resistance is the inherent element that keeps discourses alive because programs cannot ‘survive’ as discourses without resistance keeping the discussion alive. Second, from this perspective, resistance is the force that keeps discourses in the state of continuous movement.

In all, to examine discourses and at the same time avoid falling into methodological individualism, I emphasize that discourses can be seen to realize in and through power relations (Foucault 1978, 1994). However, important is, that the direction of the renewal of discourse follows the ontology of becoming (Clegg *et al.* 2005; Jorgensen & Boje 2009; Tsoukas & Chia 2002). In other words, processuality of discourses is not about moving nearer and nearer towards objectives set by individual intention. Instead, the processuality of discourses follows the logic of becoming as going away from those states-of-affairs that are seen as undesired.

4.3.2 Genealogical analysis of subjects

If Foucault’s archeology is seen as a method to analyze discourses, genealogy can be seen as a method for analyzing the interlinkages of subjectivity and non-discursive practices (Foucault 1979). Foucault adopted the concept of genealogy from Nietzsche (1887) (*The Genealogy of Morality*) to unpack the historical and coherent subject. In strategy research, only few studies have raised the genealogy as a method to unravel how subjectivity in strategy-making is produced through the

mutually constitutive relations between discourse and power. These studies are Knights and Morgan (1991) and Rasche and Chia (2009). In addition, Vaara and Lamberg (2015) argued that genealogy could be seen as a one possible method to better understand the historical unfolding of strategy.

However, these studies use genealogy in somewhat diverging ways. Knights and Morgan (1991) follow a more commonly used interpretation of genealogy as a method to understand the power effects of strategy discourse. They defined genealogical analysis as a method which *'seeks to show how social relations of power and knowledge are reconstituted to create new ways of seeing and acting'* (Knights & Morgan 1991: 254). Thus, according to Knights and Morgan (1991) the purpose of genealogy is to analyze those conditions that make a particular discourse possible.

On the other hand, Rasche and Chia (2009) adopted the concept of genealogy to reveal the historical-contingent conditions of strategy as practice literature. However, in their study Rasche and Chia note that they do not use the term genealogy in the same sense that Foucault used it. They use genealogy to reveal four elements of social practice that guide empirical investigations. According to Rasche and Chia (2009) these social practices are: the routinized behavior of the body, the use of objects, the application of background tacit knowledge in situ, and the constitution of practitioners' identity through practices. In this way their view resonates strongly to the Foucauldian reading of genealogy. In all, in these the genealogy of strategy research has not been used strictly in the way Foucault outlined it. In this chapter I focus on elaborating how Foucault saw the method of genealogy.

Foucault's method of genealogy intertwines strongly with his unique conception of power. As explained in chapter 3, Foucault (1994) denied the relevance of searching the true core of things or origins of different phenomena. Nevertheless, he stressed that researchers need to examine the formulation and construction of things. In other words, to expose why and how certain social constructions are formed. This kind of research orientation Foucault called genealogy.

Foucault first introduced the method of genealogy in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1979). In that context Foucault argued that instead of searching for origins, genealogy studies the ways things become to exist. In this respect Foucault defined genealogy then as *"a form of history that can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, and so on, without having to make reference to a subject that is either transcendental in relation to the field of events"*

or runs its empty sameness throughout the course of history” (Foucault 1976: 150). In his essay ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’, Foucault added that as a method “*genealogy is grey, meticulous and patiently documentary*” (Foucault 1994). However, genealogy is not adversary to history; instead it is adversary to attempts of searching for the origins of phenomena (Foucault 1994: 63-64).

However, distinctive in genealogical analysis is the way how it approached the concept of subjectivity. This is central also in terms of my research design. Thus, while Foucault did not see the subject as stable or coherent but as fragmented, genealogy does not strive to find the origins of subjects. Instead, genealogy focuses on ‘destroying’ those attempts that claim to have found the fundamental elements of subjectivity. This means that instead of searching for historical continuities, research should focus on revealing the moments of discontinuities, ruptures and ostensible irrelevancies. This necessitates treating subjects as produced in and through power. According to Foucault (1976: 180), an individual should not be seen as an essential core per se into which power can adhere through repression or domination. Instead, the central effect of power is that bodies, gestures, discourses, and desires are constituted through individual subjectivity.

Consequently, according to Foucauldian definition both subjects and bodies of knowledge are seen as performative (see also Butler 1993). This leads to that genealogy as a method examines “*history as carnival*” (Foucault 1994: 101). However, this ‘carnivalistic history’ should focus those events that are seen as ostensibly irrelevant or insubstantial. When analyzing certain objectified discourses like organizational strategy, it becomes significant to show how organizational practices lead to objectification (Foucault 1972). Thus, from a Foucauldian perspective, organizational discourses should be analyzed through those events that are left out instead of classifying the events into consistently, coherent and chronological continuums.

4.4 Empirical data collection and analysis

The starting point of the empirical analysis of this thesis was to problematize and unpack dominant organizational accounts on participation in strategy-making (Boje 1995, Buchanan 2003, Buchanan & Dawson 2007, Collins & Rainwater 2005). In the empirical elaboration we combined interview data and observation. In addition, we used strategy documents to get an overall understanding of the realization of organizational strategy-making. We treated interviews as narratives of the interviewees (Sliwa & Johansson 2014). However, distinctive in the narrative

analysis was that the purpose was not to strive to either find or build coherent or chronological narratives based on the interviews (Boje 2001, 2008). Instead, we approach narrativity in the interviews through Boje's (2001) notion on antenarrative that regards narratives as inherently non-linear and fragmented. This approach allows us to focus on the multiple meanings and contradictions, and to further examine how participation in strategy-making unfolds through relation of power. This enables us to show how organizational practices of strategy-making lead to privileging those who adapt and on the other end, leads exclusion of those that fail to participate in the prevailing practices of strategy-making.

In line with our view in the third essay, we define narratives as discursive constructions that provide means for individual, social and organizational sensemaking (see also Vaara, Sonenshein & Boje 2015). While individuals are seen to use narratives to determine, justify and guide their lives (Fisher 1985, Weick & Browning 1986), this definition enabled us to examine how individuals both position themselves to and build their subjectivity in relation to the organizational strategy discourse. In our analysis we followed Näslund and Pemer's (2012) notion that while storytelling can lead to increased polyphony within organizations, it can equally serve as a tool for achieving hegemony through strengthening dominant stories and established truth claims in organizations (Currie & Brown 2003, Geiger & Antonacopoulou 2009).

Consequently, in the empirical analysis we used both narrative deconstruction (see essay III, Boje 1995, 2001) and Foucauldian discourse analysis to reveal how participation unfolds through power relations. The reason for combining these two accounts was that with narrative deconstruction we can elaborate on how participation in strategy-making unfolds through relations of power. While in organizations, everyone is responsible of the formation and continuous reproduction of power relations, individual and organizational narratives can be seen as making these power relations explicit. However, crucial is that narratives are not considered to provide a coherent representation or a constant stream of information about realization of organizational strategy. Instead, narratives are seen as interrupted and fragmented manifestations of the practices of strategy participation that unfold through power relations. We followed Boje's (1995) view to deconstruct the collective and historical dynamics of dominant organizational narratives.

The data for the empirical essay was collected during 2012. The primary empirical data consisted of two main sources: 16 individual interviews and an observation period. As secondary data we collected organizational strategy

documents. The 'entering the field' (Eisenhardt 1989: 538) occurred in a project meeting with the development manager of the case company. The data collection was part of a larger national-level research program. Data collection and the tentative data analyses were discussed in the project's workshops with the case company representatives twice a year during 2012 and 2013. In the first project meeting we agreed on the data collection methods and planned the tentative list of possible interviewees. Particular attention was given to that we interviewed organizational members from all hierarchical levels. Based on our discussion, the final list for the interviewees was made by the human resource manager of the case company.

The data collection started in spring 2012, with a two-week observation period. During the observation period in the case company, the objective was to develop an understanding of the explicit participation practices of the case organization's strategy-making. The observer paid special attention to the general atmosphere within the organization, and how it was created and sustained. The period included observing sales clerks' daily work in the call center, recruitment interviews, three-day-long training period for new sales clerks, and various staff meetings. Observation data was constructed by writing down field notes as much as possible while observing the organization. After the daily observation period, the observer made additional notes and constructed a daily summary. Also, the observer wrote down their personal reflections because of data collection and data analysis overlap (Eisenhardt 1989). Also, personal reflection was added to provide awareness of some of the researchers' own positioning and to acknowledge the underlying assumptions of the researcher regarding the practices of the call center work. In so doing, we did not treat the observation data as representative of 'objective reality', but more as a socially constructed interaction with the researcher (Essers 2009).

Second, we conducted 16 interviews involving both employees and company management. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way, based around the themes of organizational everyday practices and how interviewees saw the strategy of the case company. Semi-structured interviews are characteristic for analyzing interview data through narrative approaches (Gubrium & Holstein 2009). The interview structure was not provided to the interviewees in advance. All the interviews started with an opening question by inviting the interviewees to talk about their own personal work background and their work history in the case company. After this, the interviewees were asked about their personal experiences regarding both the organization's everyday work practices and how they understood strategy related practices. The interviews lasted between 38 and 78

minutes and were recorded and transcribed. Our aim was to understand how the interviewees reflected and made sense of strategy-making and its practices through their individual experiences.

Third, we explored a variety of strategy-related documents, both publicly available and internal. These documents consisted of internal strategy documents, different sales training documents including guidelines for sales training, and company web pages. The documents were mostly provided by the HR manager of the company and those were treated as fragments and manifestations of the discursive practice of strategy.

In relation to dispositive analysis, our analysis presents one possible perspective on how participation in strategy-making unfolds through relations of power. More specifically, in our elaboration we present one crucial aspect of dispositive analysis, namely, how strategy as an artificial rationality produces objectified subjects of strategy through various discursive and sociomaterial practices. However, the purpose of dispositive analysis is not to focus solely on the 'constitution of the self' per se. Instead, Dispositive analysis shifts attention to the relations between one subject and other subject, as well as its relation to objects of discourses, forces, procedures, the connections and flows made possible, the becoming and capacities engendered, the foreclosed possibilities, the machinery connections that produce and channel the relations between subjects, and the assemblages subjects form (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 74, Rose 1998: 182). Thus, this analysis shows the imaginary anatomy (Rose 1998), or in other words the hyperreal nature (Baudrillard 1983) of participation in strategy-making as it continuously reproduces itself through discourses of knowledge and different social and material arrangements (Grandy & Mills 2004, Knights & Morgan 1991).

5 Summaries of the essays

My thesis consists of four interrelated essays, in each of which I strive to show how power relations generate strategy-making and its practices. All of the essays are co-authored research papers. In all of the essays I am the first author. In these research papers my co-authors and I focus on the relation between strategy discourse and individual subjectification. However, in our analyses we proportion this relation between strategy discourse and individual subjectivity into broader web of power relations. In this way each research paper on its part contributes to how strategy can be seen as an organizational dispositive. Furthermore, from this perspective, all the four essays sheds light on the research question of this thesis, which is: *'How do power and resistance produce organizational strategy?'*

Each of the essays plays a particular role in answering my research question and further enables strategy scholars to better understand some of the crucial issues related to strategy processes and practices, such as the dynamics of strategy realization, who can be defined as a strategist and what is the role of resistance. In the first essay (section 5.1) we focus on the concept of dispositive. In this theoretical essay we present the concept of dispositive and elaborate the implications of it to enhance poststructural strategy research. The main argument is that with the concept of dispositive we can examine on how power relations produce organizational strategy-making through discourses and subjects at the level of the logic of practices. Crucial in our elaboration is the notion that subjectification is built in and through power relations through the process of negation against 'the significant other'.

The notion of otherness leads to the second conceptual essay (section 5.2) in which we examine the role of resistance in strategy-making. In particular, we elaborate how resistance can be understood as a productive force in relation to organizational strategy-making. In this essay we provide a framework of how resistance is dealt in previous strategy research and based on that build an agenda for future research to better understand the dynamics of organizational strategy-making. In particular, the purpose of this essay is to show that even though in organization research the question of productive resistance is well advanced, in strategy research these conceptual developments have not been broadly utilized.

The third essay (section 5.3) serves as an opening for understanding narratives as a method for examining power relations in an organizational context. In this essay we analyze different ways of using narratives in process organizational research and from this basis provide a future research agenda. In this way, the third

essay functions as a methodological basis for my fourth essay, which is an empirical study of the dual effects of participation in strategy realization (section 5.4).

All four essays included in my thesis form a one possible account to better understand the productive role of power and resistance in organizational strategy-making. More specifically, by examining the roles of subjectivity, resistance, narratives, and participation, each essay provides a detailed insight into understanding organizational strategy-making through the concept of dispositive. Next I summarize the main arguments of each essay in a more detailed manner and discuss how each of these views are connected to dispositive analysis of organizational strategy-making.

5.1 Structure of the essays and the reading of existing literature

Three of the essays in this thesis are conceptual and one is empirical. This is purposive since the objective of my study is to challenge some of the underlying assumptions related to strategy research in general and strategy as practice research in particular. To examine the underlying assumptions, I give specific emphasis on theoretical elaboration of previous strategy literature. In this analysis I follow the logic of conceptual literature review (Kennedy 2007; Whitemore & Knafl 2005). According to Whitemore and Knafl (2005: 546-7), conceptual review enables to summarize both empirical and theoretical literature to present a comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon. More specifically this means that I treat both previous strategy literature and original empirical data collected (essay IV) as equivalent.

Conceptual analysis enables me to re-examine some of the underlying assumptions that are generally associated with organizational strategy-making. These assumptions are: strategy-making is based on rational calculations, managers are defined as strategists, and organizational practices are defined as strategic practices if those practices are related to planning and implementing strategy. With this approach I focus on how strategy is continuously formed and renewed as a body of knowledge (Grandy & Mills 2004, Knights & Morgan 1991). Methodologically, I build on ideas of strategy as a narrative (Boje 1995, Barry & Elmes 1997, Fenton & Langley 2007). This narrative view on strategy has argued that strategy discourse can be seen to constitute a specific body of knowledge (Grandy & Mills 2004, Knights & Morgan 1991). However, instead of looking for coherent storylines, shared meaning and common values, I strive to problematize dominant organizational narratives and accounts (Boje 1995, Buchanan 2003,

Buchanan & Dawson 2007, Collins & Rainwater 2005) and to unravel the discursive practice of strategy as a body of knowledge (Ezzamel & Willmott 2008). However, in my analysis, treating strategy as a narrative is not restricted solely to analyzing data in relation to the empirical essay (essay IV). Instead, I include scientific discussions as one form of data that constitutes strategy as a body of knowledge (Knights & Morgan 1991).

With my three conceptual essays I strive to unpack the underlying assumptions behind organizational strategy-making. The first essay examines organizational strategy through the lens of dispositive. Adopting the concept of dispositive enables us to re-examine and reveal the inherent dialectics and tensions embedded in three key processes of organizational strategy-making: the realization of strategy practices, the temporal effects of strategy discourse, and the formation of strategy subjectivity. In the second conceptual essay we focus on the role of resistance in strategy-making. Our key argument in examining resistance in strategy-making is that even though conventional strategy research has treated resistance as a hindrance to strategy-making in organizations, it can be seen as productive in relation to organizational strategy-making. In the third essay we focus on narrativity from the perspective of process organization research and distinguish four perspectives on narratives. These perspectives are narrative representation, narrative construction, narrative deconstruction and narrative agency. Through these categorizations we can better understand how narratives and storytelling can serve as vehicles for building artificial rationalities through strengthening dominant stories and established truth claims in organizations (Currie & Brown 2003, Geiger & Antonacopoulou 2009), but more importantly narratives can be seen as a method for unpacking these rationalities.

In the empirical essay we examine on the role of participation in strategy realization. In our analysis we methodologically combine the Foucauldian understanding of examining practices both from the perspective of discourse and sociomateriality. In our empirical analysis we draw from Foucault's definition of discourses as the '*practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak*' (Foucault 1972: 49). However, we follow Hardy and Thomas's (2014) notion that discursive practice should not be analyzed purely as a linguistic conception. Instead, discourses are always intertwined with social and material forms of organizing, including the bodily dimensions of practices (Foucault 1972). Next I will elaborate on the contribution of each essay separately, as well as its interconnections to dispositive analysis in a more detailed manner.

5.2 Essay I: Strategy as dispositive

The first essay ‘Strategy as dispositive – Analysis of power, discourse and subjectivity in organizational strategy-making’ is co-authored with Vesa Puhakka. The purpose of this essay is to present and elaborate the concept of dispositive in relation to strategy research. The main argument of this essay is to theorize how power relations (namely, power and resistance) can be defined as forces that are ex ante and productive in relation to strategy discourse. In this essay we define dispositive as an artificial rationality through which relations between discourse, power, and subjects realize into material and social practices. This definition leads to that organizational strategy is an artificial rationality that functions as a body of knowledge that continuously reproduces itself through both discourses and different social and material practices (Grandy & Mills 2004, Knights & Morgan 1991). Central in our argument is that, even though strategy is seen as artificial by nature, it is not without actual impacts on organizational life such as objects, practices, events and experiences.

By conceptualizing strategy as an organizational dispositive this essay continues the critical stream of strategy discourse research that has examined the power effects strategy discourses produce on subjects. More specifically, with dispositive analysis we build a framework that theoretically integrates three key elements of critically-oriented strategy research: power, discourse, and subject. However, instead of elaborating the characteristics of these elements per se, dispositive analysis enables us to pinpoint to the interrelations between these elements. Drawing on the ideas on relationality, our analysis shifts attention to the tensions underneath the three key issues of organizational strategy-making that can be found in prevailing strategy literature. These processes are: The realization of strategy discourses, temporality in strategy-making, and last, the formation of strategy agency.

By conceptualizing strategy as an organizational dispositive this essay continues the critical stream of strategy discourse research that has examined on the power effects strategy discourses produce on subjects (Ezzamel & Willmott 2008, Grandy & Mills 2004, Hardy & Thomas 2014, Knights & Morgan 1991, Laine & Vaara 2007, McCabe 2010). This enables us to unpack the inherent paradoxicalities embedded in organizational strategy-making. These paradoxicalities are the following. How intensified strategy implementation realizes into conflicting practices, how discourses of strategic planning lead to the

reproduction of the past, and last, the formation of strategy subjects through resistance.

5.3 Essay II: Resistance as a productive force in strategy-making

The second essay is a joint work with Eero Vaara. The purpose of this conceptual essay is twofold. First, we examine on how resistance is understood in previous strategy literature. Second, by drawing on both previous organization research that has examined different forms of resistance in general and Foucault's notion of productive resistance in particular, we suggest how strategy research could advance the understanding of the role of resistance in the processes and practices of strategy-making. In our elaboration we follow Foucault's definition of productive resistance, and show how resistance can be conceptualized as a force that produces strategy-making, instead of solely treating resistance as a force hindering strategy implementation.

The starting point of this essay is that the role of resistance in organizational strategy-making is still a relatively under-researched topic, and thus our understanding of the different kinds of implications of resistance are yet not well enough elaborated in strategy research. We begin our analysis by providing an insight into how the role of resistance is understood in previous strategy process and practice research. In our view we distinguished three perspectives on resistance. These perspectives are: the functionalist-managerialist approach, the interpretative approach, and the critical approach. Based on this categorization we build an agenda for future research to examine resistance in strategy research. To build this agenda we draw on the Foucauldian perspective on power, in which resistance is an inherent and dynamic part of power relations.

Through our elaboration of previous strategy literature, we suggest that instead of viewing resistance as something to overcome in relation to strategy, a closer look at resistance reveals its central role in strategy-making. In particular, we suggest that there is more to the critical perspective on resistance in strategy research. Thus, we outline avenues for future research by pointing to four topics that warrant special attention if we are to better understand the fundamental role of resistance in strategy-making: the mobilization of collective resistance, resistance as an inherent part of the dynamics of strategy-making, resistance and redefinition of subjectivity, the various modes and the role of sociomateriality in resistance, and ideological reproduction and resistance.

Thus, with this essay we add to contemporary strategy research by providing an explicit elaboration of the different ways in which the role of resistance has been dealt in strategy literature. This view resonates closely with previous elaborations on the role of productive resistance in organizational change literature (Cutcher 2009, Courpasson, Dany & Clegg 2012, Thomas & Davies 2005, Thomas *et al.* 2011, Sonenshein 2010). However, I regard that even though these streams of literatures overlap to some extent, strategy research has still failed to truly develop broader conceptualizations on resistance in organizational strategy-making. I argue that for this particular reason it is important to explicitly elaborate the different viewpoints to the role of resistance in organizational strategy-making.

In terms of dispositive analysis this essay serves two main purposes. First, taking the perspective of productive resistance to examine organizational strategy-making enables us to theorize how strategy as an organizational dispositive is processual by nature. Second, to examine resistance in dispositive analysis enables to unpack the objectified nature of discourse. In particular, in his analysis of the dispositive of sexuality, Foucault (1978) highlighted that encoding of resistance points is central for dispositive analysis since it makes the productive and objectified nature of discourse explicit. In this way, understanding the role of resistance as producing organizational strategy-making enables strategy scholar to theorize the relations between power, discourse, and subjectivity, which are the key elements of a dispositive.

5.4 Essay III: Narratives and processuality

The third essay serves as a methodological basis of my thesis. This research paper is co-authored with Eero Vaara. In this essay we focus on the role and contribution of narratives in process organization research. The elaboration of the processual nature of narratives is central for dispositive analysis for two main reasons. First, adopting a narrative view on organizational strategy enables me to examine on how strategy is seen as a meta-level story that can be seen as a specific form knowledge. This ‘knowledge’ operates in two levels: both within the organization itself, and to uphold a compelling account in relation to stakeholders ‘outside’ the organization. In this way the meta-level narrative analysis can be as a one possible method to examine organizational strategy without reducing analysis to the ideals of functionalist thinking. Second, individual narratives of the ‘self’ is the key to examine social ‘assemblages’ (Rose 1998: 173-182). However, central in this analysis of narratives of the self is that human agent is not posited into the core of

sensemaking activity. In other words, narrative analysis is not proportioned to the realm of signs, meaning, or communications, but instead to the techniques, intensities, authorities, and dispositives (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 138, see also Rose 1998). In this way, analyzing narratives of the self, resonates with dispositive analysis because it enables me to highlight the relations between power, discourse, and self by shifting attention to the emergence of practices, locales and enunciative regimes, that empower certain individuals to speak of our truth in the language of the self (Rose 1998: 178).

Thus, a broad understanding of different narrative approaches in process organization research provides a methodological basis for data analysis conducted in my empirical essay. In this essay we examine narratives from the perspective of process organization research and distinguish four narrative perspectives that are each relevant for process organization research. These perspectives are narrative representation, narrative construction, narrative deconstruction, and narrative agency.

The first perspective on narratives in process organization research is narrative representation. This perspective treats narratives both as a reflection of organizational reality and as a means of data gathering to better understand organizational processes that exist independently of the narratives. This perspective is based on realist or postpositivist perspectives on organizational processes, and reflects the functionalist thinking of organizations. The second perspective, namely narrative construction, examines narratives as objects of study per se, and the focus is on the various kinds of constructions of organizational processes and differences between them. This perspective is based on interpretative or social constructionist epistemology, and the purpose of this perspective is to understand how organizational narratives are constructed. Related to this, the third perspective also focuses on narratives per se, but draws on poststructuralism to challenge and deconstruct prevailing narratives. In particular, narrative deconstruction focuses on questions of inclusion and exclusion through narrative analysis. Finally, the fourth perspective views narratives and the storytelling as parts of organizational ontology, and the focus is on their agentic power. This perspective resonates with postmodern views on organizations and the 'strong process' view. We then go on to provide directions for future research in terms of a discussion of narrative temporality, intertextuality, multimodality and sociomateriality, and mediatization.

5.5 Essay IV: Participation in strategy realization – the dynamics of control and self-actualization in strategy-making

The fourth essay of my thesis is empirical. In this essay I examine the dynamic relation between control and self-actualization in strategy realization. In particular, I focus on how participation unfolds through relations of power. This essay is based on the assumption that according to interpretative strategy as practice research, participation is seen as enhancing strategy-making (Floyd & Wooldridge 2000, Mantere & Vaara 2008). In reverse, exclusion in strategy-making is considered a manifestation of organizational inequality. In the analysis, I strive to challenge this assumption produced by the interpretative strategy research and argue that participation unfolds through power relations. In this way participation can be seen as exclusion through practices of inclusion. By analyzing participation as unfolding through power relations, I strive to better understand the role of participation in strategy realization.

In this empirical essay I draw on an in-depth case study of a Finnish call center. The empirical data consists of two main sources: interviews and observation. In addition to this, I analyzed strategy texts and other documentary data. In the analysis I identify five practices participation that play a central role in strategy realization: collective responsibility, collective support, positive reinforcement, making accomplishments explicit, and the sense of community.

The elaboration of these dynamics is relevant for dispositive analysis in two ways. First, through this dynamism I can empirically pinpoint the key notion of dispositive that is the intersections between organizational discourses and social and material practices. Second, by showing how organizational strategy realizes through the relation between practices of control and individual self-actualization I can show how power is inherently relational. In other words, in order to that strategies can realize to social and material practices power necessitates reciprocity between different actors.

6 Discussion

In this section I will piece together my study and discuss the theoretical implications of using the concept of dispositive in strategy process and practice research. In my thesis I have defined dispositive as an artificial rationality through which relations between power, discourse and subjectivity are intensified into material and social practices.

This definition leads to the main argument of my thesis, which is that even though strategy in organizational context produces tangible and actual implications such as practices, administrative guidelines, and material arrangements, strategy by nature is artificial. In other words, it has no substantial nature to take hold of. This artificiality can be described with the notion of substantial ‘emptiness’, which however, is not equivalent with ‘non-existence’ (cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1991). With emptiness I mean that organizational strategy per se does not entail substantial or concrete content but, instead it continuously becomes only when organizational actors ‘do strategies’. Consequently, strategy ‘exists’ in the idea of that practices (both discursive and non-discursive) of analysis, planning, implementation and control are a ‘necessity of condition’ in building a successful and effective ‘organization’.

Thus, central notion in examining organizational strategy with the concept dispositive is that enables us to pinpoint to its core function of realizing the hyperreal (cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1991). This leads to that practices of organizational strategy-making (both discursive and non-discursive) can be seen as the continuous (re)production of the hyperreal (Grandy & Mills 2004). Furthermore, dispositive analysis allows us to approach this (re)production from two perspectives. First, *how* strategy operates at the level of the logic practices (Feldman & Orlikowski 2011) by functioning as a point of reference in building actual consistence from virtual (Deleuze & Guattari 1991). Second, in comparison to previous Foucault-oriented strategy studies that have focused on the power effects of strategy discourses produce on subjectivity, dispositive analysis allows strategy researchers to reveal how power relations produce strategy discourse by generating inherent polarization and dialectics underneath ostensibly coherent, and seemingly observable surface level practices of strategy-making.

The inherent polarization is a central characteristic that differentiates dispositive assemblages from discourses. This means that strategy as an organizational dispositive operates more broadly than solely at a level of a discourse. Thus addition to its discursive nature, strategy as an organizational

dispositive can also be seen as a diagram (Rose 1998) or machinery (Deleuze 1994) that bends organizational practices toward polarities in accordance to relations of power embedded to strategy discourse. This is because power in dispositive analysis is seen as a practice that modifies, strengthens and turns power relations through endless contradictions and struggles.

This polarization of practices Deleuze (1994) illustrates by drawing on Foucault's analysis of the dispositive of sexuality as follows. The dispositive of sexuality works as machinery that bends sexuality into two different social genders. In other words, sexuality, examined through the notion of dispositive, can be seen as turned from something that naturally emerges in birth in all variety of forms between polarized male, hermaphrodite, and polarized female. However, dispositive analysis enables us to examine how naturally occurring sexuality is turned into social performance that can be understood through polarized categories between genders, namely masculinity and femininity. Align, organizational strategy can be seen as an artificial rationality that bends organizational practices towards its polarities by dividing organizational members into strategists and non-strategists, organizational practices into strategic practices and operational practices in accordance to the relations of power, and organizational events into strategic and non-strategic.

This view can be seen as providing another dimension to previous Foucauldian-oriented interpretations, which mainly have focused on either to meta-level analyses on power and discourses (Knights & Morgan 1991, Lilley 2001, Ezzamel & Willmott 2010) or to the micro-level power effects that specific strategy discourses produce (Ezzamel & Willmott 2008, McCabe 2016, Samra-Fredericks 2005). Thus I argue that this view enables us to reconsider some of the central underlying assumptions related to organizational strategy-making.

As an outcome of the thesis, I have built an integrative theorization on strategy process and practice research to better understand the interconnectedness between power, discourse, and subjects. In addition, this analysis enables strategy researchers to better understand how organizational strategy-making is produced in and through power relations, namely power and resistance.

The key implication in highlighting the productive nature of both power and resistance is that it enables strategy scholars to draw attention to the inherent tensions behind underlying assumptions of strategy research (Smith & Lewis 2011). More specifically, by arguing that both power and resistance are productive forces in strategy-making, enables me to examine how strategy literature entails elements that individually seem logical, but when these elements are examined

simultaneously, they can be seen as inconsistent or even absurd (ibid: 328). Thus, I argue that with dispositive I can unpack underlying assumptions regarding strategy process and practice research. These assumptions are the following: Strategy as rational planning, the definition of a strategist, and the role of resistance. By so doing, our analysis has implications both on strategy process and practice studies and on Foucauldian analysis in organization studies more generally. I will elaborate these implications below.

6.1 Unpacking the underlying assumptions of strategy process and practice research

Using the concept of dispositive means that power relations, namely power and resistance, are defined as forces *ex ante* in relation to organizational strategy-making. Next I discuss the implications of defining power relations (power and resistance) as preceding discourses and other social practices of strategy-making in a more detailed manner.

First, with dispositive analysis I can theorize strategy-making in away that takes into account the artificial nature of it. This means that organizational strategy-making is examined also beyond rational planning and intentional activity. I acknowledge that I am not the first to question the notion of rational planning in the context of strategy research. In particular, recent studies of strategy as becoming (Chia & Holt 2006, MacKay & Chia 2007, MacKay & Chia 2013, Tsoukas 2010) have contributed to the strategy literature by showing how strategic change can be examined as an interactive process of creative evolution (Bergson 1911). This means that choice, change and environmental consequences interact to produce both positive and negative unintended consequences in organizational settings (MacKay & Chia 2013). However, the concept of dispositive adds to this stream of literature a theorization of the role of power. In other words, dispositive analysis provides an alternative account to the question of what Whitehead (1925: 51) called the "*fallacy of misplaced concreteness*" - a confusion of treating the abstract as the concrete. With this theorization we can better understand the interrelation of agency, action and practice in the context of organizational strategy (cf. Chia & Holt 2006). More specifically, by examining how strategy as an artificial rationality creates subject positions from which an individual agent is able to act (Knights & Morgan 1991), we can better understand the logic of practices through which strategies emerge beyond managerial intention. By elaborating the process of subjectification and furthermore, by showing how power produces practices through the processes

of subjectification and identification (see essay I), we can examine how action results from internalized predispositions (Chia & Rasche 2015). More importantly, giving emphasis on the productive nature of power relations, we can examine how these internalized predispositions are in a constant state of flux and continuous change.

Second, with the concept of dispositive we can re-elaborate the question of agency in the context of organizational strategy-making. In other words, we can challenge traditional notions of who can be defined as a strategist. While previous studies of subjectivity have already broadened the definition of agency in strategy-making (Knights & Morgan, 1991, Laine & Vaara, 2007), the concept of dispositive enables us to illustrate how strategy as an artificial rationality leads to the polarization of both subjectivities and practices in an organizational context. This means that strategy-making necessitates contradictions, ambiguity and resistance to keep the discourse of strategy alive and ongoing. Thus, crucial in my analysis is that the process of subjectification alone does not automatically produce the realization of strategic practices (for similar approach, see Rose 1998). Instead, the realization of strategic practices unfolds through power relations between individual subjects. This notion turns the focus of analysis towards how discourses and other social practices are continuously formed and renewed in power relations, in the relation between variety of subjects. Subsequently, the power relation between subjects involves the process of identification, which according to Foucault (1994) forms against the significant other (Hall 1997) in the process of negation (Deleuze 1983, Foucault 1994, Hall 1997). This adds to our understanding of the realization of strategy discourses into social and material practices (Balogun et al. 2015).

By focusing on negation in the realization of strategy practices, I also contribute to our understanding of the roles, identities and agencies of organizational strategists (Dameron & Torset 2014, Dick & Collings 2014, Mantere 2008). More specifically, I argue that with dispositive analysis we can better comprehend how strategy subjects search for and adopt positions that allow them to exercise influence either through specific strategy discourses or resisting those discourses. This notion of polarization and resistance enables us to approach the definition of a strategist from new perspectives. In other words, the role of top managers in forming and launching new strategies can be seen as resistance towards previous states-of-affairs. Also, from this perspective, employee resistance to prevailing strategy discourse can be seen as necessary for keeping organizational strategy discourses alive.

Third, resistance can be seen as a necessary element of organizational strategy-making. Traditionally, resistance is seen to hinder effective strategy-making, and participation is seen to advance the enactment and implementation of strategy. To challenge these notions of organizational strategy-making, I argue that actually resistance plays a central role in organizational strategy-making. Resistance has received little attention in this area, but recent studies have elaborated on its modes and dynamics (Dick & Collings 2014, Ezzamel & Willmott 2008, Laine & Vaara 2007, McCabe 2010). This view is counter-intuitive, but important for understanding the dynamics of organizational strategy-making in three ways. First, the launching of ‘new strategies’ can be seen as resistance towards previous ones, while strategies are challenged by new ones. Second, through productive resistance we can better understand the emergent nature of strategy-making. Third, the role of resistance can be seen as crucial in creating dialogue and strategy enactment. Consequently, the actualization of strategy is seen to be formed through power relations, in which the processes of subjectification, identity construction and negation interact. Thus, using the concept of dispositive provides one way to explore the emergence of strategic change from the perspective of seemingly innocuous occurrences taking place at the periphery (Regner 2003) of an organization (MacKay & Chia 2013) by underscoring the ‘push’ that comes from prevailing dynamics of power and resistance. Thus, we can better illustrate strategy-making as movement from the prevailing state-of-affairs instead of examining change as purposive action to achieving a desired future state.

6.2 Contributions to Foucault-oriented organization research

In addition to strategy process and practice research, my thesis contributes to the Foucauldian and other critical perspectives of organization research. In particular, I add to the stream of Foucauldian organization research that has broadened interpretations of power beyond domination and hegemony (Bardon & Josserand 2010, Fleming 2013, Fleming & Sturdy 2013, Munro 2012, Raffnsøe *et al.* 2016). My analysis adds to this growing body of research by theorizing the interrelations between discourse and subjectivity. This is not novel per se since many of the Foucault-oriented studies have already examined on what kinds of power effects discourses produce on subjects (Knights & Morgan 1991, Samra-Fredericks 2005, Townley 1993), as well as the post-disciplinary effects of power (Fleming 2013). However, in my analysis I focus on to theorize how power relations also precede discourses and subjects. In this way, we can better understand how power and

resistance are forces that produce objects, subjects, and practices in and through discourses (Hardy & Phillips 2004). This dynamic is less well understood, perhaps because the usual reading of ‘early’ Foucault privileges discourses over actors. In the spirit of biopolitical analyses of Foucault, this enables us to examine how actively engage in the reproduction of their own subjectivity through positioning.

My thesis also adds to the increasing interest in the forms and modes of resistance in organizational settings (Putnam, Grant, Michelson & Cutcher 2005, Thomas & Davies 2005). Recent organizational studies have started to promote a more positive approach to examining the role of resistance (e.g. Courpasson *et al.* 2012, Thomas & Hardy 2011, Thomas *et al.* 2011). Distinctive to these studies is, that resistance is not only understood as a negative element, as a force that prohibits or reduces effectivity in organizations, but among others resistance is seen as one force per se creating movement and change. These studies have started to examine the role of resistance in a more positive sense, mainly in the context of organizational change (Cutcher 2009; Ford *et al.* 2008). These kinds of perspectives on resistance draw more or less on the Foucauldian (1980, 1987) conceptualization of power relations by adding to our understanding of the facilitative role of resistance in organizations (Thomas *et al.* 2011). However, while epistemologically these studies have drawn on Foucauldian thought, they have still largely examined resistance as a reaction to managerial power (Kärreman & Alvesson 2009).

Treating resistance as facilitative is a central notion in terms of recent Foucauldian organization research. However, I argue that Foucault’s notion of productive resistance holds potential to enlarge the notion of facilitative resistance. More specifically, I strive to draw attention to that resistance could be defined more broadly than as a mere reaction to the use of power. With this notion I mean that the tendency to resist is inherent in human nature also in situations where an individual is not able to explicitly define a specific object of resistance. In other words, I argue that the tendency to resist is inscribed in human activity, and furthermore this tendency in central function in both collective and individual development. Thus, dispositive analysis enables me to theorize how resistance can be conceptualized in organizational context in general and in the context of organizational strategy-making in particular. In this way I define resistance as a force *ex ante* in relation to organizational strategy-making. This enables organization researchers in general and strategy researchers in particular to examine the constitutive role of resistance in forming and renewing organizational strategy (Cutcher 2009).

Finally, with my thesis I contribute to organization research more generally by advancing the methodological perspectives in three ways. First, the third essay of narratives in process organization research adds to the existing literature on narratives (Boje 2008, 2014, Rhodes & Brown 2005, Vaara *et al.* 2016) and process organization studies (Langley *et al.* 2013) by distinguishing different ways of using narratives in process organization research. Second, with the empirical essay I add to organization studies that have focused on the post-disciplinary applications of Foucault (Bardon & Josserand 2010, Fleming 2013, Fleming & Sturdy 2013, Munro 2012) by advancing understanding of the relational and reciprocal nature of power. Third, by combining narrative analysis to the concept of power as relational and productive I provide an example of how positioning and individual self-actualization can be empirically examined in organizational contexts.

7 Conclusions

The purpose of my thesis has been to both theoretically and empirically show how organizational strategy-making unfolds in and through power relations. For this purpose, I have presented the concept of dispositive. With the dispositive analysis I have contributed to the poststructural strategy process and practice research as well as to poststructural organization research in general. In my study I have shown that even though strategy discourse can be seen as an artificial rationality, it produces actual social and material effects in an organizational context. This dynamic realization of discourses into social and material practices entails the notion of productive power as inherent. More specifically, central in this dynamics is that resistance can be seen as a central force that generates movement and renewal in the context of organizational strategy-making. To conclude, I will next discuss the practical implications of my study, possible avenues for future research, and last, the limitations of my study.

7.1 Practical implications

Poststructural and Foucault-oriented methods have not conventionally seen to produce relevant explicit managerial implications. Especially in the context of organizational strategy-making different poststructural and critical views have been challenged of being too theoretical, and with limited practical implications (Jarzabkowski & Spee 2011). In particular, focusing on the notion of power is either seen as being too pervasive to make a contribution to existing literature or, on the other hand, power as a concept is seen as replaceable either with the concept of influence (Floyd & Woolridge 1997) or with the notion of bias in decision-making (Nickerson, Silverman & Zenger 2007, Baer, Dirks & Nickerson 2013). In spite of these notions, I argue that by treating organizational strategy as an artificial rationality, we can better understand the practical realm of organizational strategy-making in three ways. First, while approaching organizational strategy-making from the perspective of productive power, we can broaden the notion of who in an organizational context can be defined as a strategist. Second, by taking the perspective on productive power, we can examine the logics through which strategies are realized. Third, by viewing resistance as a force producing organizational strategy-making, we can better understand how strategy resistance can be a crucial element in organizational strategy-making. In this way my study highlights the complexities, ambiguities and contradictions in organizational

strategy-making that may easily pass unnoticed with more conventional or interpretative approaches.

Thus, while traditionally strategy-making in organizations is seen as the practice of top and middle management, the perspective of productive power enables us to adopt a broader look at the definition of a strategist. This broadening of the definition of a strategist in an organizational context can potentially have two main practical implications. First, by treating organizational actors beyond top management as strategists increases the strategizing potential. Second, taking a broader look at strategy and strategizing also enables managers to focus on examining what kinds of practices in an organizational context actually are strategic, instead of focusing on practices of forming official strategies.

Second, my study has practical implications for creating understanding of the realization of organizational strategies. By focusing on the logic of practices through which strategies unfold, practitioners can also gain a deeper understanding of why some strategies take off while others do not. This can be seen as crucial for strategy practitioners both from the perspective of top management's strategizing as well as for middle managers' everyday strategy work. Particularly by making the power relations explicit in organizational contexts, one of the targets of my study has been to show that organizational actors beyond top and middle management hold strategizing potential that still is rarely used in the context of everyday organizational strategy-making.

Third, my study provides new insights into the role of resistance in organizational strategy-making. This concerns strategy practitioners, especially in terms of launching new strategies and during major strategic change processes. Since resistance is seen as inevitable in organizing, my thesis enables strategy practitioners to understand how resistance can be seen as positive and productive in relation to strategy-making. Also, treating resistance as a necessary phenomenon creates an understanding of the effects of overemphasizing participation in organizational strategy-making. This means that overemphasized participation in organizational strategy-making can lead to narrowed views of strategy, which can lead to a decrease in creativity and new developments in the process of strategic planning.

7.2 Future research

My thesis also opens up new avenues for future research. Because my third essay largely focuses on building a future research agenda for using narrative analysis in

process organization research, I will not elaborate this here in detail. In terms of other suggestions for future research, I discuss these below.

In my thesis I have mainly focused on the theoretical conceptualization of strategy as dispositive. Thus, the primary suggestion for further research is to apply the concept of dispositive in empirical studies of strategy process and practice research. Using dispositive enables researchers to empirically examine the relation between prevailing organizational discourses and subjectivity in organization studies in general and in strategy research in particular. This also enables building future research to elaborate different modes of both participation (Laine & Vaara 2015, Mantere & Vaara 2008) and resistance (Munro 2016, Thomas & Davies 2005). For example, in strategy research future studies could focus on the effects of overemphasizing participation and demonizing resistance. As Ford et al. (2008) and Thomas and Hardy (2011) note, thoughtful resistance can play a much more important role in sustaining change than unquestioning acceptance. By examining strategy from these two directions, i.e. adaptation to predominant strategy discourse and coding its points of resistance, I argue that we could empirically produce new and significant knowledge about strategy and its practices.

Giving explicit attention to the relation between prevailing strategy discourses and resistance can open up new directions to deeper understanding of agency in organizational strategy-making. While strategy research has mainly focused on understanding of the dynamics between discourse and subjectification, with a few exceptions (e.g. Laine *et al.* 2015) critical analyses of the construction of identity has remained scarce. I argue that crucial in analyzing identity would be to separate the concept of identity from the concept of subjectivity. This would be beneficial for strategy research in two ways. First, putting more emphasis on both the construction and deconstruction of identity in relation to organizational strategy-making could provide new insights into how strategy practices unfold at an individual level as well as at the level of the logic of practices. Second, by focusing on the (inter)relation between identity and subjectivity we could better understand and re-examine the question of who can be defined as a strategist in an organizational context.

On the other hand, more empirical studies should be conducted from the perspective of Foucauldian governmentality (Dean 1999, McKinlay, Carter & Pezet 2012). Even though there has been increasing interest towards 'late Foucault' analysis on 'life itself' in organizational research (Fleming 2013, Fleming & Sturdy 2013, Munro 2012), I suggest that conducting analysis of the effects of power beyond domination would be particularly useful in further advancing the critical

understanding of strategy research. With this I mean that strategy research could put more emphasis on the mundane and everyday practices of power, namely the everyday ‘how’ of governing that occurs through individuals ‘free will’, desires and aspirations. However, this suggestion should still not be understood as providing a comprehensive account to strategy research. Instead, it could be seen as one possible avenue of research for enlarging critical approaches and conceptualizations of strategy research in general and strategy as practice research in particular. This could further allow strategy scholars to examine the local unfolding of strategy practices, both discursive and non-discursive.

Lastly, a key issue for future research would be to highlight the specific dynamics and differences in them in various social, cultural and historical settings. For example, giving more attention to understanding the different temporal views on strategy could enhance our understanding of how dominant organizational accounts are formed and sustained in relation to strategy-making. This is particularly relevant when doing narrative analysis of organizational strategy-making. After all, the very practices of strategy-making vary in different settings, and an analysis of how they are historically (re)produced and transformed is a crucial question in strategy research (Carter 2013, Vaara & Lamberg 2016). Further, by focusing on the historical embeddedness of strategy-making, we could also open up new pathways for deeper understanding of the temporal nature of organizational strategy-making that, with a few exceptions (Kaplan & Orlikowski 2013, Vaara & Pedersen 2013), has remained a ‘black box’ issue and thus represents a major challenge for future strategy research.

7.3 Limitations of the study

Finally, I discuss the limitations of my study that should be taken seriously. I acknowledge that I have only provided an overall sketch of the myriads of power-resistance dynamics that characterize organizational strategy-making. While in my thesis I have focused mainly on the productive nature of power relations, I acknowledge that this can lead to the downplaying of the constraining or suppressing role of power. However, this has been intentional since previous studies of strategy research that have taken the perspective on power relations, have mainly focused on the negative effects of power and resistance.

The second limitation concerns the empirical study and data collection conducted in my thesis. I acknowledge that my empirical study addressed only fragments of the practices of participation in strategy-making. Also, when

conducting observation and narrative interviews, the impact of the researcher needs to be given explicit attention. However, in poststructural analysis this is not seen as a problem since the target of the analysis was not to carry out an objective analysis of the state-of-affairs. Instead, the focus was to elaborate the dynamics between observed practices, both discursive and bodily, and the fragments of individual narratives. As poststructural analysis focuses on the contextual nature of discourses and practices, it does not strive to make generalizations about research findings.

Third, I acknowledge that the approach taken does not provide an exhaustive account of understanding how power produces organizational strategy-making. Other theoretical and methodological accounts, such as sensemaking (Weick 1995), critical discourse analysis (Fairclough & Wodak 2005) or paradox theory (Smith & Lewis 2011) could have provided interesting findings. However, with these approaches it would not have been possible to open up the relational and productive nature of power.

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- I Rantakari A & Puhakka V Strategy as dispositive - Analysis of power, discourse and subjectivity in strategy-making. Conference paper in Academy of Management Annual Meeting in Anaheim, US 2016.
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