

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS PERSPECTIVE ON STRATEGY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Strategy has become a dominant discourse for decision-making in and around business and other organizations. Managers or enterprises no longer seem to do without *strategy* or *strategic planning* processes. Furthermore, strategy discourse has colonized other kinds of organizations to the extent that whether we are dealing with universities, hospitals, government organizations, or NGOs, we inevitably confront various discursive and social practices related to it.

The roots of this hegemonic discourse can be traced to ancient military strategy. However, it is only during the past few decades that this discourse, linked with neo-liberal ideals and the development of the modern corporation, has gradually conquered businesses and other organizations around the globe. In many ways, it has provided means to structure organizational decision-making and to engage in active planning. In the best cases, this has meant that the people in organizations have been able to better plan for their own future. However, this hegemonic discourse has also created inequalities and other problems, many of which easily pass unnoticed.

While management and organization scholars have started to pay attention to the problematic aspects of organizational decision-making and in particular to the role of strategy in organizations, few studies have looked at strategy as a discourse. However, there are some notable exceptions. Knights & Morgan (1991) suggested a Foucauldian genealogical approach to strategy research, and Levy *et alii* (2003) have argued for a hegemony perspective. Others have then employed discursive perspectives in trying to understand the formation of specific kinds of strategy discourse in particular contexts (e.g. Hardy *et alii*, 2000; Samra-Fredericks, 2003 and Vaara *et alii*, 2004).

In our paper, we wish to add to this emerging literature by looking at strategy discourse from a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective.

Our main motive is that we still lack an understanding of the various kinds of topics that can be explored if we take a critical perspective on the extensive use of strategy discourse in contemporary society. In particular, we try to spell out in concrete terms how Critical Discourse Analysis can contribute to a fuller understanding of the various social and societal implications of the extensive use of strategy discourse in various kinds of organizations.

We see Critical Discourse Analysis as a discourse analytic methodology that examines the linguistic aspects (language use in speech and writing) of the social construction of reality from a critical perspective. In our version of Critical Discourse Analysis, we emphasize the contextuality of discourse analysis, meaning that we see discourses as part of social practices (e.g. Fairclough 2003). In fact, the dialectics between specific discursive and other social practices is in our view essential if we want to understand the broader social and societal implications of the extensive use of strategy discourse in contemporary society.

In our analysis, we make a conceptual distinction between strategy as a body of knowledge, specific thematic discussions around particular organizational strategies, and specific strategy discourses within particular organizations. Such an analytical distinction is in our view necessary to deal with different levels and types of discourse as well as to be able to understand their interrelationships.

In this paper we sketch three important areas for empirical research. First, based on a multidimensional view on *ideology* (e.g. van Dijk, 1998), we reflect on the ideological implications of strategy discourse. In brief, the militarist legacy of strategy discourse, the neo-liberal corporate ideology in which this discourse is anchored, the instrumental rationality inherent in this discourse and the consequent lack of humanism, the colonial nature of the discourse, and the masculine worldview associated with this discourse are important questions that deserve our attention. Second, we suggest taking the legitimating and naturalizing aspects of strategy discourse seriously. This means paying attention to topics such as how specific organizational strategies (e.g. growth, internationalization, restructurings, rationalizations, downsizing), but not others are legitimated in particular time periods and particular contexts. While there are various theoretical and methodological approaches to adopt in such analyses, we suggest that legitimation strategies (e.g. van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999) and naturalization (e.g. Fairclough, 1997) deserve specific attention in this context. Third, we argue that the emerging identities and subjectivities constructed through strategy discourse require special attention. We point out that strategy discourse, as it is most often employed, tends to reproduce inequalities. These inequalities as well as

specific tendencies such as the technologization of strategy discourse are in our view particularly important topics for critical analysis.

2. ON THE EVOLUTION OF STRATEGY DISCOURSE

The roots of military strategy research can be traced as far back as Sun Tzu (1971). It was, in turn, the ancient Greeks that introduced key terms such as *strategy* and *tactic*. Thereafter, we have seen these concepts being used increasingly in military strategy, but also in other areas of social life. However, there are few areas where *strategy* has been given as prominent a role as in contemporary strategic management discourse.

From an historical perspective, the development of strategy discourse has been closely linked with corporate management. As early as the beginning of the 20th century, corporations grew into specific organizational and juridical forms under which businesses were developed and managed in the US and elsewhere. Before the Second World War, ownership and management also became increasingly distinguished functions and roles, paving the way for the professionalization of business and corporate management. In the post-war era, especially US corporations grew at an increasingly rapid rate and conquered new markets at an unprecedented pace. In this situation, corporate managers faced new problematics that called for novel conceptual and practical tools. Not least because of the readily available vocabulary and the apparent fit with neo-liberal ideology promoting corporate competition and expansion, *strategy* emerged as a particularly suitable discourse for making sense of and giving sense to the new challenges of corporate management. What we have seen thereafter is the institutionalization of strategy discourse as an inherent part of the management of corporations, and also other organizations.

While a description of the actual role of various actors in the spread of this discourse is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note that American business schools as well as the older or newly established European business schools and respective faculties in universities played a key role in spreading this new discourse in the post-war years. Strategy consulting companies, such as the Boston Consulting Group or McKinsey, have also been especially influential in disseminating strategic thinking all across the globe. The media have also picked up strategy discourse, and, for example, business journals and television are now major outlets for spreading it. In fact, one can speak about the popularization and mediatization of strategy discourse, especially during the past three decades.

From an academic perspective, the emergence of strategy discourse is part of the overall development of the management sciences (accounting, finance,

marketing, organization studies, etc.) in the 20th century. All management disciplines have been strongly influenced by the modernistic ideals of *scientific management*. However, in strategy, this linkage has been especially strong due to an emphasis on analysis, planning and organizational control. In any case, today strategy has grown into a respected and influential management discipline with specific paradigms and academic conventions.

Academic strategy literature nowadays comprises a complex set of theories, models and approaches. For example, Whittington (1993) outlines a model of four different paradigms while Mintzberg *et alii.* (1998) distinguish ten different schools of thought in corporate strategy. But these are obviously not exhaustive typologies. Most established views on strategy were created in the 1960s when organizational decision-making processes were conceptualized as strategic planning processes (e.g. Chandler, 1962 and Ansoff, 1965). Characteristic of this view is to emphasize the key role of top management in the various planning tasks. Following the formulation of specific *strategies*, top management is then supposed to make respective decisions and *implement* the strategies in the organization. Especially under the influence of Porter (1980), strategy has thereafter been closely linked with direct and indirect industrial competition, meaning a specific emphasis on the positioning of one's company vis-à-vis competitors, suppliers, customers, new entrants and substitutes.

As an alternative to these views promoting the role of rational analysis, others have emphasized the concrete actions taken by management and other members of the organizations. In fact, academic research has increasingly been interested in the various political and cultural processes through which *strategies* are created or enacted (e.g. Pettigrew, 1973, Whittington, 1993, Mintzberg 1994 and Johnson *et alii.*, 2003). These approaches have often been closely linked with organization studies. While these approaches have provided strategy research with more sociological ideas and even *constructionist* perspectives, it is important to emphasize they have been much more influential among academics than practitioners. These approaches have also rarely gone beyond a sheer managerialist perspective when reflecting upon the implications of various perspectives and findings.

By and large, the existing strategy literature does not in fact question why we choose to look at things from a *strategy* perspective or reflect upon the political and moral implications of this discourse. Lately, some researchers have, however, provided critical perspectives and questioned the paradigmatic starting points of strategy research and practice. This has meant asking for example why strategy rather than something else should guide organization decision-making and action and why top management should be seen as the privileged actor (e.g. Smircich & Stubbart, 1985; Knights &

Morgan, 1991; Alvesson & Willmott, 1995; Barry & Elmes, 1997; Eriksson & Lehtimäki, 1998; Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Levy *et alii*, 2003 and Vaara *et alii*, 2004). It is this emerging research tradition that forms the basis for our analysis.

3. A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS PERSPECTIVE ON STRATEGY

For our purposes, it is important to distinguish different facets in contemporary strategy discourse. At the most abstract and general level, we can look at this discourse as a body of knowledge in a Foucauldian sense. As sketched above, this means paying attention to the general characteristics of this discipline and its evolution over time and reflecting upon the societal implications of this discourse. At another level, we can examine specific discussions concerning particular strategies. This means focusing attention on key issues and *fashions* in contemporary management, ranging from appropriate growth strategies to specific practices in dealing with human resource issues. And at yet another level, we can examine organization-specific strategy discourses, meaning analyzing the particular discursive and other social practices characterizing, for example, decision making in that organization. It is however, important to note that these levels of analysis are interrelated. The general body of knowledge, with all its ambiguities and contradictions, provides the basic conceptual framework and vocabulary for discussions around specific themes, which are then reflected in strategy discourse of particular organizations. At the same time, it is the organization-specific discussions that reproduce and at times also challenge the more general discussions around specific topics as well as the meta-level discourse. It would, however, be false to assume that strategy discourse is similar in all contexts or that its use has the same kinds of implications in different social settings. This means that whatever the specific level of analysis or topic at hand, one should take contextuality and intertextuality seriously.

As pointed out above, we must also distinguish between different traditions and genres in strategy discourses. On the one hand, we have more theoretical and even scientific texts. Although in this paper we are not targeting the academic literature *per se* –which can in a sense be seen as a meta-discourse of strategy– using strategy discourse often includes theoretical elements and even *scientific* jargon. On the other, there are more popular versions of strategy discourse. For example, in the media, strategy discourse can be linked with more entertaining discourses. Likewise, in particular organizations, a specific strategy discourse can also include more banal elements. All this means that we should aim at an interdiscursive approach when examining strategy as discourse. This calls for specific

attention to the mix of genres, discourses and styles in particular texts (Fairclough, 2003).

While there are many important topics to be examined from a CDA perspective, the ideological aspects of strategy discourse, the legitimation and naturalization of specific social practices, and the identities and subjectivities constructed in strategy discourse deserve special attention as important areas. We will now briefly sketch what kinds of topics could be examined in these areas when employing a CDA perspective.

3.1. *Ideological dimensions of strategy discourse*

When we look at strategy as a discourse, it is possible to analyze the underlying ideological assumptions of this discourse that easily pass unnoticed. Although this is a complex topic, and social settings (e.g. the specific historical and cultural circumstances as well as the organization in question) differ greatly, this analysis is of paramount importance if we want to understand the implications of employing strategy rather than some other discourse, for example, in organizational decision-making.

While there are many types of conceptions of ideology, we will in the following subscribe to a multidimensional view promoted, for example, by van Dijk (1998: 8). According to this view, “ideology forms the basis of the social representations shared by members of a group”. Ideologies provide frameworks for beliefs and values concerning what is true or false, right or wrong in particular contexts. Ideologies are also closely linked with specific societal and social power relationships, and are often self-serving. From a practical point of view, the ideological aspects of particular discourses are at times obvious, but unraveling them most often requires a particular kind of contextual and intertextual interpretation, for instance *reading between the lines*.

In the case of the contemporary strategy discourse, especially the militaristic history, the instrumental rationalism characteristic of this discourse, the neo-liberal spirit, and the neo-colonial linkages deserve special attention. Despite the fact that strategy discourse is evidently linked with the militaristic discourse, the values and ideological assumptions characterizing this discourse have not received much attention (see however Knights & Morgan, 1991). Strategy discourse has in any case adopted specific militaristic terms (such as *strategy* or *tactics*) and reflects a worldview where winning and losing, the heroism of leaders, and dramatic maneuvers have been naturalized. Likewise, the unintended or unfortunate consequences of dramatic corporate decisions or management actions are easily seen as an unavoidable part of corporate reality, not far from natural *losses* in combat.

This is the case, for example, with massive layoffs in restructurings or rationalization projects. When it comes to decision-making within organizations, the top-down approach, clear-cut hierarchies, rapid decision-making, authoritative power relationships, and unquestioning implementation reflect the military model. Further, the corporate decision-making culture is often not far from that of the military when it comes to masculine values and male homo-social relationships as the norm. At the same time, feminine values and women are easily marginalized.

It would, however, be wrong to proceed in an overly straightforward manner in this kind of analysis. Although the militaristic roots of strategy discourse undoubtedly strengthen the tendencies discussed above, the social context in question naturally determines the kinds of effects such a discourse has on the organizations and the people involved. In fact, strategy discourse does not in this respect seem to differ greatly from the traditional bureaucratic discourse in organizations (including also public sector). This is of course no coincidence but a result of the intertwining of bureaucratic, nationalist and militarist discourses in the historical development of governmental and other public organizations.

However, this does not mean that the militaristic roots of strategy discourse should receive less attention. On the contrary, the spread and increasing popularization of strategy discourse is important precisely because it reproduces or strengthens traditional –in many ways undemocratic– organizational and decision-making models.

Strategy discourse is also closely related to the modernist project, and is characterized by a specific kind of instrumental rationalism. The most important objective is the maximum performance of one's own organization in the specific –nowadays increasingly often global– markets. This is achieved through the most effective and efficient use of available resources¹. This is closely linked with the idea that the people working in the organizations in question are resources that can be used and mobilized for the greater common cause. From this perspective, it is, for example, relatively easy to legitimate massive layoffs as part of inevitable strategic reality. This instrumentality is a major philosophical question precisely because it contradicts the classic ideals of humanism according to which human subjects should be seen as ends rather than means in all kinds of decision-making. Without going into details, the lack of humanism in strategy discourse is an important topic for further analysis.

¹ Interestingly, the *resource-based view* is one of the leading schools of thought in the contemporary strategy literature.

Behind this instrumental rationality, it is easy to see neo-liberal capitalist ideology. As sketched above, the contemporary strategy discourse has grown as part of the neo-liberal economic project, which has now achieved a dominant hegemonic position in the world. Free competition in different markets and the attempt to maximize return from investment have become the institutionalized objectives not only for business, but also other organizations. It is important to note that while strategy discourse is a means to articulate the goals, values and practices at the level of organizational decision-making, its use strengthens the neo-liberal economic order in a *bottom-up* manner.

Further, we can see strategy discourse as a colonial discourse. On the one hand, this is linked with the militaristic heritage of conquering and winning, which is in many ways reflected in contemporary strategy rhetoric. Corporate mergers and acquisitions and internationalization projects are good examples. On the other, we can see strategy discourse precisely as a part of a neo-colonial globalization project. Apart from strengthening neo-liberal values and ideology, it is also specifically a question of Americanization. This is because strategy discourse has been developed in the US and most of the central practices related to corporate strategy –concerning planning, participation, reporting, or corporate governance– are essentially American practices. It is also important to note that the American emphasis is strong in the literature and teaching in this area, shown for example in the cases widely used in textbooks and teaching.

While all these are important topics for further analysis, it should be emphasized that this kind of ideological analysis above all helps to reveal underlying assumptions that easily pass unnoticed. In fact, whether we examine discourses in the media or the local strategy discourse in particular organizations, the specific ideological assumptions concerning true or false and right or wrong are an essential part of the social practices related, for example, to organizational decision-making. These linkages are obviously not straightforward, nor are the ideological considerations themselves simple.

To illustrate, most people do understand that corporate strategy is usually driven by neo-liberal ideas that see shareholder value as the most important objective for business organizations. However, to which extent one must in important decision-making situations see humans only as resources is a question that is much more controversial. What easily happens is that the strong instrumental rationalism of strategy discourse leads to a de-humanizing approach with extremely unfortunate consequences for particular people. Layoffs are sad contemporary examples of this. In these situations, the people in question, when treated merely as organizational resources, are often deprived of any real opportunity to voice their concerns.

In non-business organizations, it is in turn particularly important to note that employing strategy discourse implicitly promotes a neo-liberal worldview. While this can be seen as *natural* or *acceptable* for business organizations, many of the other organizations have not been established to maximize the return on owners' investments and certainly do not operate in conditions of free competition. This means that the mobilization of strategy discourse often brings with it values that are alien to that context and fit poorly with the basic *raison d'être* of these organizations. For example, municipal hospitals or universities have not traditionally operated in the same way as multinational corporations. Therefore, employing a (strategy) discourse created in another context may produce all kinds of unanticipated side-effects that one should be more aware of. If strategy discourse is used as a purposeful means to transform or revolutionize these organizations, there is an even bigger need to make this explicit.

3.2. Legitimation and naturalization of specific social practices through strategy discourse

At another level of analysis, one can examine the legitimating and naturalizing effects of particular strategy discourses. This means focusing attention on the discursive practices and strategies that legitimate and naturalize particular social practices, but not others.

When it comes to legitimation, it is important to emphasize that legitimation not only deals with the specific phenomenon, action or practice in question, but is also linked with the power position of the actors. For example, the legitimation of specific strategic ideas taken by a corporation also legitimates the power position and leadership of the corporate management. Consequently, legitimation is closely associated with power – a topic that we will come back to in the following section.

While legitimation is a phenomenon that can be examined from various perspectives, it is useful to focus on *legitimation strategies* employed in various texts. These strategies do not have to be understood as intentional choices made by the authors or speakers, but as discursive practices that are often employed half-consciously. There are many ways to categorize different legitimation strategies, but one of the most developed frameworks is provided by van Leeuwen & Wodak (1999) and Vaara *et alii* (2006). According to this model, there are four general types of semantic-functional category used in legitimation: *authorization*, *rationalization*, *moral evaluation* and *mythopoesis*.

Authorization is legitimation by reference to the authority of tradition, custom, law and of persons in whom institutional authority of some kind is

vested. In strategy discourse, such authorization can in its most banal sense mean *normalization*, that is legitimation by exemplification. In fact, management fashions are based on companies and other organizations following the examples of others. Let us just think about such recent fads as management-by-objectives, business process re-engineering, organizational *value* programs, or use of the balanced scorecard. Authorization can also be more specific, implying an explicit reference to authorities such as corporate managers themselves, the markets, business analysts, various kinds of consultants, or for example strategy gurus (professors or famous consultants). In this context, it is indeed very interesting to analyze the role of consultants and other kinds of experts from a critical perspective. On the one hand, the selection of particular advisors defines what kinds of questions are raised and what the preferred strategies are likely to be. On the other, the advisors are usually not *neutral* actors. For example, it is in the vested interests of strategy consultants and investment banks to advocate large-scale change projects because such projects provide them with employment and revenue.

Rationalization is legitimation by reference to the utility of institutionalized social action, and to the knowledge society has constructed to endow them with cognitive validity. In strategy discourse, the legitimation of specific strategies or management practices is often built on instrumental rationalization. It is typical that a strategy resulting in major organizational changes is justified by more efficient resource utilization or by its positive impact on organizational effectiveness or performance. This rationalization most often means employing financial calculations and rhetoric. It is important to note that while such calculations often seem very convincing they are always based on specific kinds of assumptions and often deal with rough estimates concerning long-term effects. These *hard* financial calculations nevertheless most often seem to override *softer* considerations. For example, negative implications such as job losses are easily framed as *unfortunate* but *inevitable* consequences of organizational changes.

This already reveals that rationalization is always based on specific moral or ideological grounds, although not often explicit. Explicit *moralization* then means reference to specific values. In actual texts, moralizations can be of many kinds. For example, in international mergers and acquisitions, it is not uncommon to draw from nationalistic discourse either for legitimation or de-legitimation purposes (Vaara *et alii*, 2006). *Mythopoesis* is by far the most complex discursive legitimation strategy. In practice, this most often means constructing narratives exemplifying what good or bad might happen if specific strategic opportunities are not seized. In this respect, widely spread success and failure stories are particularly interesting object of analysis.

Legitimation often leads to naturalization (e.g. Fairclough, 1997), which is a particularly important feature in strategy discourse. In brief, naturalization means that certain phenomena or practices no longer require specific justification or legitimation but are rather taken for granted. This is the case with many management fashions such as mergers and acquisitions. This is also the case with specific management practices associated with these fashions, such as layoffs in the case of mergers and acquisitions. The critical point here is that such naturalization constructs a particular kind of social order with important power implications. Unfortunately, this often, though not always, seems to further strengthen the power position of the managers at the expense of those who are managed.

3.3. Subjectivity, identity and power in organizations

It is also important to examine what kinds of identities, subjectivities and power relationships are created by the contemporary strategy discourse in different settings. Among other things, this helps us to better understand the social construction of organizational decision-making and its implications. While there are important contextual differences, the contemporary strategy discourse seems to reflect a strong assumption of a hierarchical and authoritarian organization, where the top management defines the key strategies, to be implemented by mobilizing the organizational resources. In other words, it is for the top management to make the key decisions and the others to obey. This is a model that obviously differs greatly from the ideals of democratic participation.

However, the contemporary understanding of legitimate and successful strategy work is not this simplistic. For many reasons –for example to motivate and commit the personnel and to avoid resistance to change– participation has become a key issue when it comes to strategy work in organizations. Nowadays, most strategy experts actually advocate a process where an increasing number of organizational members actively participate in strategic planning and implementation. In practice, this participation is, however, often undermined by the fact that the major decisions are still made by top management (often in secrecy) and the role of the personnel is to participate within the tight limits set by top management. To which extent this is the case in specific settings is a major challenge for future research.

Apparently people have increasingly adopted a worldview where strategic planning and implementation are a normal part of the life of business and other organizations. At the same time, they often (not usually intentionally or consciously) reproduce a specific kind of social order and particular power relationships within organizations. For management, the chaotic

organizational reality seems more controllable and manageable within the parameters of strategy discourse, which is an attractive scenario given all the uncertainties and ambiguities usually characterizing organizational decision-making. However, strategy discourse most often also reconstructs a superior knowledge and power base for management and overall gives them a privileged position vis-à-vis other organizational actors. At the same time, the subjectivity constructed for other organizational members is much more passive and less privileged. What is interesting is that their participation in particular organizational strategy processes usually opens up only limited opportunities to influence decisions, and therefore it is quite understandable that strategy discourse, even when it reproduces inequalities, is often voluntarily accepted by those in a less privileged position. Another kind of approach, for example a refusal to participate in strategy work, would easily be interpreted as an unwillingness to engage in dialogue or as illegitimate resistance. This voluntary adoption of strategy discourse by those who are given a less prominent position may in fact be one of the key explanations for its hegemony.

Strategy discourse has developed into an essential part of the identity of corporate elite –and apparently also the elite of other organizations. One of the key issues here is the ability to master this particular discourse and rhetoric (e.g. Bourdieu, 1982). By mobilizing the most fashionable strategy rhetoric, decision-makers can actually win the support of different stakeholders and legitimate their own power position. Conversely, an inability to master the contemporary strategy rhetoric may be seen as a sign of lack of knowledge or sheer incompetence.

This is closely related to the technologization (e.g. Fairclough, 1997) of strategy discourse, which leads to increasing complexity and even mystification. This implies that not all people are able to follow and understand strategy discourse, to say nothing of successfully participating in it. From a critical perspective, a key part of the value of management education is probably learning to master strategy discourse and its most fashionable versions. MBA programs are probably the best (or the worst) examples of how specific concepts, case examples and legitimate argumentation strategies are woven into management education.

Those who cannot understand or participate in strategy discourse are in a completely different position. For them, strategy discourse may have no meaning whatsoever. These are cases of real alienation. However, even worse are probably situations where the powerful strategy discourse is seen as destructive or derisory. For example, the discourses used when justifying layoffs are often likely to produce such unfortunate effects.

To what extent specific organizational discourses around strategy include such features is a question requiring context-specific discourse analysis. Apart from uncovering hidden assumptions and reflecting upon problematic consequences, researchers can also search for novel and more positive features. For example, discursive practices advocating organization-wide participation and open dialogue are very important vehicles in the construction of more democratic and humane organizations.

4. CONCLUSION

We have argued that we should take the contemporary strategy discourse and its social and societal implications seriously in this paper. As a step towards this direction, we have adopted a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective and provided some ideas as to what such analysis can entail. We have also outlined particularly important topics that deserve special attention. These include an ideological analysis of strategy discourse that can reveal underlying assumptions and thereby contribute to a better understanding of the various kinds of values that are attached to it. We have also called for a closer analysis of the various legitimation strategies that seem to be an essential part of the discussions around particular strategies as well as pointed to important naturalization effects. In addition, we have made the case for studying identity and subjectivity construction and the various power implications of using strategy discourse as the basis for organizational decision-making.

What we have sketched here can be seen as a preliminary research agenda that hopefully inspires more fine-grained theoretical and especially empirical analyses. This list of topics is, however, by no means exhaustive, and there are many other questions that warrant attention in future research. Future studies can take many directions ranging from detailed linguistic analysis of the particular features of strategy discourse to more sociological analysis of the discursive and social practices characterizing organizational decision-making processes. Likewise, future studies can analyze various kinds of textual material; for example; media texts, books written by strategy gurus, or conversations in organizational strategic planning processes. While a Critical Discourse Analysis methodology can accommodate various theoretical perspectives and empirical methods, we wish to emphasize the need for contextual analysis to be able to place specific texts and discourses in their wider contexts. It is through these kinds of analysis that we can best understand the linkage between language use and social practices and thus the particular social consequences of strategy discourse.

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