The Paradoxical Foundation of Strategic Management
Contributions to Management Science
www.springer.com/series/1505

S. Sulzmaier
Consumer-Oriented Business Design

C. Zopounidis (Ed.)
New Trends in Banking Management
2002. ISBN 978-3-7908-1488-0

U. Dorndorf
Project Scheduling with Time Windows
2002. ISBN 978-3-7908-1516-0

B. Rapp/P. Jackson (Eds.)
Organisation and Work Beyond 2000

M. Grossmann
Entrepreneurship in Biotechnology

H. M. Arnold
Technology Shocks

T. Ihde
Dynamic Alliance Auctions

J. Windsperger/G. Cliquet/G. Hendrikse/M. Tuunanen (Eds.)
Economics and Management of Franchising Networks

K. Jennewein
Intellectual Property Management

M. J. Thannhuber
The Intelligent Enterprise

C. Clarke
Automotive Production Systems and Standardisation

M. Lütke Entrup
Advanced Planning in Fresh Food Industries

U. M. Löwer
Interorganisational Standards

G. Reepmeyer
Risk-sharing in the Pharmaceutical Industry

E. Kasper
Internal Research & Development Markets
2006. ISBN 978-3-7908-1728-7

L. Coleman
Why Managers and Companies Take Risks

M. A. Bader
Intellectual Property Management in R&D Collaborations
2006. ISBN 978-3-7908-1702-7

David L. Cahill
Costumer Loyalty in Third Party Logistics Relationships

G. Cliquet/G. Hendrikse/M. Tuunanen/J. Windsperger (Eds.)
Economics and Management of Networks

Hartmut Hübner
The Communicating Company

Jan M. Deepen
Logistics Outsourcing Relationships

Eike A. Langenberg
Guanxi and Business Strategy

Oliver Falck
Emergence and Survival of New Businesses

Christoph Kausch
A Risk-Benefit Perspective on Early Customer Integration

Fredrik Hacklin
Management of Convergence in Innovation
Andreas Rasche

The Paradoxical Foundation of Strategic Management

Physica-Verlag
A Springer Company
To My Family
The concept of ‘corporate strategy’ has changed significantly during the last few decades. Whereas the strategic planning orientation of the 70s and early 80s was still dominated by a belief in feasibility, rationality, and the smooth implementation of prefabricated strategies by top management, strategic management sharpened our understanding of possible pitfalls during planning and put more emphasis on the ‘messy’ realization of strategic plans. Moreover, the unavoidable paradoxes and dilemmas that occur within strategizing are increasingly discussed when writers consider the general importance of the organization together with its external and internal context. Although this trend towards strategic management cannot be neglected, as a quick look into any of the major journals proves, there still is the question of how we can find a theoretical fundament that gives adequate reference to phenomena such as paradox. This is where this book fills a void in the existing academic discourse.

Andreas Rasche’s book, a critical, yet constructive, analysis of the theoretical foundation of strategic management and its paradoxical nature enters new territory. In particularly, there are three reasons this is a novel and innovative treatise. First, the discussion of deconstructive thinking with regard to strategic management represents a risky and hence courageous as well as extremely ambitious task. Second, the author manages the difficult task of giving a short but comprehensive introduction to the work of Jacques Derrida. Third, he also surprises the reader with his extraordinary ability to concentrate complex relationships into reduced, though not overly reduced, illustrations. These illustrations allow the reader to gain new insights and sharpen her/his existing knowledge about the theoretical discourse that underlies strategic management.

The capability to ‘guide the reader’ through the discussion is evident when looking at Rasche’s matrix (see Figure 1 in chapter one) that is presented in the introductory chapter: based on Pettigrew’s distinction between strategy context, process, and content he provides a structured overview of the strategy field that guides his entire discussion. The resulting clarity of the analysis allows Andreas Rasche to handle a high degree of
complexity within his discussion. For instance, he criticizes the conventional wisdom of strategy research by identifying three dominant logics – the ‘necessity of adaptation’ (strategy context), the ‘primacy of thinking’ (strategy process), and the ‘fullness of strategic rules and resources’ (strategy content). He uncovers the underlying oppositions that reside within these dominant logics that have until now been obscured. In so doing, the author is able to deconstruct the strategy discourse and thus reveals its paradoxical foundation. The consequences of the deconstructions are clearly discussed: strategy research has to accept its paradoxical foundation and can only do so by challenging its deeply held assumptions, namely the belief in a ‘given’ market (strategy context), the idea of non-paradoxical strategic decisions and the resulting linear nature of strategizing (strategy process), as well as the faith in generalizable solutions to strategic problems (strategy content).

Chapters seven and eight present the ‘practical’ implications of the deconstructions and demonstrate that Rasche’s discussion has significant consequences not only for the practice of strategic management in organizations but also for the way strategy is researched and taught within business schools. The integrative framework – strategy-as-practice – introduced to discuss these consequences represents, from my point of view, a consistent and comprehensible conclusion since a practice perspective allows for a discussion of the implications of a Derridian deconstruction of strategic management while, at the same time, still remains attached to the underlying ideas of his philosophical work. The introduction of the concept of ‘communities of strategy formation’ can especially enrich future empirical research on strategic management and thus represents a promising way into the future.

All of this results in five major recommendations that the author sets up to extend, modify, rethink, and discuss scholars’ strategic realities. These recommendations he puts forward: (1) move away from the ideology represented by the dominant logics, (2) create future strategic realities under consideration of paradox, (3) acknowledge the fictional ground of strategic management as a means to deparadoxify the identified paradoxes, (4) recognize the supplementary nature of strategy context, process, and content, and (5) start researching strategy as an enacted social practice occurring within the flow of human activity.

Andreas Rasche is right: We have to think of strategy as being always already in deconstruction.

Günther Ortmann
June 2007
This book is the outcome of a long journey throughout the wilderness of strategic management. It represents a revised version of my PhD thesis that was presented and defended at EUROPEAN BUSINESS SCHOOL, Germany. I would like to briefly address two essential questions within this preface.

**Why does it make sense to discuss the philosophy of Jacques Derrida with regard to strategic management?** I think there are particularly two points that should be considered. First, Derrida’s philosophy can enrich our understanding of the value of and necessity for paradox in strategic management. As mentioned in the foreword by Günther Ortmann, paradox is often mentioned in writings about strategic management, at least in those writings that move beyond a planning orientation, but not sufficiently backed up with theory. I offer *one possible* way to theorize about paradox in strategic management without immediately concluding the impossibility of strategizing. Rather, I consider paradoxes to operate at the *necessary limits* of knowledge about strategy management, limits that we should know in order to improve future theorizing. Second, Derrida’s philosophy, a way of thinking that is often called deconstruction, provides a ‘walking stick’ to uncover and address many phenomena that are very important to strategy scholars (e.g., the role of the future and the suspension of meaning). By ‘applying’ Derrida to strategic management – although strictly speaking you cannot apply Derrida from the outside but instead need to recognize that his thinking has always already been part of the practice of strategy – I hope to open up new ways of thinking about strategizing in organizations.

**Why do we need a variety of new terms to discuss the presented issues?** Since this treatise enters new theoretical territory, I had to introduce some terms that the reader might not be familiar with. Although I provide a glossary at the end of the book, let me briefly distinguish three essential terms. First, what I call a ‘*strategic reality*’ represents my basic unit of analysis. A strategic reality reflects the assumptions somebody attaches to her/his understanding of strategic management. Even though practitioners as well as strategy scholars have strategic realities, I will focus primarily on the
strategic realities of strategy scholars. Porter, for instance, has a well-known strategic reality in which he makes certain assumptions (e.g., competitive advantage is determined by the structure of the industry). Second, paradigms in strategy research occurred during the development of the scientific discourse. Whereas in the 60s and 70s the paradigmatic orientation was much influenced by the planning school, the 80s brought about the rise of the market-based paradigm and the 90s the resource-based view. Throughout the book I treat these different schools of thought as paradigms of strategy research. Third, what I call a dominant logic refers to the obscured assumptions that strategy scholars refer to when theorizing about strategic management. The important issue is that dominant logics cut across a variety of paradigms; dominant logics (e.g., that the market dictates strategic conduct) are always part of more than one paradigm, scholars have become so used to them that they are rarely acknowledged or even referred to.

Many people have contributed to this study. Particularly, I thank the three supervisors Ulrich Grimm, Hartmut Kreikebaum, and Günther Ortmann. In addition, Dirk Ulrich Gilbert gave me an excellent review of the entire manuscript and added many thoughtful insights. I also thank Henry Mintzberg and Robert Chia for discussing parts of the manuscript with me. Christina Braasch, Hal Salzman, and Michael Darroch provided my appreciated editorial advice. Last but not least, I thank my family as well as my girlfriend, Stephanie Becker, for their support throughout this journey.

A.R.
July 2007
Contents

Foreword – Strategic Management in Deconstruction .........................VII

Preface – Strategic Management and Paradox ...................................... IX

1 Introduction to the Study .................................................................1
  1.1 Underlying Problem and Research Objective .........................1
  1.2 This Study and the Philosophy of Science .........................16
  1.3 Limitations of the Study – Some Words of Caution ..........21
  1.4 Structure of Analysis ..............................................................23

2 Strategic Management as a Field of Study .....................................27
  2.1 The Concept of Strategy ..........................................................27
    2.1.1 Why Do We Need Strategic Management? ..........27
    2.1.2 The Definition of Strategy – Differing Perspectives ....31
  2.2 Paradigm Lost? – The Roots of Strategy Research ...............33
    2.2.1 Potential Paradigmatic Classifications ...............34
    2.2.2 Disciplinary Roots of Paradigms in Strategy Research ....36
    2.2.3 Paradigms in Strategy Research – A Historical Sketch ....39
    2.2.4 The Desired Paradigmatic Status of Strategy Research ...46
  2.3 Strategic Realities – Context, Process, and Content ...........53
    2.3.1 Shaping the Contours of the Strategy Field ..........53
    2.3.2 Strategy Context – What Shapes Strategies? .......54
    2.3.3 Strategy Process – How Are Strategies Formed? ......56
    2.3.4 Strategy Content – What Are Strategies all About? ....59
  2.4 Strategy Context, Process, and Content – A Résumé ..........65

3 The Dominant Logics of Strategy Research ...................................69
  3.1 Where to Look for Dominant Logics? ....................................70
  3.2 Exploring the Dominant Logics of Strategy Research ...........74
    3.2.1 Strategy Context – The ‘Necessity of Adaptation’ ..74
    3.2.2 Strategy Process – The ‘Primacy of Thinking’ ......81
    3.2.3 Strategy Content – The ‘Fullness of Rules/Resources’ ....89
    3.2.4 The Dominant Logics of Strategy – An Overview ........96
    3.2.5 The Embeddedness of Paradigms in Dominant Logics ....97
3.3 How Dominant Logics Come into Existence ..............................................99
  3.3.1 Producing Facts in Strategy Research .............................................100
  3.3.2 Sustaining Facts in Strategy Research .............................................104
  3.3.3 From Facts to Dominant Logics ......................................................111
3.4 Challenges from Outside the Mainstream ...........................................114
  3.4.1 Levels of Critical Strategy Research ..............................................115
  3.4.2 Demanding Reflexivity in Strategy Research .....................................116
  3.4.3 Critical Reflections on the Dominant Logics ....................................118
  3.4.4 Paradox and Dominant Logics ........................................................123
  3.4.5 Strategy Because of and Despite Paradox ......................................125

4 Deconstruction and the ‘(N)either/(N)or’ .................................................127
  4.1 The Meaning(lessness) of Postmodernism ........................................127
    4.1.1 The Philosophical Discourse Around Postmodernism ....................127
    4.1.2 Postmodernism in Organization Theory ......................................135
  4.2 Deconstruction in a Nutshell? ..............................................................139
    4.2.1 The Target – Critique of a Metaphysics of Presence ....................140
    4.2.2 Deconstruction as a Way of Thinking .......................................142
    4.2.3 ‘La Différence’ – The Deconstruction of the Sign .........................150
    4.2.4 The Deconstruction of the Social – About (Con)Texts ...................157
    4.2.5 Deconstruction and Paradox ......................................................161
    4.2.6 Deconstruction – Critical Arguments .........................................166
    4.2.7 Résumé – Derrida, a Postmodernist? ........................................168
  4.3 Deconstruction within Organizational Analysis ..................................170
  4.4 Strategic Realities as Text .................................................................175

5 Strategic Realities – The Role of Paradox ..............................................179
  5.1 Strategizing Because of Paradox .........................................................180
  5.2 Strategizing Despite Paradox ..............................................................182
  5.3 Strategic Realities Despite and Because of Paradox ..........................189

6 The Deconstruction of Strategic Realities ...............................................193
  6.1 Strategy Context – Beyond the Market Given ....................................196
    6.1.1 Complexity – Beyond the ‘Necessity of Adaptation’ .....................196
    6.1.2 Strategy Context and the Paradox of Adaptation ..........................200
    6.1.3 The Deparadoxification of Strategy Context .................................205
    6.1.4 Implications of the Deconstruction of Strategy Context ................208
  6.2 Strategy Process – Beyond the Notion of Feasibility ..........................216
    6.2.1 Contingency – Beyond the ‘Primacy of Thinking’ ..........................216
    6.2.2 Strategy Process and the Paradox of Undecidability .......................220
    6.2.3 The Deparadoxification of the Strategy Process ..............................224
    6.2.4 Implications of the Deconstruction of Strategy Process .................227
6.3 Strategy Content – Beyond Simple Generalizations .................. 237
  6.3.1 Context – Beyond the ‘Fullness of Rules/Resources’...... 237
  6.3.2 Strategy Content and the Paradox of Repetition .......... 240
  6.3.3 The Deparadoxification of Strategy Content............... 246
  6.3.4 Implications of the Deconstruction of Strategy Content . 249
6.4 A Résumé – The Neither/Nor of Strategic Realities .......... 265

7 ‘After Derrida’ – Strategy-as-Practice ............................................. 271
  7.1 From Deconstruction to Strategy-as-Practice .................... 272
  7.2 ‘Social Practices’ – What’s in a Name? ......................... 274
  7.3 Strategy-as-Practice – Towards a Framework ................. 276
  7.4 ‘Communities of Strategy Formation’ ......................... 282
  7.5 Doing Strategy Research ‘After Derrida’ ..................... 286

8 Final Reflections – Retrospect and Prospect ................................. 289
  7.1 Retrospect – Rethinking Strategic Realities .................... 290
  7.2 Prospect – Fostering Engaged Scholarship .................... 295
  7.3 But, Beyond... – The End and the Beginning ................ 304

Glossary of Terms ..................................................................................... 307

Bibliography............................................................................................... 311
1 Introduction to the Study

“The lack of critical assessments of strategy research is a conspicuous barrier to more rigorous and useful research.”

Paul Shrivastava (1987: 89)

1.1 Underlying Problem and Research Objective

Strategy research has been criticized that its contributions are paradigmatically constrained by positivistic assumptions and research traditions largely stemming from economic analysis.¹ Not too surprising, such constraints open a considerable gap between the knowledge accumulated by scholars and managers’ ability to use this knowledge (Gopinath and Hoffman 1995). In his review of strategy research Bettis (1991: 315) notes that he is “struck by the sense that most of this research is irrelevant to what is going on in such firms today.” He concludes that the field of strategic management is prematurely stuck in a ‘normal science straight-jacket’.

Shrivastava’s (1986) early critique of the strategy field gives reference to this theory-practice gap by uncovering the narrow functionalist ideology² on which strategy research is based. Ideology for him

¹ See for example the debate in the Strategic Management Journal on the usefulness of applying a constructivist methodology to strategy research (Kwan and Tsang 2001; Mir and Watson 2001, 2000). Another debate in the same journal focuses on the contributions of pragmatist philosophy to a theory of competitive advantage (Durand 2002; Powell 2002).

² The term ‘ideology’ is used in different ways. Marx (1992), who is often considered the “inevitable point of departure for any contemporary discussion of ideology” (Giddens 1979: 165), used the concept politically to express the interests of dominant classes. Our concept of ideology is similar to the one of Mannheim (1936: 36) who states “that ruling groups can in their thinking become so intensively interest-bound to a situation that they are simply no longer able to see certain facts which would undermine their sense of domination.”
2 Introduction to the Study

“refers to those aspects of idea systems that obscure interests served by ideas and facilitate the establishment and maintenance of domination. [...] Meaning and legitimation are connected by ideas in such a way as to favor dominant interests.” (Shrivastava 1986: 365, emphasis added)

For Shrivastava these dominant interests are well reflected by scholars’ assumptions of a given ‘natural’ environment and a tendency to provide generalized statements that decontextualize research problems. He accuses researchers of seeking technical efficiency and instrumental rationality as primary goals of analysis. Whilst Shrivastava provides a good starting point to challenge this functionalist ideology, recent critical assessments seem to prove that scholarly activity is as firmly rooted in this ideology as ever (Clegg et al. 2004; Farjoun 2002; Hafsi and Thomas 2004; Levy et al. 2003). To better understand this scientific inertia and to offer alternative ways of reasoning, we need to know more about the process of ideology production that influences the field’s intellectual foundation.

Bachelard (1987: 46-50) provides a profound examination of the underlying dynamics of ideology production. Central to his argumentation is the concept of dominant logic, which can be defined as pervasive, yet invisible predispositions with regard to certain scientific problems. Based on the assumption that research fields are often governed by such logics, he claims that once they are established, the appreciation of underlying problems and the willingness to question them vanishes. To be ‘scientific’, researchers need to give reference to the established predispositions that tacitly pervade the community. These predispositions fix central conceptions as well as the used terminology for the respective field of study. Problems are not perceived as problems anymore as the dominant logics dictate what is regarded as scientifically desirable. The ability of scholars to critically reflect the underlying assumptions of their discipline is eroded. As discussed

---

3 These remarks show that the concept of dominant logic comes close to, but is not equal to, what can be labeled ‘normal science’ in a Kuhnian sense (Broich 1994: 1). Kuhn (1996: 24) himself regards normal science as “[...] research [that] is directed to the articulation of those phenomena and theories that the [dominant] paradigm already supplies.” (annotations added) The ideas of dominant logic and normal science share the claim that doubts about favored assumptions and research procedures are suspended (see also the discussion by Willmott 1993: 686). Both concepts are different in that normal science, as we understand the term, “means research firmly based upon one or more past scientific achievements, achievements that some particular scientific community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation of its further practice” (Kuhn 1996: 10), while dominant logics are less about the model-role of scientific achievements but look at the assumptions that are attached to these achievements.
above, strategy research makes no exception in this case. Whipp (1997: 270), for instance, argues that a lack of reflexivity represents a serious problem to strategy scholars. Similarly, Michel and Chen (2004) claim that the field needs to be more self-critical to guarantee relevance, to further intellectual progress, and to help recognize the contribution relative to other areas of research. Considering this, an in-depth discussion of the ideological character of strategy research requires that we examine the process of ideology production by identifying the prevailing dominant logics of the field.

The decision which lines of argumentation are labeled ‘dominant’ is contingent (like any decision). This does not mean that we cannot find some classificatory scheme that guides the identification process and thus limits the sphere of possible dominant logics. What is needed is a framework for theory building that captures the widespread activities of strategy scholars and enables us to understand the embeddedness of strategic realities in the context of past and ongoing research. Strategic realities reflect scholars’ constructed nature of the ‘world-of-strategy’; they describe the assumptions researchers attach to their more detailed theories and frameworks of strategic management in terms of central categories like ‘the environment’. For instance, Porter’s (1980) strategic reality includes a variety of assumptions regarding the nature of the environment and the causes of competitive advantage. Since dominant logics need to refer to something, we propose to consider strategic realities as their building blocks.

To identify these dimensions, we use Pettigrew’s (1988) tripartite framework of strategy context, process, and content as it is (a) widely accepted by scholars working in the strategy field and (b) holistic, including a considerable extent of past and ongoing research. Strategy context asks which set of circumstances influence decisions with regard to strategy content and process and thus gives rise to the wherein of strategy research (wherein, in which circumstances, are strategy process and content embedded?). By contrast, content and process assess the purpose of strategic decisions. Do we investigate the decision itself (its content) or how the decision has been made (its process)? Strategy process research covers the way strategies are created, sustained, and changed over time by focusing on the how of decision-making, whereas strategy content addresses the product of

---

the strategy process by asking *what* constitutes a competitive advantage. Strategy context, process, and content give us an idea about the dimensions that scholars discuss in their strategic realities and thus tell us where we have to look for dominant logics. As a consequence, we now set up the ‘necessity of adaptation’ (strategy context), the ‘primacy of thinking’ (strategy process), and the ‘fullness of strategic rules and resources’ (strategy content) as dominant logics of strategy research and illustrate that their dominance relies on a *disregard of their own paradoxical nature*. The paradoxes we are interested in are operational in the sense that they are reflected in the praxis of strategizing. For us, paradoxical reasoning is reasoning whereby the enabling and constraining conditions of an operation (e.g., a strategic decision) coincide. Paradox implies that the respective operation is impossible because the condition of the possibility of the operation leads, at the same time, to its impossibility.

Regarding *strategy context*, we can identify a tendency to view organization and environment as two separate entities while thinking about the circumstances that shape strategy. This separation gives rise to a dominant logic that we label the ‘necessity of adaptation’, because it characterizes the fact that scholars analyze the environment as existing on its own and hence in an objective manner. Organizations are left with the task of adapting and fitting to this environment as well as possible. Speaking with Chaffee (1985: 90), adaptation-based strategy research supposes that companies make up their environment in the sense that all social actors are parts of *one* reality. This reality is relevant to all and provides the point of reference for strategy formulation. The dominance of this thinking becomes most obvious when considering that Ansoff (1987a: 501) sees the core of strategic thinking as “the logic which guides the process by which an organization adapts to its external environment.” This logic has been widely applied by advocates of market and resource-based thinking.

Advocates of the market-based view argue that organizations adapt to their environment by following the strategic rules of their industry. Porter (1980) believes that an industry can be perceived as an objective structure that restricts the strategic actions of the corporations located within it. All corporations observe and adapt to this structure while developing their strategy. A similar argumentation is brought forward by the resource-based view. Hamel and Prahalad (1995: 310) argue that a competence is only valuable if customers regard it as leading to a distinct competitive advantage. Customers, like the environment in the market-based view, become ‘objectified’ in the sense that they are thought to determine the value of competences. Similarly, Collis and Montgomery (1998: 31) state that
“[a] valuable resource must contribute to the fulfillment of a customer’s needs, at a price the customer is willing to pay. At any given time, that price will be determined by customer preferences.” (emphasis in the original, see also Brandenburger and Stuart 1996: 6)

Even the recent view on dynamic capabilities stresses that “in high-velocity markets, effective routines are adaptive to changing circumstances.” (Eisenhardt and Martin 2000: 1117) Resource and market-based reasoning suppose that the environment is objectively given and able to mediate between successful and unsuccessful strategic conduct.

This adaptation-based logic obscures a paradox (Vos 2002). For this, we need to recall that the hidden assumption in the paradigm of adaptation is that there is only one environment that exists independent of all organizations. As a consequence, the solution to the problem of adaptation is a rather straightforward one: observe what is going on and adapt to the situation. Considering Ashby’s (1956: 206-207) ‘Law of Requisite Variety’, for a firm to be in control it needs to take as many control measures as there are external variations. In the paradigm of adaptation, firms adhere to this law because they build up requisite variety and establish a point-to-point correspondence to the environment they need to adapt to. However, in a world where the environment is more complex than the organization, it is impossible to establish such a point-to-point correspondence (Luhmann 1994: 46-48). Because of the indispensable complexity-gradient between organization and environment, every observation of the environment is just a construction from the perspective of the organization. This notion implies that every organization possesses its own environment.

If the environment is just a construction, what do firms adapt to? It cannot be the (objective) environment because the complexity-gradient restricts full access and thus correspondence to the environment. When considering that the environment is just a construction from the perspective of the organization, there is a paradox that needs to be accepted: adaptation to the environment is only possible as self-adaptation. This situation is paradoxical in the sense that an organization needs to distinguish itself from an environment that is not part of itself, while at the same time it observes that this environment is nothing more than its own production. Organizations cannot observe the environment despite and because of themselves. As long as one obeys to the paradigm of adaptation, one obscures the paradox that organizations can only be adapted to their environment if they are adapted to themselves. This paradox is obscured by the ‘necessity of adaptation’ since the observation of the environment is not problematized and can only be taken into consideration when conceptualizing the organization/environment distinction in a self-referential way.
Concerning strategy process, scholars tend to follow a notion of feasibility by alleging that thinking (strategy formulation) and action (strategy implementation) are two separable entities (Mintzberg 1994a: 290-294). This results in a dominant logic that we call the ‘primacy of thinking’ because thinking is thought to come before action in a way similar to a cause determining its effect. Implementation is perceived to be a derivation of the fully formulated strategy. Scholars who follow this perspective stress the goal-oriented nature of strategic management and argue that strategies rely on explicit deliberate decisions. Strategizing is thought to be an overly linear process based on rational assumptions. Like an engineer builds a bridge, a manager is thought to be a designer of a grand strategy which first becomes formulated, then implemented, and later evaluated (Leibold et al. 2002: 72; Pettigrew et al. 2002: 12). Instabilities and structural ruptures are assumed to be obstacles to a thriving strategy formation. Unintended successful action patterns are either seen as brilliant improvisations or just pure luck. The implications of this view are far-reaching. For instance, middle and lower management are assigned the role of facilitators that provide relevant information to the executive level where the strategy is developed. In consequence, strategic and operational issues are detached.

It is widely recognized that Andrews (1971) and Ansoff (1987b) are advocates of this view on strategy. Whereas it became popular to criticize the linear and formalized character of their work, the underlying assumptions are still established in several well-known concepts. Wack (1985: 140), for instance, introduces scenario planning which “[…] structures the future into predetermined and uncertain elements.” Scenarios are thought to provide a range of options about future developments by outlining plausible ways to act. Although scenario analysis does not forecast one best way but rather a set of possibilities, it still relies on the basic premise that thinking precedes action. Similarly, Brandenburger and Nalebuff (1995) assume a predetermined continuity between present and future, although they recognize that there can be multiple futures. Their game-theoretical approach supposes that the future is knowable through “look[ing] forward far into the game and then reason[ing] backward to figure out which of today’s actions will lead you to where you want to end up.” (Brandenburger and Nalebuff 1995: 58, annotation added) Both examples demonstrate that conceiving the ‘primacy of thinking’ as a dead tradition of thought may be a misleading presumption (Mintzberg et al. 2005: 56).

As a prominent example one can refer to the ‘Mintzberg-Ansoff-controversy’ held in the Strategic Management Journal between 1990 and 1991 (Ansoff 1991; Mintzberg 1990a; Mintzberg 1991).
In establishing a dichotomy between formulation (thinking) and implementation (action) strategy scholars have overlooked a paradox that inevitably is inherent in any decision. According to non-paradoxical logic, strategic decisions are executed after an appropriate preference order has been established – a preference order that fully justifies the decision (Jutterström 2005). This is a rather idealized version of events because particularly strategic decisions underlie double contingency. Ortmann and Salzman (2002: 208) characterize a double contingent situation as follows:

“One firm will make its action dependent upon its competitor’s action, and vice versa, and none of them knows or can have full knowledge about what the other will do – each conditions its actions on the actions and outcome of the other and factors in the environment.”

According to double contingency, the world does not hold still while we are trying to establish a preference order. Strategic interactions among organizations constitute a situation of double contingency, which is recognized as such by both sides: both know that both know that one could also act differently. Then, can we justify a strategic decision \textit{ex ante} to indicate that goals exist detached from the decision situation?

Luhmann (2000: 142) is well aware of the underlying paradox: no decision can ever reach a final justification because it concurrently potentializes other decisions. Any decision (fixation) as opposed to a non-decision (contingency) contains the non-decidable that it cannot analyze away. The paradox points to an interesting insight: a strategic alternative is an alternative because it is potentially possible; however, at the same time the alternative also is \textit{no} alternative because it cannot be justified. To address this paradox means to recognize that the meaning of decision criteria is constituted \textit{in actu}, in the course of action so to speak. Preferences, as Luhmann (2000: 134, 222-256) remarks, are fully constituted only after the decision has been made. Not until the decision has finally been executed can one decide whether and how contingency was fixed and what justification was chosen. If we do not want to evade this paradox, we need to break with the either/or-logic to give reference to both, formulation and implementation at once; strategy formation is thinking within (and not prior to) action.

According to Hoskisson et al. (1999), \textit{strategy content} research uncovers the constituting factors of competitive advantage by either deriving certain strategic rules that tell strategists ‘how the markets works’ (e.g., industry analysis) or highlighting the need to develop distinct organizational
resources (e.g., knowledge). Usually, strategic rules and resources are treated as generalizable; strategic rules are thought to be generalizable across organizations while the resource-based view classifies resources as ‘given’ and thus generalizable within organizations. To be generalizable, scholars implicitly assume that strategic rules and resources are able to define their own conditions of application by being ‘full’ of meaning prior to their usage. The resulting dominant logic is called the ‘fullness of strategic rules and resources’ since fullness implies that rules and resource-based theories give recommendations that are thought to be valid regardless of their context of application. To make contextual claims resources and strategic rules need to give reference to the process of their application because a contextual ‘filling’ can be achieved only in actu (Ortmann and Salzman 2002: 208). Theories of competitive advantage are conceptualized as if they were full, whereas in fact they are ‘empty’ waiting to be filled with meaning in the course of application. Emptiness implies that rules and resources expel contextual meaning and are treated as a priori given; corporate diversity is overlaid by generalized (‘empty’) solutions.

Wernerfelt (1984: 172), one of the advocates of the resource-based view, argues that “[…] a firm’s resources at a given time could be defined as those (tangible and intangible) assets which are tied semipermanently to the firm.” He defines resources with regard to the corporation but independent of their context of application and thus supposes that resources possess a priori characteristics. Surely, resource-based reasoning emphasizes heterogeneity, which refers to the belief that different organizations have different resources (Rasche and Wolfrum 1994: 503). Yet, heterogeneity does not imply that resources are conceptualized with regard to their application within a firm. Similarly, Porter (1980) defines the skills that are necessary to implement generic strategies. Managers aiming at cost leadership are advised to accomplish:

“aggressive construction of efficient-scale facilities, vigorous pursuit of cost reductions from experience, tight cost and overhead control, avoidance of marginal customer accounts, and cost minimization in areas like R&D, service, sales force, advertising […]” (Porter 1980: 35)

Porter’s common characteristics do not acknowledge the dynamic and equivocal nature of implementing a generic strategy. On the one hand, Porter (1996: 62, emphasis in the original) claims that strategy is about “performing different activities from rivals’ or performing similar activities in

---

6 Strictly speaking, resource-based reasoning also offers strategic rules. Barney (1991), for example, tells us that a resource’s potential depends on its value, rareness, and non-substitutability.
different ways.” On the other hand, he delivers general recipes for doing so. By neglecting the process of application that produces the specific context in which strategies are put, he believes in the fullness of his rules, but in fact delivers emptiness. This is not to say that strategic rules and resources are superfluous, but that they are potentials that need to be activated in situ.

By conceptualizing rules and resources as counterparts to their own application, strategy research has overlooked yet another paradox. If strategic rules and resources were full of meaning, it should be possible to perfectly iterate them across contexts. Yet, every attempt to perfectly iterate a rule or a resource points to a paradox. For this we have to recognize that generalized — ‘full’ — statements suppose that meaning is not context-bound. Meaning, however, is always context-bound and contexts themselves are boundless (Derrida 1999a). Accordingly, rules and resources need to be modified in the course of application because a contextualization becomes necessary. The existence of a rule/resource at the same time implies the impossibility of application without alteration. Perfect iteration is rendered impossible since rules/resources need to, at least partly, destroy their own nature during the process of application. In other words, rules and resources cannot define their own conditions of application. When applying strategic rules and resources, a strategist needs to refer to them and to manage to get along without them at the same time. The either/or-logic that has been established between rules/resources and their application obscures this paradox because it is assumed that rules are one thing and their application another. The paradox can only be uncovered when referring to rules/resources and their application at the same time.

Our discussion of the dominant logics of strategy context, process, and content revealed three paradoxes that were disregarded by strategy research up to this point. Put differently, the dominant logics persist as long as scholars obscure their paradoxical foundation. Once we accept paradox and agree to those phenomena that helped us to uncover paradox (e.g., complexity and contingency), the dominant logics’ impossibility is uncovered. By definition, every paradox is about contradictory self-referential reasoning and thus impossibility. In our case, this impossibility refers to an objective description of the environment (strategy context), full justification of strategic decisions prior to implementation (strategy process), and ‘purely’ generalizable strategic rules and resources (strategy content). This raises an important question: What is the point of emphasizing the impossibility (paradoxical foundation) of strategic management? We disagree with scholars who claim that paradox undermines scientific utility and diminishes the ability to guide managerial practice (Porter 1991; Priem and
We propose that paradox in scientific inquiry is intrinsic and indelible (Lado et al. 2006: 116; Poundstone 1988), and increases interest (Davis 1971) and theories’ general potency (DiMaggio 1995). Within this study, we treat paradox as a necessary limit to our knowledge about strategic management, a limit that enhances our understanding of strategic phenomena because its consideration increases our ability to create requisite complexity in strategic realities (Cameron and Quinn 1988). Accordingly, we use paradox as a nucleus for theorizing in strategic management.

Since we are attempting to expose the three paradoxes that were briefly outlined above, we need to understand why strategy scholars were able to neglect them. For this we must realize that the identified dominant logics are structured around binary oppositions. The ‘necessity of adaptation’ relies on the opposition environment/organization; the environment demands, the organization reacts accordingly. The ‘primacy of thinking’ is based on the separation formulation/implementation. The ‘fullness of strategic rules and resources’ is founded on the proposition that rules and resources are detached from their application. This claim refers to the oppositions strategic rules/application and resources/application. All oppositions are hierarchically structured. The environment dictates the organization’s strategy, formulation is thought to precede implementation, and strategic rules/resources are thought to determine their application.

If strategy scholars sustain these oppositions by giving primacy to one hierarchical pole, they follow the classic dichotomous approach for coping with paradox (Clegg et al. 2002: 485; Poole and Van de Ven 1989: 566). By regarding self-contradictions as an either/or-choice, research hopes to get rid of or at least evade the ‘dysfunctional’ status of paradox. This mode of thinking is problematic because we cannot analyze paradox away (Luhmann 2000: 131). This would require ‘a safe ground’, ‘a self-defining’ origin that acts as a ground for strategic reasoning. Yet, to be ‘safe’, every ground needs to be justified. Striving to solve paradox by looking for a fully justified ground, we find ourselves in a situation once characterized by Albert (1985) as the Münchhausen trilemma. According to this trilemma, any attempt to find a final justification that would ‘solve’ paradox results in the choice between an infinite regress, a circulus vitiosus or a dogmatic interruption at an arbitrary point.7 The last alternative of

---

7 An infinite regress represents the causal or logical relationship of terms in a series that logically has no first or initiating term. A circulus vitiosus characterizes situations in which one trouble leads to another that aggravates the first. The conclusion of one argument is appealed to as one of the truths upon which the argument rests itself. Dogmatic interruptions simply terminate the justification process at an arbitrary point to evade an infinite regress.
this triple blind-alley sounds familiar since the dominant logics of strategy research terminate the process of justification by privileging one side of an opposition as a metaphysical ground. Accordingly, we cannot prove with a noncontradictory logic that reality is free of paradox. As Luhmann states (1988: 154): “There are paradoxes everywhere, wherever we look for foundations.” To facilitate orientation, the major points of our analysis are summarized in Figure 1.

Fig. 1. The Ideology of Strategy Research

If we cannot analyze paradoxes away, there is need to establish a way of thinking that acknowledges their unavoidable occurrence in order to not regard them as a dysfunctional state. Learning to handle paradoxes implies becoming engaged in their passionate endurance (Derrida 1998b) by actively pursuing implications for further theory development. Recall that the key characteristic of paradox is the simultaneous presence of two mutually exclusive elements. The dominant logics, because of their reliance on hierarchical oppositions, disregard paradox and thus ignore the simultaneous presence of the ‘ends’ of the oppositions. We then need to confess that the ‘ideological core’ of strategy research rests on the existence of oppositions. According to this argumentation, the research problem underlying this study can be formulated as follows:
The theory of strategic management sustains dominant logics that arise according to the ‘necessity of adaptation’ (strategy context), the ‘primacy of thinking’ (strategy process), and the ‘fullness of strategic rules and resources’ (strategy content). To maintain their dominant character, these logics obscure paradoxes. The paradoxes demonstrate that the arguments that underlie the dominant logics aim at impossibilities (viz. environmental adaptation in strategy context, full justification of strategic decision in strategy process, and generalizable strategic rules and resources in strategy content). As these paradoxes cannot be analyzed away, scholars’ disregard of them, based on the establishment of hierarchical oppositions in the dominant logics, calls for further conceptual research.

To expose paradoxes and consequently dismantle the three dominant logics of strategy research, we highlight the simultaneous existence of both sides of an opposition. By doing so we not only criticize the prevailing dominant logics but offer ways of reasoning that reach beyond ideology. Certainly, this is not to say that the outlined ideology has not been criticized up to this point. By regarding paradoxes not as dysfunctions but statements that meaningfully indicate the margins of knowledge, this study wishes to complement, enrich, and also extend the rich accounts of critical knowledge strategy scholars have developed so far. To evocatively explore these margins, an appropriate theory perspective is needed.

There are three requirements for a suitable perspective: (a) the theory needs to acknowledge oppositions in some way, (b) the theory has to unravel hierarchical structures to expose their simultaneous occurrence (paradox), and (c) the theory must be applicable to strategic management. A good point of departure for the identification of a suitable approach is provided by Linstead’s (1993: 56) statement:

“Where modernism pursues the opposition of terms, actively placing the one over and against the other, postmodernism resists the closure of terms, actively exploring the supplementarity of the one within the other.” (emphasis in the original)

By using the terms modernism and postmodernism, we face a profound problem as both expressions refer to a wide range of theoretical concepts. Modernism and postmodernism cannot be reduced to Linstead’s remarks on oppositional and supplementary logic. Whereas an in-depth discussion of the various meanings of both perspectives is beyond the scope of this in-

troduction, we need to clarify which theoretical element of postmodernism addresses the *supplementarity* mentioned by Linstead. Supplementarity is vital for our analysis, since the *limit* of every supplementary relation points towards a co-presence of oppositional elements and thus paradox.

While sociologists like Luhmann (1994) and Giddens (1984) have endowed us with approaches like ‘the autopoiesis of social systems’ or ‘the duality of structure’ that reflect supplementary relations between categories like agency *and* structure or organization *and* environment, we are in search of a more general perspective that captures the diversity of phenomena subsumed under the three dominant logics. An author whose intellectually rich account of work reflects this variety is the French philosopher Jacques Derrida who is often associated with postmodern thinking. His work is appealing to our analysis as he focuses on exposing and dismantling hierarchically structured oppositions within ‘texts’. Derrida’s understanding of text may be misleading at this point as one is led to believe that he is exclusively concerned with the written. For Derrida, however, ‘the text’ also relates to the (social) world, or as Cooper (1989: 482) specifies: to the interactional text. This makes texts the building blocks of contexts because contextual features are ‘textualized’ in that they provide the context for ‘the text’ in question.

“I believed that this extension and strategic generalization of the text was necessary to give deconstruction its chance. The text is not restricted to the written [...] language is a text, the gesture is a text, reality is a text in this new sense.” (Derrida 1987a: 107-108, cited in Ortmann 2003a: 109, translation and emphasis A.R.)

What Derrida labels deconstruction in the quote above represents the major theoretical embodiment of his thinking. Deconstruction acknowledges and overturns the dependence of any text on hierarchically ordered oppositions. Overturning in Derrida’s view does not mean to devote primacy to the so far neglected pole of the opposition. Deconstruction seeks to explore the supplementarity of both poles by thinking the one within the other. The meaning of one pole depends on the supplementary relationship with its other, and this relationship is never fixed but always reconstituted

---

9 This is not to say that we ignore the work of Luhmann and Giddens form here on but that we discuss their ideas on the background of Derrida’s philosophy. Proceeding in this way is feasible since Giddens (1979: 9-48) extensively refers to Derrida’s work and Luhmann (1995a: 9-35) at least recognizes the importance of his thinking. To neglect ideas like the paradox of decision-making (Luhmann 2000) or the importance of agency in (re)constituting rules and resources (Giddens 1984) for the sake of sticking to one theory only, surely is not an appropriate way for scientific progress.
in space and time. Meaning is constantly in a state of flux and can never be fully grasped. Strategic rules, for instance, cannot be applied regardless of context, as this implies that one side of the opposition (‘the strategic rule’) is regarded as being full of meaning, whereas the other side (‘the application’) is deemed to be a simple derivation. Deconstruction argues that both sides cannot do without each other as there is no self-defining cause that is full of meaning to precede and govern the neglected pole of the opposition. Both sides come into existence by giving reference to their (apparent) opposite. In consequence, deconstruction reveals a tension of juxtaposed opposition, a tension that, according to Derrida (1992a), exposes paradox.

We argue that deconstruction meets the outlined demands for a theoretical perspective that can guide our analysis: (a) it addresses oppositions in a general sense, (b) it provides a supplementary logic that exposes paradox if the tension of the juxtaposed opposition is considered as a co-presence of its poles, and (c) it can be applied to strategy research since the definition of ‘text’ offers a way to examine the ideas located in scientific discourses and the behavior of strategists (that relates to these ideas) as text production (Kilduff 1993: 14). Deconstruction fits the specific purpose of this treatise and helps to create new ways of thinking by moving beyond the established either/or-ideology of contemporary strategy research. Deconstruction’s potential to challenge existing ideologies is illustrated by Eagleston (1997: 117) who remarks:

“Deconstruction has grasped the fact that binary oppositions […] are representative for ideologies. Ideologies like to draw exact lines between the acceptable and the unacceptable, between the self and the non-self, between true and false, sense and nonsense, the central and the marginal, the surface and the depth. Such metaphysical thinking cannot be simply avoided: we cannot propel from this binary thinking into an ultra-metaphysical space. But by means of a specific manner of treating texts […] we can start to unravel these oppositions to show how one term of an antithesis secretly contains its opposite.” (translation A.R.)

Deconstruction enables the conceptual research we like to undertake by providing an apt theory perspective; it thus reflects the possibility of research within this study.

*Deconstruction provides a supplementary logic to dismantle the hierarchically structured oppositions that occur in the ‘text’ of strategic management. This logic uncovers the paradoxes that have been obscured by the dominant logics of strategy research up to this point.*

The need to dismantle the dominant oppositions of strategy research and the realization that deconstruction offers a way to do so justifies the following research objective.
This study aims at outlining an approach to strategy research that deconstructs the hierarchical oppositions reflected by the ‘necessity of adaptation’ (strategy context), the ‘primacy of thinking’ (strategy process), and the ‘fullness of strategic rules and resources’ (strategy content) to disclose the unavoidable paradoxes that have been neglected so far. As paradoxes only indicate the limits of knowledge we can gain about the nature of things, this study also shows how these paradoxes can be unfolded to think about the possibility of strategic management despite their existence.

Our approach to strategy research intends to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions to offer new ways of thinking about the conventional wisdom of strategic management to complement and extend existing perspectives. Complementing and extending current research does not imply that we deem other positions to be ineffective ways for thinking about strategy; just as we do not claim that research that is in line with the presented dominant logics inevitably follows a ‘modern’ perspective that is now replaced by a more encompassing ‘postmodern’ one. The examined questions may be fundamental, however inevitable to the progress of the field.

To facilitate orientation, Figure 2 summarizes our way of argumentation and thus shows the ideas on which the research design is based. We started with the statement that some scholars (e.g., Shrivastava 1987) claim that strategy research possesses an ideology but do not ask why this ideology exists and persists. We then suggested that this ideology is based on three dominant logics that arise according to strategy context, process, and content. These dominant logics are sustained because they neglect their own paradoxical foundation (and thus impossibility). Further sustaining these dominant logics calls for ‘solving’ paradox, which, however, requires an ultimate justification that we do not have according to Albert’s (1985) Münchhausen trilemma. Hence, there is need to uncover and discuss the paradoxes that strategy context, process, and content obscure thus far. To identify a theory perspective that helps us to uncover and discuss paradox, we need to know why the paradoxes are neglected in the first place. The paradoxes are neglected because the dominant logics are based on conceptual oppositions that pretend to provide an origin for strategic reasoning. To dismantle these oppositions and uncover their simultaneous existence (viz. paradox), we use deconstruction. Since every paradox only indicates the limits of knowledge we can have about the nature of strategy, we also show how the impossibility of the dominant logics (viz. their paradoxical nature) can be used positively to inform future strategy research.
1.2 This Study and the Philosophy of Science

In the light of the previous findings, we classify our research in relation to the philosophy of science to better understand the context of the presented arguments and their relation to the work of other scholars (Scherer 1999). The philosophy of science is concerned with an analysis of the methods of scientific practice (How do we conduct our research?), its purpose (To which end do we conduct our research?), its relation to other studies (How can we differentiate our research?), and its addressees (Who do we conduct our research for?).

The Methodology Used: We are conducting research about strategy research and thus deal with what Eberhard (1999: 36-46) calls a theoretical-critical way of reasoning. Schanz (1977: 67) remarks that empirical investigations are only useful if they are based on a solid theoretical foundation and Sutton and Staw (1995) remind us that without conceptual arguments any field ends up in dust-bowl empiricism. Because this study investigates the way scholars theorize within strategic management, our investigation is conceptual and not based on empirical tests of certain phenomena on the
object level. This does not mean that the presented arguments cannot be empirically tested, but that we need to rely on further research for empirical substantiation. Freeman and Lorange (1985: 16) remind us that empirical validity is only one possible criterion for research and that strategic management is especially endangered in traveling the narrow path of empiricism; the creation of future strategic realities must not exclude ‘thought experiments’ that are necessary for conceptual changes. Only by means of these changes can there be further meaningful empirical research.

The Purpose of This Study: Reflecting upon the purpose of this study helps us to assess its contributions to the existing body of work. The resulting question is whether we conduct research to establish new ‘truths’ about the way strategy research has to function or how else we wish our arguments to be understood. Since this treatise navigates in the waters of postmodernism, we suppose a postmodern understanding of science that sees scientific practice as being subject to incommensurable metatheoretical assumptions. Following Burrell and Morgan (1979), we identify metatheoretical assumptions with postulates about the nature of science (related to ontological and epistemological issues). Incommensurability describes the impossibility of comparing scientific knowledge that was generated in accordance with different metatheoretical beliefs, as no common standard of rationality exists. Scientific dogmatism becomes out of reach as the validity of statements can only be judged locally (with regard to the assumptions). Incommensurability implies that any treatise needs to submit itself to a competing battle of voices with no voice having a claim to priority over others (Jackson and Carter 1991). What are the implications of these remarks for our study?

Because of incommensurability this study does not reject the legacy of other perspectives on strategy or suggest that collaboration across different perspectives is impossible. We understand the contributions of this study neither as superior to other perspectives nor as a new ‘truth’ for strategy research but as a novel perspective to see theorizing in strategic manage-

---

10 Research methods that are consistent with the assumptions of deconstruction aim at qualitative empirical studies. Exploring organizations via narrative analysis provides a valuable point of departure in this context (Calás and Smircich 1999; Clandinin and Conelly 2000; Czarniawska 1998).

11 Incommensurability does not dissolve scientific legitimization into taste preferences (Jones 2003: 510) as this would lead to the impossibility of serious scientific practice. Scientific argumentation in the light of incommensurability implies a local understanding of rationality – ‘to play by the rules’ favored by a particular community of scholars. Accordingly, Latour (2002) argues that ‘scientific facts’ are not given but constructed by a network of actors (also Astley 1985; Astley 1984; Cannella and Paetzold 1994).
ment from a different angle. For us, incommensurability implies that the results and claims of this study need to be judged against the background of the assumptions of deconstruction. Hence, science is not a magnificent march towards some higher truth. If there is no final truth to discover, to which end do we conduct our research? How can we evaluate research that denies the existence of final truths? Lyotard (1999: 173-174), for instance, views scientific practice primarily as a way to create new ideas and Weick (1989: 517) claims in a much similar sense that

“[…] a good theory is a plausible theory, and a theory is judged to be more plausible and of higher quality if it is interesting rather than obvious, […] a source of unexpected connections, high in narrative rationality, aesthetically pleasing, or correspondent with presumed realities.” (emphasis added)

Interesting theories deny routinely held assumptions; they engage attention and make people sit up and take notice; they create discomfort and produce debate (Davis 1971: 311; McKinley et al. 1999). Kunda (1990) shows that the more a theory challenges taken-for-granted beliefs, the more other scholars see it as interesting and thus care about its arguments and Baldridge et al. (2004: 1066) propose that practitioners often judge interesting theories high in relevance. Thus, creating interest is the purpose of this study.12

**The Relation of this Study to other Perspectives:** If there is no ultimate, privileged point from where ‘true’ reasoning can unfold, it is essential to differentiate one’s own assumptions to other forms of legitimization within the chosen field of research. Such an overview portrays the ‘scientific landscape’ and provides the scholar with orientation regarding her/his limits of reasoning. Within organization theory and strategic management, a variety of frameworks enable such a differentiation. Most of these reference frames reduce scientific debates to two dimensions to offer a matrix in which researchers are supposed to locate themselves. Burrell and Morgan (1979), for example, distinguish between objective/subjective studies and scholars’ assumptions with regard to the nature of society (order/conflict). Not much different, Astley and Van de Ven (1983) emphasize the deterministic/voluntaristic nature of research as well as the level of organizational analysis (micro/macro). Similar to the modern-

---

12 Speaking with Weick (1989: 522-523), we contribute to heterogeneity in ‘thought trials’ within strategic management theory by choosing an uncommon perspective for criticizing existing research. Elsewhere Weick (1987b: 99) states that “[t]heories should be adopted more to maximize what we will see than summarize what we have already seen. Usually, what we have already seen merely confirms what we expect to see. To theorize better, theorists have to expect more in whatever they will observe.”