Strategy Participation in Discussions of a Transforming Organisation

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**Abstract:**

Though most strategy scholars and practitioners acknowledge the importance of participation, studies of participation and participation possibilities in particular are currently very few. This study's main aim is to contribute in the scarce research of discursive aspects shaping strategy participation. I add on the knowledge by examining the particular discursive processes shaping organisational members’ possibilities to take part in strategizing. Moreover, I provide a novel perspective to strategy participation by applying positioning theory in my analysis.

I apply critical discourse analysis as a methodological framework. Furthermore, as positioning takes place within the evolvement of storylines, I also need a method to analyse the diachronic nature of the phenomenon. Therefore, I specifically apply methods narrative inquiry in analysing strategy discussions. The empirical data consists of internal social media discussions in Nokia. The dataset is vast, and final analysis includes 1980 selected message posts where strategic matters are discussed.

The analysis demonstrated that modes of participation are shaped and predicted by a general strategy participation framework. The framework constitutes of a temporal dimension past-future and a strategy dimension construction-enactment. These types of participation predict how acts of positioning will be formulated. Participation in strategy discussion is typically related to giving or receiving strategy information, and to giving or receiving suggestions for strategic actions. Differently positioned participants had varying, yet equally important roles in driving discussion and promoting participation. Therefore, participation is best enabled when the whole spectrum of positions are given a voice.

**Keywords:** strategy, participation, organisational discourse, positioning
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Participation and its positive effects have long interested both organisation scholars and practitioners. The ample positive effects of enabling organisational members to take part in decision-making concerning themselves have been acknowledged through academic disciplines and business functions alike. Studies have proven that when participation is effective, it produces significant beneficial outcomes for individuals as well as organisations (Pasmore & Fagans 1992), from reducing change resistance (Coch & French 1948) to capturing innovations (Dogherty 2004) and enhancing championing in strategy (Mantere 2005). Interest to participation has reached the very top of organisation pyramid and the highest level of decision-making – strategy and strategizing. Yet, little is known about the actual processes of strategy participation, and particularly the processes enabling or limiting participatory action among organisational members.

The interest towards organisational participation first evolved in organisational development and change research, as part of the overarching mission of empowerment (Pasmore & Fagans 1992). Strategy scholars and practitioners became interested in the phenomena as their focus shifted from strategy content (see e.g. Porter 1980) towards the processes through which strategies are realised (see e.g. Pettigrew 1992; Mintzberg 1978; Chakravarthy & Doz 1992). Researchers examined both strategic decision-making and strategy construction, and strategy implementation processes. Participation was found remedy challenges in both of processes. Lack of participation, on the other hand, explained why sometimes even the most fastidiously planned strategies fail. Involving organisational members was discovered to have a significant impact on both the success of strategy implementation as well as strategizing (see Floyd & Wooldridge 2000, Westley 1990, Mintzberg 1994, Balogun & Johnson 2004).

Participation became an almost normative solution to strategy construction and implementation failures, as both scholars and organisational leaders exalted its impact in enhancing individual wellbeing and organisational effectiveness. Though strategy participation research mainly focused on the positive effects, the challenges and paradoxes of participation were demonstrated by organisation development scholars (e.g. Miller & Monge 1986, Pasmore & Fagans 1992, O’Connor 1995). They noted that even if participation may have many benefits, these benefits will not be realised unless
participation is truly effective. Furthermore, recognising the importance of participation does not automatically lead to such effective participation. Organisational members may not be properly equipped to take part in strategizing in the first place: their competencies and possibilities to participate vary. Thus, to realise the benefits of organisational participation, the possibilities to participate have to be understood first.

When seeking to understand what affects strategy participation and how participation possibilities are shaped, organisational power relations become central. Power relations impact who is granted the opportunity to have her say and whose voice is silenced. However, in modern organisations such structures are likely to be very subtle, fine-grained and embedded in the daily lives of organisational members. Discursive perspective provides a valuable opportunity to explore the most fundamental parts of strategy not easily reached with more traditional approaches (Laine & Vaara 2007). It holds great promise especially in regards to complex phenomena such as participation. Nevertheless, most current strategy discourse literature has dismissed analysing what factors affect participation possibilities (Mantere & Vaara 2008).

In this study I recognize both the need to understand what shapes possibilities to take part in strategizing, as well as the current void in strategy research related to participation possibilities. I aim to contribute in increasing knowledge of organisational members’ possibilities to participate in strategizing through discourse; increased knowledge on participation possibilities will benefit academic strategy research as well as strategy practice. I approach the issue by exploring discussions in an internal social media discussion forum of Nokia, a global telecommunications corporation going through a significant strategic transformation. This particular context provides a highly fruitful basis for analysing strategy discussion participation. Firstly, it provides a unique chance to closely explore one of greatest strategic transformations in the history of telecommunications industry globally, and in Finnish business life in particular. Secondly, social media discussions enable to tap naturally occurring strategy talk in its original and full form, in an organisation-wide forum, which is rarely attained in similar studies.

1.2. Aim of the Thesis

Studies of participation and participation possibilities in strategizing are currently very few. By analysing how organisational members discuss strategy, how they participate in strategizing discussions, and what affects their participation possibilities I pursue to
add on strategy discourse and participation knowledge, and on my part contribute in decreasing the current void in strategy research. I build on previous strategy as discourse research and in strategy participation studies in particular. Yet, I adopt a novel agent point of view and a linguistic micro-level approach in studying the interactional discursive processes shaping organisational members’ possibilities to participate in strategizing. In order to understand what shapes participation possibilities, I need to first understand how organisational members typically discuss strategy. How strategy is discussed implies what kind of discursive, interactional framework formulates existing modes of participation. When I understand this discursive framework, I am able to analyse how it shapes organisational member’s participation possibilities. Thus, research questions in this study are following:

1) How do organisation members discuss strategy?

2) How do organisation members take part in the strategy discussion?

3) What affects possibilities to participate in strategizing?

1.3. Contributions

This study’s main aim is to contribute in the scarce research on discursive aspects shaping strategy participation. I add on the knowledge by examining the particular discursive processes shaping organisational members’ possibilities to take part in strategizing. Moreover, I provide a novel perspective to strategy participation by applying positioning theory in my analysis.

The managerial implications of the research contribute in understanding how strategy communication could be formulated to attract more participation in strategy discussions and in strategizing. Increased participation implies more benefits of participation will be realised, e.g. in the form of better strategy internalisation, implementation and employee satisfaction.

1.4. Delimitations

In this research I study only corporate social media as a forum for strategy discussions; other forums are limited outside of scope. I acknowledge strategizing takes place in other venues as well, and therefore it should be highlighted that this research does not aim to provide a comprehensive picture of strategy participation and strategizing but focuses only on this particular type of discussion. Furthermore, the discussions I study
took place in an organisation undergoing a significant strategic transformation. This created a special context for the discussions, and likely impacted the modes of participation. However, it is out of this study’s scope to analyse how the special context may have affected. On the other hand, this study provides one stagnant picture of strategy discussions and participation. As social reality is constantly (re)created, it is likely there has been evolvement in strategy discussion and the forms of participation as well, but such temporal changes cannot be examined within the scope of this study.

1.5. Definitions of Key Concepts

*Discourse.* Language use conceived as social practice discourse; a way of signifying experience from a particular perspective (Fairclough 1995).

*Discursive resource.* Concepts, expressions or other linguistic devices, drawn from practices and texts that explain action while also providing a horizon for future practice. Constructs and maintains preferred visions of selves and groups. Signifies types of identifications, making evident the social claims inherent in subject positions (Kuhn 2009).

*Narrative.* Forms of discourse where events are configured into plot with temporal unity (Polkinghorne 1995). In this study, narrative refers to the braided development of several storylines incorporated in one discussion (Davies & Harré 1999).


*Position.* A position or subject position is a metaphorical concept referring to person’s moral and personal attributes as a speaker (Langenhove & Harré 1999, 17). Subject positions define what social actors are expected, allowed or restricted to do in a specific social and discursive space (Davies & Harré 1999).

*Positioning.* Giving and taking subject positions. A position is a metaphorical concept where a person’s moral and personal attributes as a speaker are collected (Harré & Langenhove 1999).

*Social constructionism.* An ontology where social reality is seen to be (re)produced in language and social encounters; language does not simply mirror reality but constructs it (Fairclough 1995).
Speech act. Refers to the illocutionary force of an utterance, i.e. what is achieved in saying something (Langenhove & Harré 1999, 17), for example in saying ‘well done’ the act of congratulating is achieved.

Storyline. Refers to a frame of interaction participants attend to and thus ‘live out’ in the interaction between them (Harré & Langenhove 1999a).

Strategizing. Constructing and enacting organizational strategies, through both formal and informal means (Whittington 2001).

Strategy. A future plan to achieve a certain goal, commonly consisting of identifying target customers, providing better or less expensive services or products than competitors, and utilising the organisation’s strengths (Shimizu 2012).

1.6. Structure of the Thesis

After introducing the background and aim of this research, I continue with a review strategy process research, where I locate this study in the research stream of strategy-as-discourse. I then discuss the problem of participation as examined in organisational development and change literature, where also strategy scholars have drawn from. After presenting these two main bases of my study, I draw them together in the chapters discussing participation in strategizing; I particularly focus on who has been able to take part in strategy-making.

Next, I examine the specific perspective I apply to examine participation in strategizing: discourse analysis. After setting the discursive perspective, I further discuss the particular theoretical framework of positioning which I will apply in analysis. When the study is located within previous research and theoretical framework is built, I move on presenting my research setting: data and methods. In the methods section I discuss how I analysed the data in a way applicable to my aforementioned framework. I also present the research case to provide the reader a background and a context. Finally, I introduce the processes of processing and analysing data.

After that, I proceed to the latter part of the thesis where I discuss the analysis, done using the above presented theoretical framework and methods. I focus on participation possibilities and present my framework of strategy participation. I then elaborate how the framework impacts the different dimensions of positioning. I start by discussing speech acts, then add on subject positions, and finally draw all the dimensions together
in the analysis of storylines. Lastly, I draw final conclusions of my findings, and also discuss theoretical and practical implications of the study, as well as what will be left for future studies.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Strategy

Strategy is a both common and powerful word. The term is eagerly yet freely used in different settings, often without a clear conception of its definition (Mintzberg et al. 1998, 9). The excessive cultivation of ‘strategy’ can be explained by the importance embedded in the word. People tend to believe their ideas become more important and relevant with ‘strategy’ attached to them (Shimizu 2012, 1). In organisations strategy is considered to be the high point of any managerial activity (Mintzberg et al. 1998, 9). Despite and perhaps partly due to the popularity of ‘strategy’, the term is used in varying ways both in and outside of organisational settings.

Most often, strategy is defined as a plan: an intended direction of action from here to the future. Strategy can also be viewed as a pattern, i.e. a consistency in an organisation’s realised behaviour over time. Strategy may also be defined as a position, meaning the location of particular products in particular markets. In addition, strategy is the perspective of an organisation: the fundamental course of action. Finally, strategy as a ploy is used to illustrate the specific actions intended to outwit an opponent. (Mintzberg et al. 1998.) Though there are several definitions of strategy, certain overlapping themes characterise all of them. As Shimizu (2012) argues, strategy can be defined as ‘a future plan to achieve a certain goal’ based on the common characteristics. Strategy thus consists of identifying target customers, providing better or less expensive services or products than competitors, and utilising the organisation’s strengths. Furthermore, strategy is sometimes used as an interchangeable term to business model, which in turn is defined as a particular system to develop better products and services than competitors. (Shimizu 2012, 1-2.)

Strategies are examined from two different points of view: content and process. According to Chakravarthy and Doz (1992), strategy content research focuses only on exploring which strategic positions lead organisations to optimal performance under varying environmental contexts. Strategy process research on the contrary focuses on the administrative systems and decision-making processes influencing the strategic position. The content and process points of views differ in focus, disciplinary bases and methodology. Focus in strategy content research is in a company’s competitive and resource positions, whereas the process view focuses on how companies achieve and maintain such positions. The disciplinary premise of content research is economics,
while process view embraces broad and varied disciplinary contributions ranging from macroeconomics to ethics, in order to explore the processes from multiple perspectives. Finally, the differences between content and process strategy research streams culminate in diverse methodologies. Strategy content can be studied using secondary published data, whereas process research requires more intrusive methods. (Chakravarthy & Doz 1992, 5.)

As this study examines participation in strategizing and strategy discussions, the interest lies in strategy processes and not in the content of strategies. Thus, the study is located in the process research tradition. The strategy process tradition, nonetheless, a wide array in itself. Process tradition can be further divided into several research streams: managerialism, strategy as social process, strategy as social practice and strategy as discourse. To understand the academic context of strategy as discourse research, I will next discuss the developments and varying viewpoints of strategy process research.

### 2.1.1. **Strategy Process Research Streams**

The classical strategy literature was based on a managerialist foundation (Mantere & Vaara 2008, 342). Strategy research in the managerialist stream is prescriptive in nature, meaning it is more concerned with how strategies ought to be formulated than how strategies actually form. Following Mintzberg et al. (1998, 4-7), the prescriptive tradition can be divided into three schools of thought: design, planning and positioning. The design school views strategy from the point of view of conception. In its simplest form, strategy formulation is seen as a process of attaining a fit between internal capabilities and external possibilities. The planning school is similar to the design school but views strategy formulation as an even more detached and systematic formal planning process. The positioning school in turn is concerned also with the content of strategies, and thus contributes also to the content research tradition. (ibid.)

The strategy as social process research stream shifted from prescriptive towards descriptive, and from static towards dynamic. The approach focuses on the processes through which strategies are realised (see e.g. Pettigrew 1992, Mintzberg 1978, Chakravarthy & Doz 1992), namely with choice processes, i.e. strategic decision making, and implementation processes, i.e. strategic change. The choice and change processes are interpreted in incremental, cultural and political terms (Pettigrew 1992, 6). According to Chakravarthy and Doz’s (1992, 5) definition, the purpose of strategy as process research is to study 'how a general manager can continuously influence the
quality of the firm's strategic position through the use of appropriate decision processes and administrative systems'. Yet, this definition remains somewhat narrow and maintains emphasis on strategic position. As Pettigrew (1992, 11) argues, strategy as process research can also be defined more generically as the description, analysis and explanation of recurrent patterns in strategic management processes, complemented by exploring why, when and how the features of policy processes and contexts shape policy outcomes.

The social practice approach, in turn, sees strategy as something organisations do, not as something they have (Whittington 1996, 2006; Balogun 2003; Jarzabkowski 2004; Mantere 2005; Jarzabkowski et al. 2007). The focus of the social practice research stream defined by Whittington (1996, 731) is on the ways strategy practitioners act and interact. The main question is then 'what does it take to be an effective strategy practitioner' (ibid.) which involves very similar utility implications as the managerialistic strategy approach. On the other hand, the approach to strategy as social practice is in many ways similar to the strategy as social process research stream. The social practice approach, however, immerses in a deeper level of strategy and strategizing processes. The social practice scholars seek to understand also the micro-level processes and practices constituting strategy and strategizing (Mantere & Vaara 2008, 342). The importance of ‘micro strategy’ has been emphasised as a respond to the macro-level strategy approach that prevailed in strategy research before the turn to social practices (Johnson et al. 2003).

The research stream of strategy as discourse emerged in parallel with the strategy as social process approach, but it focused solely on strategy discourses (Knights & Morgan 1991, Barry & Elmes 1997, Hendry 2000, Levy et al. 2003, Vaara et al. 2004, Mantere 2005, Mantere & Vaara 2008). As mentioned above, the social practice stream also covered discursive social practices in strategy-making processes, but the new approach immersed in the details of discursive practices. Furthermore, in the strategy as discourse approach discursive social practices are investigated through a critical lens (e.g. Hendry 2000, Lilley 2001, Levy et al. 2003, Grandy & Mills 2004, Mantere & Vaara 2008). Knights and Morgan (1991) embarked on the new approach with their seminal study about strategy as a body of knowledge and strategy language’s power implications on organisation. Drawing from Foucault, they argue ‘strategy can be seen as discourse which has its own specific conditions of possibility’. Strategy is an emergent set of practices which arise and become reproduced in managerial discourse,
and the emergence and reproduction of strategy discourse can be traced in specific changes in organisations and managerial subjectivity. Power relations within organisations and between organisation members have significant effects on strategy and strategy discourses: firstly, the conditions of possibility on organisational level can be traced back to various exercises of power; and secondly, organisation members are transformed into particular types of subject through mechanisms of power. (Knights & Morgan 1991.)

According to Laine and Vaara (2007, 32), three types of studies can be distinguished within the strategy as discourse research stream. Firstly, there are theoretical analyses studying strategy as a body knowledge, which also Knights and Morgan’s (1991) research on subjectivity and power represents. Subsequent scholars such as Levy et al. (2003) have further developed the exploration of the hegemonic nature of strategy discourse and practices started by them. Others have studied discourse’s role in sustaining organisational inequalities through ideology processes (Thomas 1998), how strategy discourse affects the ways of examining organisations (Lilley 2001), and how strategy discourse has been naturalised (Grandy & Mills 2004).

Secondly, strategy discourse researchers have taken a narrative approach and studied the role of narratives in strategy processes (Barry & Elmes 1997, Dunford & Jones 2000, Vaara 2002). The seminal work in this approach was Barry and Elmes’ (1997) study of strategy as a form of narrative. According to their definition, ‘a narrative view of strategy stresses how language is used to construct meaning’ and the approach ‘explores ways in which organizational stakeholders create a discourse of direction (whether about becoming, being, or having been) to understand and influence one another’s actions’ (Barry & Elmes 1997, 432). Also a sensegiving point of view has been applied to the narrative approach e.g. in Dunford and Jones’ (2000) analysis of narratives as portrays of events surrounding strategic change.

In the third type of studies within the strategy as discourse research stream scholars have analysed discursive practices involved in strategy-making (Hardy et al. 2000, Maitlis & Lawrence 2003, Vaara et al. 2004, Samra-Fredericks 2005). Some researchers have taken a resource point of view, and examined the use of different discursive resources utilised for strategic purposes; how the resource utilisation involves circuits of activity, performativity and connectivity (Hardy et al. 2000); and how the interplay of discursive elements and political behaviour may be the cause for failures in strategizing (Maitlis & Lawrence 2003). Vaara et al. (2004) in turn analysed
how specific discursive practices are used to naturalise and legitimise strategies in the case of airline alliances.

Furthermore, conversation analysis has been applied in studying discourse practices in strategizing. Samra-Fredericks’ (2003, 2004, 2005) conversation analytical studies examined the roles and identities in strategy processes. She focused especially on rhetorical skills used in persuading and convincing others, and how these skills are used in constructing subjectivity as strategist (Samra-Fredericks 2003, 2004) as well how organisational power relationships are constituted in everyday interaction (Samra-Fredericks 2005). Also Mueller et al. (2004) have analysed rhetoric in discourse practices and how specific rhetorical strategies are utilised in justifying strategies. Mantere and Vaara (2008) explored participation issues by studying the different ways employees from operating level personnel to top management make sense of strategy processes, and what roles are assigned to the different organisational members in the strategy processes.

This study adapts a discursive perspective in analysing participation in strategizing. Therefore, the study locates in the strategy as discourse research tradition. Furthermore, I examine how discursive practices in strategizing shape organisational members’ possibilities to take part in strategy discussions. Thus, I contribute in the third type of strategy as discourse studies where discursive practices involved in strategizing are in focus. These studies, however, do not provide enough knowledge on the problems of participation. As mentioned, strategy research has typically lacked in analyses of participation possibilities; currently, the aforementioned research by Mantere and Vaara (2008) provide one of the few exceptions. Therefore, to better understand issues related to participation I next turn to organisational development research – the original basis of organisational participation.

### 2.2. The Problem of Participation

The basis of organisational participation discourse is in organisational development and change literature. Strategy process scholars became interested in the topic when seeking answers to why strategies fail – a question that has widely interested both strategy practitioners and researcher. As Balogun and Johnson (2005) state, it is well documented that intended strategies tend to lead to unintended outcomes. Stories of failed strategies are common. Within the strategy process research such failures were
defined as problems of strategy implementation (Nutt 1987, 1989) or strategizing in general (Maitlis & Lawrence 2003).

Participation was discovered to have a significant impact on the success of strategy implementation and strategizing (Floyd & Wooldridge 2000, Westley 1990, Mintzberg 1994, Balogun & Johnson 2004). Currently, most strategy scholars acknowledge the importance of participation (Mantere & Vaara 2008). Participation has thus become almost a normative solution to strategy and strategy implementation failures: it enhances individual wellbeing and organisational effectiveness and therefore is something to pursue. Nevertheless, Miller and Monge (1986) reminded how Locke and Schweiger already in 1979 provided multiple examples of how both managers and scholars advocated participation only on moral grounds despite its actual effects. Moral reasoning has been confounded with practical reasoning. (Miller & Monge 1986, 727.)

Research mainly focused on the positive effects of participation, and the challenges of participation have received less attention within strategy research. Participation may be beneficial, but are there actually opportunities to take part? Are there particular constraints shaping participation? This study contributes in better understanding the challenges organisational members face when aspiring to participate in strategy discussion, and how the discursive constructions within strategy discourses affect participation. Here, I draw from organisational development and change research which has examined also the problematic of participation; these paradigms can provide a more versatile view of the phenomenon. Therefore, to better understand organisational participation and also the challenges involved, I will next explore participation in organisational development and change research.

### 2.2.1. Organisational Participation

Participation refers to people’s ability to take part in making decisions involving themselves. In organisational settings, a value of empowering all members on all organisational levels has been inherent in the concept. (Pasmore & Fagans 1992.) Both scholars and practitioner emphasise the rhetoric of involvement. Involvement is defined as ‘a favourable disposition toward the change effort’. Others who oppose involvement are considered backward and old fashioned; their point of view is depicted rooted in ignorance and thus training is required to produce involvement. (O’Connor 1995.) Literature urges managers to involve everyone, to make them aware of the change effort’s meaning, and to provide them as much information as possible
The benefits of involving organisational members are argued to be superiority of economic results (O’Connor 1995) and productivity (Miller 1986), success in organisational development (Pasmore & Fagans 1992) and employee satisfaction (Miller 1986).

Nevertheless, involvement and participation are more complex phenomena than it appears at first glance. Firstly, Miller and Monge (1986) argue influence to organisational members’ satisfaction and organisation’s productivity can be accounted with three different models: cognitive, affective and contingency. The cognitive model suggests that participation enhances two-way flow and use of important information in organisations. On the one hand, workers have better knowledge on their work than managers and thus management benefits of involving them in decision-making. On the other hand, workers are more familiar with the work procedures to be implemented when they have participated in decision-making concerning them. The affective model of participation in turn propose participation enhances satisfaction and productivity through affective mechanisms: participation leads to fulfilment of higher-order needs such as self-expression, respect, independency and equality which in turn increase morale and satisfaction. The contingency model, however, does not agree it would be possible to develop models of participative effects that hold across a wide variety of individuals and situations. Participation affects different people and situations differently, depending on personality, relationships between superiors and subordinates, job levels, and values. (Miller & Monge 1986.)

Secondly, participation may not enhance empowerment of employees but on the contrary fortify management’s control over them. O’Connor (1995, 772), following Deetz and Kersten (1983) and Deetz (1992) makes a distinction between the political and sociotechnical forms of participation. Sociotechnical participation refers to involvement as an extension to technical interests, where participation actually presents a disguised, pervasive form of control. For example team participation programmes can be seen as new control systems, because they are usually motivated and finally dominated by managerial assumptions. Thus, the members in the participation programme end up reproducing managerial control, disguised as to the good of the group. (O’Connor 1995.)

The issue of power and control leads to the paradox of participation. As O’Connor (1995) argues, change is always someone’s agenda to be implemented according to a specific mould, not joint discovery as claimed in literature. She identifies four other
paradoxes revolving around inclusion and exclusion. Firstly, often only key people participate in decision-making, whereas other's ‘involvement’ is only agreeing and following. Secondly, disagreement or protest is not considered as a form of involvement. Furthermore, organisational members simultaneously wait for authority’s regulating actions and resent the same authority. Finally, involvement is about taking sides: one is either with or against the change champion. (O’Connor 1995, 790-791.) Equal involvement within an organisation is thus very difficult to attain: if one achieves to the right to participate in the actual decision-making, only sympathetic voices will be heard.

On the other hand, do people strive for the right to participate or will they participate when granted the option? Opposite to the general assumption that people participate when given the opportunity and that participation is preferred over non-participation, Neumann (1989) estimated that the majority of organisational members, two thirds of workforce typically, in fact choose not to participate. Pasmore and Fagans (1992) acknowledge this challenge, and as a solution they propose organisational members should be prepared not only for the change but also to participation. Many organisation members are not adequately prepared to participation. On the other hand, many failures and disappointments in organisational change can be traced to lack of participation. Therefore, they argue, individual and organisational development ought to go hand in hand. (Pasmore & Fagans 1992.) Competence to participate is required to gain the benefits of involvement. This is a relevant notion especially in the case of participating in strategy discussions. On one hand, despite the frequency of the term ‘strategy’, it is commonly misunderstood or the definition is internalized only partially. On the other, strategic decision-making is traditionally exclusively top management's responsibility. Thus, it could be presumed that all organisational members are not well or at least equally prepared to participate in strategizing. Next, I shall examine what is currently known about participation in strategizing.

2.2.2. Participation in Strategizing

As Mantere and Vaara (2008) state, participation is a central issue both in strategy research and in strategy practice. During the history of strategy research, many scholars have touched upon the question of participation and the issue of lack of participation in particular (see e.g. Floyd & Wooldridge 2000, Westley 1990, Mintzberg 1994, Balogun & Johnson 2004). Although most scholars agree on the importance of
participation, there is no consensus about to which degree organisation members should participate in strategy work and strategizing. Furthermore, while lack of participation is generally seen as an issue, there is little knowledge about the reasons behind it. (Mantere & Vaara 2008, 342.) Research has mainly focused on how top or middle managers participate in official strategy process and strategizing; less is known about the degree to which other organisational members participate in strategizing.

In this chapter I review what is already known about strategy participation and its effects, and particularly who are viewed as prospective strategy participants. The viewpoint to participation and strategy participants follows closely the aforementioned strategy process research streams. I consider this natural, since the research streams focus on different organisational levels as well as different level of details in strategy process. The review further identifies the voids in the strategy research tradition where this study contributes.

2.2.2.1. Top Management as the Educated Strategist

In the managerial research paradigm, strategy formulation was seen as a task for the top management and others were only allowed to participate in strategy implementation (Mantere & Vaara 2008, 341-342). This is especially evident in the work of Andrews (1982, as cited in Mintzberg et al. 1998), one of the founders of the design school. According to him, responsibility and control of the deliberate, conscious strategy formulation process belong to the chief executive officer only. Strategies are formulated by the educated strategist CEO, and there is no room for strategy emergence through the participation of other organisational members. Even the board of directors is disassociated from strategizing. (ibid.) The planning school allows a little more participation by introducing strategic planning departments and strategic planners. The group of educated top management strategic planners formulate strategy in a strictly systematic planning process (Mintzberg et al. 1998) which Jelinek (1979) paralleled with Taylor’s views of factory work. The CEO’s role, then, is diminished to an approver of the strategic plans (Mintzberg et al. 1998, 57).

Forms of participation are quite similar in the positioning school, albeit still somewhat more restricted. As Mintzberg et al. (1998) describes, formation of strategy is seen as a similar kind of controlled and conscious process as in the planning school, but focuses more narrowly on selecting the best fitting generic strategic position through careful calculations. CEO remains as the approver of strategy but the most important actors
are the managers and consultants conducting the calculations in a detailed step-by-step process provided by Porter (1980) in his founding positioning book.

As Mantere and Vaara (2008, 342) conclude, the managerialist literature focuses on effective strategy-formulation processes where participation is not considered an issue. Strategic planning and strategy formulation are considered to be processes which can and moreover should be executed in a predetermined, highly systematic manner. Furthermore, the processes demand mastery of strategic planning and analysis, and thus strategizing rests on a small restricted group of top managers and strategy professionals. Since it was presupposed this groups operates and makes decisions only based on facts and analyses, participation or other social aspects even within the group were not considered as issues worth investigating.

2.2.2.2. Top to Middle Level Managers as Key Participants

When strategy formation is seen as an emergent socially originated process and defined as a pattern in a stream of decisions (Mintzberg 1978, 935), more widely-ranged participation becomes a relevant issue. The social process research stream emphasises especially lower level managers’ contributions in strategizing: strategies formulated by top management are no longer viewed as superior and strictly the only legitimate form of strategizing (Mantere & Vaara 2008). Operational level personnel and middle-managers make significant contributions to innovation through bottom-up strategies. The autonomous strategic initiatives of operational personnel drives corporate entrepreneurship and the middle managers have a crucial role in linking this behaviour with corporate-level strategy. (Burgelman 1983.) Mintzberg and Waters (1985) in turn emphasise the importance of emergent strategies for flexibility, responsiveness and strategic learning where all organisation members have a role, even though the top management remains in control.

Other social process scholars have emphasised the inputs from non-senior managers in helping organisations to adapt their strategies to evolving situations and environments (Burgelman 1983, Bourgeois & Brodwin 1984, Noda & Bower 1996, Lovas & Ghoshal 2000), yet their viewpoints vary regarding the degree of control rest on top management. While others emphasise leadership’s role in controlling strategic initiatives (Burgelman 1983) or strategic intent (Lovas & Goshal 2000), other scholars have argued that managers outside the top leadership have in fact a more realistic view on strategies (Mintzberg 1994), and that they are key participants in organisational
knowledge creation (Hart 1992, Floyd & Lane 2000, Floyd & Wooldridge 2000). The importance of participation is emphasised also from the point of view of strategy implementation. Implementation activities are seen to lead to more successful strategy implementation due to increased commitment (Guth & MacMillan 1986, Korsgaard et al. 1995, Klein & Sorra 1996, Kim & Mauborgne 1991), the integration of subunit goals (Ketokivi & Castañer 2004) as well as collective sensemaking (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, Gioia et al. 1994).

The most important factors promoting strategy participation are organisational and social environments, but less is known about the factors impeding participation (Mantere & Vaara 2008, 342). Participation of middle managers and personnel in general is encouraged by a dynamic environment, whereas in a more stable environment organisations tend to construct a hierarchical administrative structure decreasing participation in strategizing (Miles et al. 1978, Floyd & Lane 2000). Also managerial strategy implementation tactics and organisational design in general have an effect on engagement (Nutt 1987, 1989). Interaction between top leadership and other organisation members affects also inclusion (Westley 1990).

2.2.2.3. From Top to the Operational Level

Official company strategists—managers and consultants—remained at first in the focus of attention in the social practice research stream, evident in Whittington’s (1996, 732) argument that the social practice research is aimed at the managerial level and thus analysis focuses on how the managers and consultants act and interact in strategizing sequences. Yet, he emphasises the different roles of various strategy practitioners and the importance of understanding their distinct tasks and skills (ibid.). The micro-strategizing scholars have in turn acknowledged also other organisation members as actors, and argued that all members regardless of their hierarchical status are essential to the actualisation of potential value, even though they do keep managerial practices in the main focus for research (Johnson et al. 2003).

As the strategy as practice research stream evolved, the consideration for non-managerial practices and lower level organisation members increased. In formulating a framework for strategy as practice research in 2007, Jarzabkowski et al. declared the importance of identifying also middle and operational level employees as strategic actors: though their inputs may be unintended, they are crucial for the company’s survival and strategic advantage. The middle and operational level members may not
have a formal role in strategizing, but they shape strategy through their social, interpretative, linguistic and personal knowledge bases (ibid.). Their inputs in strategy are recognised related to capturing practice-based knowledge for service innovations (Dogherty 2004), in strategic change processes (Balogun & Johnson 2004) and as strategy champions who go beyond their operational responsibilities and participate in strategy-making (Mantere 2005).

As Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) argue, strategy-makers ought to be studied as strategy participants rather than strategy formulators: it is necessary to focus strategy research on actions and reactions of strategy practitioners in order to understand human agency in the constitution and enactment of strategy (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007). The strategy as practice studies have shown how some of the social practices enable and others constrain participation in strategizing. The studies have specified social conditions and organisational practices that have an impact on how different actors participate in strategy work, yet there have not been studies on the effects of different discursive practices (Mantere & Vaara 2008, 342).

2.2.2.4. All Organisational Members Discussing Strategy

By the emergence of strategy as discourse research stream, participation had already been acknowledge as a crucial issue for strategy research and practice, though viewpoints of the degree of participation in strategy work still vary (Mantere & Vaara 2008). This is in part evident in strategy discourse studies as variance in research subjects — the people who are seen to be prospective strategizers. Some of the strategy as discourse researchers have concerned only top management or the official strategists as participants in strategizing (e.g. Samra-Fredericks 2004) while others have taken a broader scope and studied discourses of different level organization members, from operating level personnel to top management (e.g. Vaara et al. 2004, Mantere & Vaara 2008). On the other hand, as strategy as discourse research stream applies a constructionist approach where the world is seen to be (re)produced in language and social encounters (see e.g. Fairclough 1995), in principle anyone who participates in a strategy related discussion can be viewed as participating in strategy. Also strategy is (re)produced in language, and therefore it is not some stable object a designated strategist can plan, fix and rule over, but the meaning of it is constantly renegotiated and reproduced in social encounters.
Nonetheless, not everyone has equal opportunity to participate in the negotiation and (re)production of strategy: managerial hegemony and lack of participation easily prevail in strategy work (Manter & Vaara 2008). Strategy as discourse scholars have provided insights into the reasons behind the lack of participation and managers’ dominance. Knights and Morgan (1991) argue that discourses and social practices surrounding strategy have an effect of constituting different subjectivities for managers and labour. They enhance productivity power of organisations but only through subjectively locking individuals to their tasks and commitments. The strategy discourses in parallel secure particular individuals’ and groups’ privileges, and thus furthers the legitimation of stratification inequalities. Samra-Fredericks (2005) applied Knights and Morgan’s (1991) research approach and power-related arguments in her study about everyday interactional constitution of power effects and competencies of participants. Struggles over subjectivity are analysed also by Laine and Vaara (2007); in their study they show how three different ways of making sense of and giving sense to strategic development have specific subjectification tendencies. Power and control over others, resistance towards the power effects, and viability of independent identity is pursued through mobilizing a specific discourse (Laine & Vaara 2007).

Yet, the strategy as discourse research stream still lacks cumulative knowledge of discursive aspects impeding or promoting participation. Mantere and Vaara (2008) currently provide the only analysis about discourses impeding and promoting participation. Their analysis shows how different, even competing discourses involved in strategy practice have profoundly different effects on participation in strategy work. They specify three discourses promoting strategy participation and three discourses associated with non-participatory approaches to strategy work: mystification, disciplining and technologisation affect participation negatively, and self-actualisation, concretisation and dialogisation on the other hand promote participation. (Mantere & Vaara 2008.)

The discourses impeding participation embody traditional views on strategy and strategy-making (Mantere & Vaara 2008, 358). In the mystification discourse strategy and strategy work are endowed a special status surrounded with secrecy, which may lead to restricting others from the sole meaning of the activity. The discourse reproduces a view of strategy as a small group, top management-driven, secret planning activity. Individuals in charge are given an authority position similar to religious preachers, while others are expected to be compliant to the visions and
missions. Resistance to the discourse through cynicism and sarcasm further reproduce non-participation. The disciplining discourse in turn represents the discursive construction of organisational hierarchies and command structures. The discourse imposes a clear-cut managerial authority, where top management is illustrated as leaders responsible for making difficult decisions for the whole organisation. Also heroification of specific persons was included. Other organisation members were imposed a subordinate role. Though most of the studied middle and operating level personnel had internalised the disciplining discourse, some did resist it. (Mantere & Vaara 2008.)

Finally, the technologisation discourse links strategy to specific systems and technologies which govern the strategizing activities. The strategy process is viewed as a system that is drive by predefined logic, and organisation members are seen as resources for the system more than subjects participating in decision making. Yet, the system is not restricting for top managers who selected the specific technologies. Other employees, on the other hand, are more restricted due to the specific, narrow and limiting roles they are assigned to in the discourse. (Mantere & Vaara 2008, 347-350.) These discourses impeding strategy participation are easily reproduced in organisational settings (ibid., 358).

The discourses promoting strategy participation present a more recent conception about strategy and strategizing, such as the ideas of distributed leadership and collective agency (Mantere & Vaara 2008, 358). In the self-actualization discourse, employees are defined as individuals capable of outlining and defining objectives for themselves in strategy processes, and strategy is portrayed as search for a deeper meaning in the organisation’s activities. Strategy process is open for everyone, and discovering objectives together is more important than the final definition of them. The dialogisation in turn promotes participation in strategizing through an integration of bottom-up and top-down approaches. The authority position of top management nor the participation right of other organisation members is not questioned. Though the dialogical elements had become a central part in many organisations Mantere and Vaara studied, the dialog was not reality, but the idea of it was used to promote participation. (ibid., 351-352.)

Lastly, concretization is a pragmatic discourse promoting participation. The goal is to establish meaningful social and organisational action by establishing clear strategizing practices and processes. It is ‘a social grounding upon which individuals are able to find
meaningful strategic roles’. Strategy is seen as an inherent part of organisational decision making: not something given, but constantly constructed. Top management’s role in strategizing may not be questioned, however. Yet, concretization involves collective and distributive agency: everyone involved in key activities have an important role as strategist in there are of responsibility. Concretization also represents a counter discourse to the impeding discourse of mystification. (Mantere & Vaara 2008, 352-353.) The promoting discourses are used more consciously and intentionally than the impeding discourses with traditional view on strategy. Moreover, the promoting discourses are utilised to actively resist the impeding discourses. (Mantere & Vaara 2008, 358.)

As Laine and Vaara (2007, 30) note, the discursive perspective provides opportunities for examining some of the most fundamental parts of strategy which are not easily studied with the more traditional approaches. Furthermore, the strategy discourse research stream holds great possibilities especially for studying complex phenomena such as participation as shown in Mantere and Vaara’s seminal analysis on the discursive factors impeding or promoting participation. Yet, as they note (Mantere & Vaara 2008, 343), most of the current literature has dismissed the analysis of discursive factors enhancing or impeding participation, and only treated strategy as a simply hegemonic discourse.

This study recognizes this void in strategy research. The study builds on the previous strategy as discourse research, with specific focus on strategy participation possibilities. By analysing how organization members discuss strategy and strategy related issues in naturally occurring talk and how they participate in the discussions, I pursue to add on the knowledge and on my part contribute in decreasing the currently existing void in strategy research. The study builds particularly on the research of Mantere and Vaara (2008) presented above, but adopts an agent point of view and a more linguistic, micro level approach. With this choice, I aim to illustrate how discursive elements shape organisational members participation possibilities and how they utilise these elements as their discursive resources enabling participation. Next, I continue with immersing to the discursive perspective on organisations and strategy, derived from organizational discourse analysis and more specifically, critical discourse analysis.
2.3. Discursive Perspective to Strategy

2.3.1. Organisational Discourse Analysis

After the linguistic turn in organisational studies, the role of language in shaping and constructing social phenomena has increasingly grown in popularity (Alvesson & Kärreman 2000), and it has been increasingly adopted by organisation and management scholars exploring the social construction of specific organisational ideas or practices (Vaara et al. 2004, 3). Language is no longer seen as simply mirroring social reality, but scholars have acknowledged its constructive aspects in creating social reality (Alvesson & Kärreman 2000). Drawing from the social constructivist ontology (see Burr 2003), discourse analysis provides a perspective for exploring how language and social interaction constitutes social reality.

Language is a social practice, implying it is both socially shaped and socially shaping. It is a mode of action on the one hand, and on the other, as a mode of action it is socially and historically situated and is in a dialectical relationship with other aspects of its social context. Language constitutes simultaneously social identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge and belief. (Fairclough 1995, 131.) Assuming language is socially shaped further implies that it is shaped in multiple dynamic and organic ways. It is shaped by discursive practices (‘discourses’) which are multiple, coexisting, contrasting and even competing within one institution. Secondly, language is shaped by the complex relationship between certain discursive events and conventions or norms of language use which underlie all instances of language use. (Fairclough 1995, 131-132.)

Yet, perspective to the nature of discourse has divided social scientists and organisation and management scholars (Vaara et al. 2004). Even though the competing perspectives have resulted in multiple approaches to discourse analysis in general and to organisational discourse analysis in particular (Alvesson & Kärreman 2000, Heracleous & Hendry 2000, Philips & Hardy 2000, Grant et al. 2004, Hardy et al. 2004), the research traditions behind the approaches are almost exclusively either interpretative or critical (Prichard et al. 2011, 46). The difference between these traditions relates to what kind of stand they take towards power: the interpretative tradition accepts existing power relations, while the critical tradition does not. The critical tradition does depend on research in the positivist and interpretative traditions, but it adds a corrective attention to power relations. (Ibid.)
Aside the interpretative and critical research traditions, discourse analysis can be viewed in five different ways as defined by Potter (2011). Firstly, the linguistic form of discourse analysis applies it to examine the ways sentences and utterances cohere into discourse. Secondly, the cognitive approach has focused on studying how mental scripts and schemas are used to make sense of narrative. The third form of discourse analysis derives from the linguistic tradition. The main attempts in this structural approach have been to provide systematic models of typical interaction patterns in specific situations. The poststructuralism and literary theory have in turn developed a very different approach, sometimes called ‘continental’ discourse analysis. The most prominent representative of this form is Michel Foucault, and the focus of analysis is how a discourse comes to constitute objects and subjects. Finally, the fifth discourse analytical tradition, developed in sociology, social psychology and communications and often called discursive psychology, is mostly characterised by its emphasis on anti-realism and constructionism. It emphasises the ways version of the worlds, society, events and inner psychological worlds are produced in discourse. Such emphasis leads to a concern for both the participants constructions and the researchers own constructions of the world. (Potter 2000, 4-5.)

The aforementioned approaches to discourse analysis also echo different epistemological assumptions concerning discourse. The strictest constructionists consider discourses as the basic elements creating social reality, while in the more realist epistemology discourses are seen to constitute only one part of the social reality (Vaara et al. 2004, 4). In this study I follow the critical realist perspective on discourse as defined by Fairclough (2005). According to him, organisations cannot be reduced to discourse but are associated with other social and material practices. Instead, discourse analysis ought to adapt a dualist epistemology that concerns both agency and structure (Fairclough 2005, 916). As Vaara et al. (2004) describe the approach, discourses are firmly related to both social practices and social contexts; thus, they are both socially conditioned as well as constitutive. Discourses are socially constitutive because they are (re)produced in specific social settings by certain social actors. On the other hand, they are socially constitutive due to their key role in social sensemaking activities. (Vaara et al. 2004, 4.)

In this study, the critical research tradition in organisational discourse analysis provides perspective to the phenomenon of participation, as well as great tools for analysing the discursive construction of power relations which centrally affect
participation opportunities in strategizing. To analyse power relations shaping the fine-grained construction of strategic issues and modes of participation in organisational discourse, I draw on both the linguistic (Fairclough 1995, 2003, 2005; Fairclough & Wodak 2011) and the poststructuralist (Foucault 2000) traditions. Further, it I adapt the definition of discourse from the most prominent critical discourse analyst Norman Fairclough (1995, 7), who has defined discourse as ‘use of language seen as a form of social practice’ and discourse analysis as ‘analysis of how texts work within sociocultural practice’. Moreover, I consider Fairclough’s definition of discourse similarly to Vaara et al. (2004, 4) as ‘specific ways of speaking and constructing social reality’. In the following chapters I will explore critical discourse analysis in depth, and further develop the critical perspective on strategy discourse.

2.3.2. Critical Perspective to Organisational Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (from here on CDA) is a combination of analysis of text, analysis of processes of text production, consumption and distribution, and sociocultural analysis of the discursive event as a whole (Fairclough 1995). It specifically examines the role of language in the construction and (re)production of power relationships, and thus is particularly suitable for studying participation in strategizing, as it is inevitably related to distribution of power between organisation members and the discussion participants. The goal in CDA is to elucidate naturalisations of ideological representations which are usually taken for granted as background knowledge of social interaction. These ideological naturalised propositions are pervasive in discourse, and they contribute to how people are positioned as social subjects. (Fairclough 1995.) Therefore, CDA provides suitable approach for exploring the different subject positions participant take and are given as they participate in strategy discussions; the subject positions are another reflection of the power relationships in the social reality of the organisation.

The framework in critical discourse analysis is three-dimensional: it links properties of texts, features of discourse practice and sociocultural practice (Fairclough 1995, 88). Moreover, CDA takes a dualistic view on discourse. According to Fairclough (1995), the theoretical assumptions behind critical discourse analysis emphasise social action and the related dual structures. Firstly, verbal interaction is a form of social interaction which—as any type of social interaction—presupposes a range of structures such as social structures, situational types, language codes and norms of language use.
Secondly, these structures are simultaneously necessary conditions for action as well as the products of action. (Fairclough 1995, 35.) This means that language is both affected by social conditions and reality, and (re)produces the very social reality shaping it. In the context of this study, this means strategy discourses do not only reflect social conditions and practices but also have power to (re)produce, construct and even transform the social reality.

Critical discourse analysis has been applied in studying organisations (Hardy 2001, Phillips and Hardy 2002, Fairclough 2005, Mumby & Stohl 2011) and in the research of strategy and strategizing in recent years (Vaara et al. 2004, 2010; Laine & Vaara 2007; Phillips et al. 2008; Mantere & Vaara 2008). The question of power and the distribution of power within an organisation are central in all of the studies. Power of strategy discourse and participation may be in the discursive practices. Vaara et al. (2004) studied the micro-processes and practices making up strategies, and found five types of discursive practices characterizing strategies in airline alliances. The discursive practices were problematisation of traditional strategies; rationalisation, objectification and factualisation of alliance benefits; fixation of ambiguous independence concerns; reframing of cooperation problems as ‘implementation’ issues; and naturalisation of alliance strategies. (Vaara et al. 2004.)

The strategy texts have also a significant power potential within them. Vaara et al. (2010) immersed in the power within strategy in their analysis of the force potential of strategy texts. They explicate five features distinctive to strategic plans: self-authorization, special terminology, discursive innovation, forced consensus and deonticity. According to them, the features have significant effect on strategy’s textual agency, performative effects, impact on power relations and ideological implications. (Vaara et al. 2010.) Though the study concerned formal strategy documents, the notions are interesting also in the context of this study, since strategy discussion even in naturally occurring talk is likely to be shaped by the company’s formal strategy documents. The power implications of strategy discourses have also been studied from the point of view of subjects and agency. Laine and Vaara (2007) specifically explored the struggles over subjectivity by examining discourse mobilisation and ways of resistance, and Mantere and Vaara (2008) explained struggles in participation with the different power implications included in the subjects positions assigned to organisation members.
In organizational contexts, discourses have ontological power as they construct concepts, objects and subject positions (Hardy & Phillips 2004). According to Laine & Vaara (2007, 35), concepts are used to give meaning to specific phenomena such as strategy in this case. The concepts further create the vocabulary utilised to make sense of the phenomena (Mantere & Vaara 2008, 343). The objects in turn are created through the legitimisation and naturalisation of specific ideas such the nature of strategy work (Laine & Vaara 2007, 35.) Mantere and Vaara (2008, 343) exemplify this in strategy context: generic strategy terms such as visions, mission and specific top-down or bottom-up approaches are on the one hand concepts, but on the other hand naturalised objects in contemporary organisations. Strategy discourse in specific has legitimised and naturalised a male-dominated, managerialist and instrumentalist conceptions (Knights & Morgan 1991).

Finally, discourses also construct subject positions which define the ‘structure of rights’, e.g. what social actors are expected, allowed or restricted to do in a specific social and discursive space (Mantere & Vaara 2008; Laine & Vaara 2007; see also Davies & Harré 1990). As Mantere and Vaara (2008, 343) argue, subject positions are central in understanding organisational actors’ agencies and identities in strategy processes, because through them we can understand how a specific actor is supposed to or can participate in strategizing. Vaara and Laine (2007, 35) also note that most strategy discourses give voice primarily to top management and simultaneously silence other, competing discourses; thus, some discourses promote participation more than others.

Understanding the subject positions created in strategy discourses is therefore crucial to understanding the how organisation members take part in strategy discussions. The complex phenomenon of establishing, taking and giving subject positions in discourse can be explored analysing the aforementioned ‘structure of rights’ (Davies & Harré 1999) within which interactional acts are done. The study of such ‘local moral orders as ever-shifting patterns of mutual and contestable rights and obligations of speaking and acting’ is accumulated in what Harré and Langenhove (1999) call positioning theory. Through the analysis of positioning and the related power relationships, this theory provides great tools for analysing how organisational members participate in strategy discourses and what are their actual possibilities to participate. Next, I will present the positioning theory and discuss its implications for this study.
2.4. Positioning in Strategy Discourse

Positioning refers to the act of giving and taking subject positions in discussions; as mentioned, the structure of rights related to these positions centrally impacts participation possibilities. Positioning theory studies how this interactional structure of rights or ‘systems of rights’ (see Davies & Harré 1990) is manifested in discourse, and how these rights and obligations on the other hand shape discourse and social interaction. Social scientists and psychology scholars have used the word ‘position’ in varying ways. In this study I adopt the definition of Harré and Langenhove (1999a, 1), who emphasise the complex, relational and situational nature of the concept and define position as ‘a complex cluster of generic personal attributes, structured in various ways, which impinges on the possibilities of interpersonal, intergroup and even intrapersonal action through some assignments of such rights, duties and obligations to an individual as are sustained by the cluster’. In the context of strategy discourse this means that if someone if positioned as incompetent in strategizing, they will not be entitled the right to participate in strategy discussion. Drawing on Mantere and Vaara’s (2008) classification of strategy discourses impeding and promoting participation, for example in the participation-impeding technologisation discourse only top management and certain specialists are positioned to master the complex strategy technology while other organisation members are positioned as incompetent in strategy technology and therefore denied the right to participate in strategizing.

Positioning provides a dynamic alternative to the more static concept of role. Positioning is discursive construction of personal stories which make actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social act, and within the personal stories discussion participants have specific locations i.e. positions. In essence, a position is a metaphorical concept where a person’s moral and personal attributes as a speaker are collected. A position can be specified by referring to how other discussants perceive the speaker’s contributions with respect to different polarities of character. (Langenhove & Harré 1999.) For example, if a person positioned as powerful takes part in a strategy discussion and demands certain action from others, the address is hearable as a direct order. However, if the person demanding action is positioned as powerless, the same address is likely to be perceived as a desperate attempt to cause action. Thus, as Langenhove and Harré argue (1999, 17), the social force of an action and the positions of the actor and other interactors mutually determinate each other.
Positions are further linked to storylines that exist in every conversation. Langenhove and Harré (1999) provide an illustrative example: someone is seen as acting like a teacher in the way her talk and actions take a familiar form of classroom instruction. When living out a specific pedagogical storyline in her speech and actions, she also adopts a certain position that involves for example specific obligations to the students. Simultaneously, the talk and action becomes relatively determinate as social acts of instruction, correction, congratulation and other acts related to the lived storyline and the adopted position. (Langenhove & Harré 1999, 17.)

When engaging in a specific storyline, cultural stereotypes such as mother/son, teacher/student or powerful/powerless may be called on as a resource. However, participants may understand the stereotypes differently. By adopting a storyline incorporating a specific interpretation of these cultural stereotypes, the discussant not only positions herself but also others since she invites them to conform to her interpretation of the cultural stereotypes. If the others wish to continue the discussion in such a way it contributes to the laid storyline, they have no other option but to confirm. Yet, sometimes the others do not want or cannot confirm and contribute to the storyline, and thus end up resisting the proposed positionings. (Davies & Langenhove 1999, 39-40.) Narratives are collaboratively unfolded in conversations and they draw on shared knowledge on social structures and the roles recognisably allocated within the structures (ibid., 42). Therefore, if discussants do not share the same knowledge or do not interpret the cultural stereotypes called on in the same way, they end up creating competing storylines, narratives and even positionings for each other. In such a case, discussants need to defend their reading of the situation by drawing on discursive resources available to them.

Furthermore, power is distributed through positioning and is as relational as the positions (Harré & Langenhove 1999a). For example, the strategy technology experts are positioned as powerful due to their expertise, and therefore they are accorded the right to legitimately issue orders and demand obedience in the people engaged in the same section of life where the position is acknowledged, in this case strategy-related matters in the specific organisation. Yet, these official strategists may have completely different position in the field of R&D where they might be positioned oppositely as completely ignorant and lack power in any R&D related matters. Positions are relational also in the sense that if someone if positioned powerful others must be positioned a powerless (ibid.). Again, drawing on Mantere and Vaara (2008), this
A relational aspect is likely to be found even in the self-actualisation discourse that promotes equal participation in the organisation. When self-actualisation is defined as ‘a discourse that focuses attention on the ability of people as individuals to outline and define objectives for themselves in strategy work’ (Mantere & Vaara 2008, 351), some people are likely to present themselves as more competent than others, and some of them are also granted the higher competency position. Thus, even within the most equal and participation-promoting discourse there will be diversity in possibilities of participation. This notion proves the great potential in the positioning theory to truly explore the power relationships in the fine-grained symbolically mediated interaction between people and especially in phenomena centred in power, such as strategy.

Positioning is thus the assignment of fluid ‘roles’ to discussants in the discursive construction of their personal stories which make actions intelligible and relatively determining as social acts. The concept position can be compacted into how the rights to conduct certain acts are distributed differently between varying positions. Moreover, the same utterance will have different social meanings depending on the positions from which it is uttered, such as in the aforementioned case of power position. The utterances, from which a conversation is made up of, unfold in a storyline which is relatively socially determined such as the example of classroom instruction. Thus, Langenhove & Harré (1999) argue that the structure of conversation is tri-polar consisting of positions, storylines and relatively determinate speech acts (see figure 1 below). (Langenhove & Harré 1999, 17-18.)

![The positioning triad](image-url)

*Figure 1  The positioning triad (Langenhove & Harré 1999).*

There are three main ways of classifying positioning acts. Firstly, one dimension is the question whether individuals are positioned by other individuals or collectives by collectives. On the second dimension, what matters is whether an individual or a
collective positions themselves or whether the one positioned and positioning is some other. Thirdly, positioning can be symmetrical or asymmetrical, meaning each one can position the other or when positioning one the other is positioned as well. (Harré & Langenhove 1999b, 6.)

Positioning as a discursive practice occurs in different modes: first and second order positioning; performative and accountive positioning; moral and personal positioning; self and other positioning; and tacit and intentional positioning. In first order positioning, persons locate themselves and others within an essentially moral space by drawing from multiple storylines and categories. First order positioning is usually tacit: people usually position themselves unconsciously. Positioning becomes second order positioning when the positions given in the first order positioning are contested and renegotiated. (Langenhove & Harré 1999, 20-21.)

Performative positioning in turn refers to the immediate perlocutionary effects of prior positioning acts. If the first order positions are contested, however, there are two possible ways for that: the positionings can be questioned within the same conversation or within another conversation about the first conversation. They are forms of accountive positioning since they involve talk about talk. When accountive positioning happens outside of the initial discussion, it becomes an act of third order positioning which may involve also other persons than the ones taking part in the initial discussion. Second and third order positionings are always intentional. (Langenhove & Harré 1999, 20-21.)

Moreover, positioning by reference to people’s roles within certain moral order or to some institutional aspect of social life is moral positioning. When it is not sufficient to refer to these aspects in order to make actions intelligible and to understand the positions people take, a person may refer to their individual attributes and particularities; this is an act of personal positioning. Finally, the mode of self and other positioning refers to the notion that participants always position themselves and other simultaneously in a positioning act: when someone positions themselves in self-positioning, they also imply a position for the person to whom it is addressed as other-positioning. (Langenhove & Harré 1999, 21-22.)

These analytical distinctions between the modes of positioning further helps to distinguish three typical types of positioning talk. Firstly, there are discursive practices where discussants position themselves or others or become positioned by them. Such
talk includes first order positioning which is mostly tacit, and takes place in an evolving storyline. Secondly, there are discursive practices where the former type of positioning acts is raised as topic. Also this type of positioning occurs within an on-going storyline, yet it simultaneously concerns the same storyline. Thirdly, there are discursive practices where a first or second order positioning taking place in another discursive practice is the topic of the current discursive practice. This type of positioning talk occurs when a discussant interprets their interlocutor’s saying. (Langenhove & Harré 1999, 22-23.)

To conclude, the positioning theory draws from social, psychological and management research on subject positions, narratives and speech acts. Such theoretical combination has not been applied to strategy research before. Due to the aforementioned focus on fine-grained power relationships and effects in discourse, the positioning theory holds great promise to exploring participation issues in strategy discussions. The positioning theory is applied in this study to examine both the finely detailed discursive practices constructing strategy discussions as well as the subtle power relations affecting how organisational members take part in these discussions. The theory, as well as this study, will provide a detailed, yet comprehensive picture of these issues due to the tripartite nature of the approach. Yet, the components of positioning need to be further operationalized for the purposes of analysis. Here, I draw from subject position, narrative and speech act theories.

2.4.1. Narratives

Positionings unfold in discussion within a shared storyline (Harré & Langenhove 1999a), and the concept of narrative can be used to analyse the storylines. Like strategy, narrative is a term commonly used in both popular culture and social research, and it is also as diversely understood from biographical patterns to diversity of theoretical orientations (Squire et al. 2008). Even within qualitative studies, there are multiple uses for the term narrative. Firstly, narrative can refer to any type of prosaic discourse meaning text that consists of full sentences which are linked into a coherent and integrated statement. However, this meaning of narrative has been extended to refer to all data in the form of natural discourse or speech. Narratives are in essence forms of discourse where events are configured into plot with temporal unity (Polkinghorne 1995). In this study, I adopt a similar perspective to Davies and Harré (1999), where narrative refers to the braided development of several storylines incorporated in any
discussion, since it is important to acknowledge that there may be multiple storylines within one discussion.

Despite the variety of definitions, Vaara (2002) argues there are four conjunctive aspects in all of them. Firstly, narratives are interpretations of sequential events, which further implies that there is a plot giving a meaningful causal structure to the sequential events. It should be noted, though, that this structure is not an intrinsic attribute of the plot but imposed by the author. The author creates the causal interpretation; recipients then judge the plausibility of this interpretation. (Vaara 2002, 215-216.) The second unifying aspect derives from the aforementioned notion that author imposes the plot on the events. According to Vaara (2002), narratives always assume the intentionality of human action. Therefore, narrative analyses have often studied the subject positions in stories (Vaara 2002, 216), which is also the aim of this study. Furthermore, narratives are built on a finite number of different types of discourses which construct the subject positions and attach identities to the actors. This leads to the fourth aspects: narratives and identity-building are inseparably intertwined. (ibid.)

2.4.2. Subject Positions

A position is a metaphorical concept referring to a person’s moral and personal attributes as a speaker (Langenhove & Harré 1999, 17). Subject positions define the ‘structure of rights’, e.g. what social actors are expected, allowed or restricted to do in a specific social and discursive space; in organisational settings, subject positions are constructed in discourse (Mantere & Vaara 2008, Laine & Vaara 2007, see also Davies & Harré 1999).

As Hazen (1993, 16) highlights, organisations are always polyphonic: each organisation member has her unique voice, reflecting her experiences and perceptions, and when people are organised together to work on a common goal none of them could achieve alone, there are at least as many voices as there are participants. Most strategy discourses, however, give voice primarily to top management, while silencing other voices in the organisation (Laine & Vaara 2007). Furthermore, in strategic plans and other texts, strategy narratives are traditionally told from a singular external perspective and the author excludes herself from the storyline. This creates a sense of objective neutrality, and an illusion of a rational, unbiased point of view. Such narrator position induces to forget the plurality of voices, and that strategic information is
drawn and selected from a variety of sources — not an objective single truth. (Barry & Elmes 1997, 436-437.)

Discussants draw on different discursive resources when they build their subject positions. They rely on these resources especially in case they need to justify their position as valid participants whose arguments are legitimate. Discursive resources are thus used in constituting a subject position. Kuhn (2009) illustrates this in his study of how corporate lawyers draw on a variety of discursive resources when building their subject position in different discourses circulating corporate legal organisations. When discussant makes an argument to defend her behaviour, she is required to produce an account, i.e. a justification for conduct that portrays action as meaningful and intelligible in a way that others can understand it and explains untoward behaviour; the intent is to bridge the gap between action and expectation, and neutralise the action or its consequences (Scott & Lyman 1968). According to Kuhn (2009, 684), such accounts can also be understood as discursive resources. They are concepts, expressions or other linguistic devices that are drawn from practices and texts. Discursive resources not only explain action but also provide horizon for future practices. (Fairclough 1992.) The discursive resources participants draw on provide information about their subject positionings as well as reflections on general discursive frames surrounding them (Kuhn 2009, 685). Differences in discursive resources participants draw upon reflects their position and thus affects also how they participate in building the storyline they are engaged in.

2.4.3. **Speech Acts**

A discussion unfolds collaboratively, through the joint action of all participants as they make their own and other participants’ actions socially determinate in the shared storyline. The shared storyline becomes socially determinate through speech act. As Davies and Harré (1999) argue, the speech-actions become determinate speech-acts only if the participants perceive and accept them as such. This perspective differs from Searle’s (1979) version of Austin’s (1961) speech-act theory, who argues that the type of a speech-act is to be defined by the social intentions of the speaker. (Davies & Harré 1999, 34.) Nevertheless, I consider Searle’s (1979) classification of speech acts useful for analysing what discussants do with language, since to understand speech acts in the sense Davies and Harré (1999) interpret them, we need to first examine the speech
actions produced in the unfolding of a discussion’s storyline. For the sake of simplicity, I will call these speech actions speech acts from here on.

Searle’s speech acts, as well as the speech acts and actions of interest to Davies & Harré (1999) in the positioning theory, are illocutionary in nature. The illocutionary force of an utterance refers to what is achieved in saying something (Langenhove & Harré 1999, 17), for example in saying ‘well done’ a teacher achieves congratulating. Searle (1979, as cited in Palmer et al. 2004) defines six illocutionary speech acts: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives (presented in table 1). Assertives commit the speaker to statement and propositions which can be assessed as true or false. Directives call up the recipient to do something, and commissives in turn commit the speaker to a certain course of action. Expressives express a psychological position related to a state of affairs, such the compliments from the teacher. Finally, declaratives perform an act in the very utterance they are included in. (ibid.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech Act</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Associated Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assertives</td>
<td>Statements that can be verified as true or false</td>
<td>Assert, claim, affirm, assure, inform, predict, report, suggest, insist, hypothesize, swear, admit, confess, blame, praise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directives</td>
<td>Statements that call upon the reader to do something</td>
<td>Direct, request, ask, urge, demand, command, forbid, suggest, insist, recommend, implore, beg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissives</td>
<td>Statements that commit to a course of action</td>
<td>Promise, vow, pledge, swear, consent, refuse, assure, guarantee, contract, bet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressives</td>
<td>Statements that express a psychological position about a state of affairs</td>
<td>Apologize, thank, condole, congratulate, complain, protest, compliment, praise, welcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaratives</td>
<td>Statements that, through their utterance, perform an act</td>
<td>Fire, pronounce, declare, appoint, confirm, endorse, renounce, denounce, name, call, repudiate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Speech acts according to Searle (1979) and Searle & Vanderveken (1985) (adapted from Palmer et al. 2004).

In organisational change context, Ford and Ford (1995) discovered that the speech acts are utilised differently during different phases of change. In initiative change conversations managers draw on assertives, directives, commissives and declarative in order to make all organisational members understand that it is necessary of them to engage in the change. Only assertives and expressives are used in conversations for
understanding, where ideas about needed actions are generated. In performance conversations mainly directives and commissives are used to identify what the change implementation will look like when well conducted. Lastly, the closure conversations signal the completion of change through the use of assertives, expressives and declaratives. (Ford & Ford 1995.) The varying use of speech may thus indicate changes in the social reality of the discussion participants, and they can also be utilised to drive a particular change.

2.4.4. **Empirical Research Framework**

To conclude the literature review, I present here my empirical research framework (figure 2) that I shall apply in the following discourse and narrative analyses of my data. The empirical setting is based on the aforementioned theoretical frame of positioning. I operationalize the elements of positioning theory by drawing from theories that also constitute the positioning theory: subject position theory, speech act theory and narrative theory. As subject positions are shaped by discursive resources available in specific positions, I include this element in the position dimension. In the following chapters I discuss methodologies applied in analysing this framework in my empirical data.

![Figure 2](image-url)  
**Figure 2** Empirical research framework. Conversation triad (adapted from Harré & Langenhove 1999) within the theoretical premises of positioning theory.
3  METHOD AND DATA

The main interest in this study is to understand social reality, and specifically how the reality is socially constituted and (re)created in discourse. Furthermore, the object is to illustrate the implicit yet often unnoticed power relationships immanent in language and social reality, and how they shape organisational discourse and further the social reality itself. This enables to illustrate strategy participation and the constructions affecting participation possibilities. Therefore, this study follows the principles of qualitative research (Silverman 2001), and draws from theoretical and methodological framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough 1995, 2001) as well as from narrative inquiry (see Polkinghorne 1995) in particular.

3.1. Critical Discourse Analysis as Methodological Framework

CDA is a discourse analytic methodology which specifically examines the role of language in the construction of power relationships and reproduction of domination (Vaara et al. 2010), and therefore it is especially suitable approach for this study. According to Vaara et al. (2010), the aim is to expose the social, political and economic assumptions underlying in discourses and texts. CDA differs from other critical discursive analyses with similar aims by its textual orientation: interpretations of discourse should be based on the text’s lexical and grammatical choices, located and reflected in the text’s pragmatic context (ibid.). This is the critical realist perspective of CDA, according to which organisations cannot be reduced to discourse. Instead, other social and material practices ought to be considered as well. The dualist epistemology of CDA derives from this notion. Thus, both agency and structure should be included in analysis. (Fairclough 2005.)

Discourse analysis is inductive in nature: it focuses on text and talk as social practices in their own right and does not set a preformulated hypothesis. As in conversation analysis, any smallest detail in talk or text is considered potentially relevant for social interaction. (Potter 2011, 20.) Also Fairclough (1995) emphasises that CDA is not to be taken as a method for particular level of analysis. It requires attention to multiple aspects of text and language, and the working assumption is that any level may be relevant. (Fairclough 1995, 7.) Another reason for the requirement for detailed textual analysis is the political or ideological content of discourses. Discourses are connected to these ideologies through the assumptions embedded in texts. (Vaara et al. 2010.) The
embedded assumptions in turn are triggered by the text’s linguistic features (Fairclough 2003), and thus a close textual analysis is required to reveal the embedded political or ideological content. Despite the essentiality of textual analysis, CDA is not merely linguistic analysis of texts. The focuses of CDA ‘oscillates’ between specific text and the ‘order of discourse’, i.e. language’s relatively enduring social structuring that is one part of the relatively enduring structuring and networking of social practices. These two focuses are connected through the way texts are analysed: texts are not analysed only linguistically, but an ‘interdiscursive analysis’ is included to see texts in terms of the different discourses, genres and styles they draw from and articulate together with. (Fairclough 2003, 3.)

Furthermore, CDA requires more information on the analysed phenomena than the text can provide (Vaara et al. 2010). According to Fairclough (1995), discourses ought to be analysed simultaneously on three levels: textual, discursive practices and social practices. The textual level refers to micro-level textual elements, such as phonology, grammar and lexical choices. (Fairclough 1995.) For a researcher, this level implies close analysis of textual structures (Vaara et al. 2010). The discursive practices are processes of text production, distribution and consumption (Fairclough 1995), and analysing them implies analysing what people do with texts (Vaara et al. 2010). The third level entails analysis of discursive events as sociocultural practice (Fairclough 1995). It provides the broader situational and institutional context to analysis; on this level the researcher explores how texts and discourses are used in the situational and institutional contexts they both index and construct (Vaara et al. 2010). For this study the three-dimensional analysis implies that I examine both the linguistic features in strategy discussion participants’ addresses, e.g. which words they use to describe a particular strategic plan and the discursive practices used in formulating the address, such as which speech acts they conduct, as well as the organisational context of discussion.

Though CDA provides a useful methodological framework in regards to my aim to make implicit power relations shaping the acts of positioning visible, I need also a method to examine the narrative nature of positioning. By analysing how the braided storylines unfold through positions and speech acts, I will be able to reach also the underlying discursive structures and power relationship. As positioning takes place within the evolvement of storylines, I need a method to analyse the diachronic nature of the
phenomenon. Therefore, I will specifically apply methods narrative inquiry in analysing the strategy discussions.

3.2. Narrative Analysis as Research Method

In essence, narrative can be defined as a form of discourse where events are configured into plot with temporal unity (Polkinghorne 1995). Barry and Elmes (1997) add the layer of meaning into their definition, which I find particularly suitable for this study: ‘narrative and story refer to the thematic, sequenced accounts that convey meaning from implied author to implied reader’. This definition emphasises the hermeneutic, parts-to-whole focus of narrative analysis. Therefore, subjective interpretations and different readings are the norm of narrative analysis; they depend on all the attributes of the interpreter. (Barry & Elmes 1997, 431.)

As Barry and Elmes (1997) note, narrative method is particularly beneficial for studying the diversity and complexity of strategy discourse, since it emphasises the simultaneous presence of multiple interlinked realities the participant bring into the discussion. Moreover, narrativity can be applied to both strategies and strategizing, as it encompasses both ‘the telling’ and ‘the told’. Formalised strategies can be studied as artefacts which rhetoric, tropes, metaphors and sequencing can be identified, compared evaluated. On the other hand, strategizing can be examined as narrative process: stories about directionality are appropriated, championed, defended and discounted. (Barry & Elmes 1997, 432.) In this study, I examine the strategizing aspect; yet, I do not focus on how stories about strategies are told, but how discussants participate in building the stories.

There are four epistemological assumptions in doing narrative analysis, as listed by Pinnegar and Daynes (2007). First assumption relates to reliability, which is founded on the realist conception that the objects of study have an independent existence without intrinsic meaning. When social facts are treated similarly, researcher can measure and number them with the assumption they create a ‘number trail’ allowing the measurement of feeling and thinking to be accurate, consistent and free of metaphors. Narrative inquiry, on the contrary, acknowledges that all research is based on language and embraces the metaphoric quality of language. Objectivity refers to the way relationship between researcher and her object is usually viewed in science: researcher and object are separate from and not connected to each other. This position denies the fact that researcher chooses her object of study and is connected to it in a
non-neutral way through her interest and insights. Narrative inquiry differs from this ‘scientific’ objectivity by understanding social scientific analysis is relational process involving curiosity, passion and change. (Pinnegar & Daynes 2007, 29.)

Thirdly, narrative analysis dismisses the positivistic assumption of generalizability, since it does not acknowledge the value of local and particular. Instead, narrative inquire understands that understanding the complexity of the individual, local and particular provides a more solid basis for human interaction. Narrative inquiry also turns away from another positivist conception – validity. Validity, relying on statistics, denies the different ways of knowing and questioning of what counts as knowledge, and only insist there can be a single kind of truth. Narrative analysts on the other hand desire more to understand than to control and predict. (Pinnegar & Daynes 2007, 30.)

There are also several different epistemological assumptions about narratives in organisational studies. As stated above regarding organisational discourse in general, I follow the critical realist perspective on discourse as defined by Fairclough (2005), according to which organisations cannot be reduced to discourse but are associated with other social and material practices. Therefore, I adopted the dualist epistemology that concerns both agency and structure (Fairclough 2005). In the same way narrative can be seen either as means for representing organisational change, or radically constructivist being just a product of social interaction in particular settings (Vaara 2002, 216). I follow the similar epistemology concerning narratives, and view them as Vaara (ibid.) describes ‘an important epistemological layer as such’, ‘but also recognize the linkages with particular historical events’.

The ‘small story’ approach of narrative analysis best suits with my stated epistemological assumptions, as well as for my aim of studying the discursive practices of positioning in strategy discussion. Phoenix (2008) defines the focus of small stories to be on how narratives are performed and accomplish particular tasks, in contrast to ‘big stories’ of biographical nature. Analysis on the small stories enables researcher to explore both how people build their narratives and the performative work done by narratives. The perspective can provide insights into the troubled subject positions that discussants negotiate as they tell their stories, and through this further insights into the discussants understanding of current consensus about what is acceptable action in their local and cultural context. (Phoenix 2008, 65.) Therefore, the approach is very suitable for analysing possibilities to participate in strategizing.
The central element in narrative method is analysis of key themes organising the way a story is told. The themes cluster around recurring content in stories, and thus identifying repeated subject matter is a good means of identifying key themes. The key themes may but do not have to be stories of events. Specifically in the small story emphasis, the analysis of key themes does not emphasise structural search for narratives-as-events. Moreover, it overcomes the difficulty of the fact that not all research participants produce narratives of events and that a narrative of event does more than describe the event. The focus of small story analysis is instead on sense-making processes: accounts that construct worldviews, characters or events in a way illuminating why specific accounts are produced in a specific way. (Pheonix 2008, 68.)

Moreover, I apply a structural method of recognisable story boundaries in finding storylines in the strategy discussion. Stories can be found and analysed by focusing on the beginning, which is the orientation of who, when, what and where, and the end, which is a coda bringing the story to a close. In between the beginning and end there are evaluations of why a story is told, an abstract summarising the story and chronological events. (Hollingsworth & Dybdal 2007, 154.) There is always someone or some ones telling a story – a narrator who speaks from a particular point of view with her unique voice. Identifying the stories enables to identify also these voices, operationalized as subject positions, and analysing how they take part in unfolding the story, i.e. the speech acts they engage in. Next, I present how I applied this in my data about the case of Nokia’s strategic transformation. I begin by presenting the context of the study, and then proceed to discussing data production and analysis processes.

3.3. The Case: Nokia’s Strategic Transformation

Nokia is a telecommunications company with a history of transformations. It evolved from a small riverside paper mill into a global corporation over the past 150 years. During the years Nokia has engaged in several different industrial trades: along with making paper and mobile phones, Nokia has produced rubber, cable and consumer electronics, and it is also involved in the telecommunications infrastructure business through Nokia Siemens Networks, a joint venture with Siemens. Since 1991, Nokia has focused only on producing and developing telecommunications devices and services. Currently, the company operates globally with net revenue of 30.2 billion euros, and organisationally it is divided into Smart Devices, Mobile Phones, Location & Commerce and Nokia Siemens. (see Nokia 2013.)
In this study Nokia’s strategic transformation does not include all the changes and shifts in business focus along the company’s history. Instead, the study focuses on the latest strategic transformation started in 2010. At that time, Nokia’s decade-long domination of the mobile phone industry was undercut by competitors focusing on the all-important smartphone market. This transformation is described as ‘the most radical strategy change’ in the company’s mobile phone era (Hill 2011). The transformation started at full stretch in September 2010 when Stephen Elop was appointed as the company’s new CEO, shortly after the dismissal of former CEO Olli-Pekka Kallasvuo.

Early February 2011 was the first landmark of the transformation. CEO Elop issued the ‘burning platform’ memo where he explains bluntly the deepness of Nokia’s current predicament and why the company’s personnel have to make a terrifying jump to the unknown in order to save themselves from doom. It became instantly famous both inside and outside the company. The burning platform was a metaphor for Nokia’s own operating systems, and the jump referred to an urgent need for a change in strategy.

The change was not awaited long. The next landmark in Nokia’s transformation was a strategic partnership with Microsoft, announced also in February 2011. The aim in the partnership was to strengthen Nokia’s position in the smartphone market by establishing Windows as a third ecosystem to rival iOS and Android (Nokia 2013). However, the partnership also meant Windows ecosystem would supersede Nokia’s own, self-developed operating systems Symbian and Meego. Yet, at the time of these announcements critics argued the rescue attempts will not succeed: Nokia had already missed the smartphone revolution due to poor leadership, complacency and over-consensual culture, they claimed (Hill 2011).

Organisationally, a significant change reflecting Nokia’s strategic transformation was the restructuring of Devices & Services business unit. In fall 2011 Nokia continued the organisational reformation by dismissing 6800 people in R&D and later additional 3500 people in production. Further reductions were done in early spring 2012 in manufacturing and in January 2013 in IT, production and logistics.

To form a full picture of the context strategy discussions take place in, it is important to also explore Nokia’s official strategy statements. The company’s current mission is ‘Connecting People’, and the goal ‘to build great mobile products that enable billions of people worldwide to enjoy more of what life has to offer’. To achieve the mission, Nokia formed the aforementioned strategic partnership with Microsoft, with the intent to
build a competitive global ecosystem that can triumph iOS and Android. In addition, Nokia intends to strengthen its position in the growth market to connect ‘the next billion’ to internet and application experiences. The strategy is supported by changes in leadership, operational structure and approach. The aim of these organisational and operational changes is to expedite decision-making and improve time to market of products and innovations. The key elements of Nokia’s strategy are to build a new winning mobile ecosystem in partnership with Microsoft; to bring the next billion online in developing growth markets; to invest in next-generation disruptive technologies; and to increase our focus on speed, results and accountability. (see Nokia 2013.)

To examine strategy discussion and participation in strategizing on a company level, an open discussion forum providing equal opportunities of participation is needed as basis for the research. In a global corporation where employees are located in the different corners of the world, thousands of kilometres apart and in varying time zones, this inevitably implies to a virtual forum where they can meet regardless of time and place. In addition, the discussion forum has to be open for all employees despite their status in the organisational hierarchy. Finally, the discussion forum should be actively used; in another case it is not possible to argue the results would hold true on the whole company’s level. In the case of Nokia, the internal social media discussion forum SocialCast qualifies well from all these aspects.

Nokia’s internal discussion forum SocialCast was introduced in 2007 but started to gain more popularity from 2010 on, at the same the strategic transformation began. The forum grew more and more popular over the years, and currently there are almost 2000 discussion groups with approximately 10 000 new posts per month. Each of the discussion groups have a specific discussion topic, ranging from buy-and-sell to corporate strategy. Most SocialCast discussion groups are open to every Nokia employee but some of them require invitation to be able to participate in discussion. In this study, only open discussion groups were included in the data. In SocialCast discussants are identified automatically, and they post comments using their own name. They can start a new discussion, comment on other’s posts in existing discussion threads, post links and surveys, share a discussion to other groups or with individuals, and express their support for other’s posts by liking them.

Strategy-related discussions in SocialCast revolved around issues central to Nokia’s business: operating systems, devises and services. Strategy in a strict sense was not
widely discussed as such even within strategy discussions; also organisational change related to strategy was not commonly discussed separately. Instead, strategy discussion themes were strongly connected to more technical or practical topics. Strategy was approached through them, from their point of view and discussed in relation to them. Specific topics within the discussion themes were further divided between practical and abstract.

The most discussed key themes was services, which involves both Nokia’s service offerings and the company’s Services unit. The services offerings included topics such as navigation and music services, as well as the transfer from Ovi to Nokia brand. Within the services theme discussants proposed improvement ideas for particular services and shared their own experiences as user of Nokia’s services. In addition, they discussed competition regarding services: discussants made comparisons to Nokia’s competitors’ services or pondered how Nokia could better compete in the market, mainly with Apple, Google and Samsung. In relation to the organisational Services unit, discussants tried to make sense of organisational changes and discussed, often even criticised other issues related to organisational structures. Furthermore, they changed views and understandings of services strategies, which usually had an effect on the Services unit as well.

Another common discussion theme was devices, which again refers both to telecommunications devices and the Devices organisation unit. Similarly, discussants changed their own user experiences and discussed user experience in general, and proposed improvement ideas to devices based on these accounts. Additionally, they suggested improvements to the whole devices portfolio strategy, i.e. which devices Nokia should produce, and Devices organisational strategy; such suggestions often touched upon the corporate strategy as well, since telecommunications devices are Nokia’s key product. In addition, partnerships and acquisitions were occasional topics under the devices theme. Discussants also compared devices to competitors’ devices and shared their ideas about market competition tactics.

The third significant theme was ecosystems and operating systems; due to the ‘war of ecosystems’ this was in fact quite an anticipated theme to arise. The topics discussed within this theme were similar to devices. Firstly, part of the topics concerned practical issues: user experience in personally and generally, improvement ideas and comparisons to competing ecosystems or operating systems. Second part of the topics related more to the abstract level of strategy, such as analyses of Nokia’s current market
situation in regards to ecosystems, propositions for ecosystem strategy and competition.

Finally, although not as popular as the aforementioned themes, strategy in general and the related organisational change comprised the last key discussion theme. Here, strategy in general represented the abstract, strategic part and organisational change discussions illustrated the more practical side of the issue. The strategy theme included topics where discussants reflected on forthcoming and recent top management strategy announcements, such as the ‘Burning Platform’ memo, new Services unit and the major strategy sharing session in April 2011; in these discussions participants mainly echoed and made sense of the announcements, and shared opinions and propositions. In addition, discussions covered geography-based strategy and competition tactics, as well as discussions about mergers and acquisitions and partnerships, and how they affected Nokia. The organisational change theme’s topics entailed criticism of current organizational structure (‘silos’), especially between Services and Devices units. Discussants also made sense of recent organisational changes and strategy implementation, or company representatives provided information about the strategy-related organizational changes. Leadership changes and practices in Nokia were as well a topic of discussion, though in a smaller extent.

There was only a slight difference between the discussion groups regarding the themes; Nokia Strategy and HR Strategy Sharing discussions focused somewhat more on strategy content, while strategy discussions in Sauna group included broader varieties of themes and topics. Moreover, in HR Strategy Sharing group themes and topics mainly involved geographical strategy, strategy in general and market competition. Yet, I want to highlight that most of the discussions in every group related strongly to services, devices or operating systems in some aspect. There were only a few posts discussing only abstractive corporate strategy, though such posts were still more common in Nokia Strategy than in the Sauna discussion group. An example of such a post would be corporate representative sharing Nokia’s new mission statement with the group. In Nokia Strategy discussion group, the most common theme was strategy in general in recent top management strategy announcements. Some of these discussions were related to services, devices and operating systems depending on the content of the strategy announcement. Nevertheless, none of themes and topics formed clearly distinguishable separate discussions in practice but were highly intertwined.
3.4. Data Production Process

This study is part of a collaborative research programme ‘Sustainable Transformation’ which is a joint endeavour between Nokia and Aalto University School of Science. Within the programme Nokia’s strategic transformation is examined from different complementing point of views, such as impacts to society, individuals and leadership. The programme is divided into four subprojects, each of which focuses on a different aspect of the transformation. This study contributes to a sub-study aiming to illustrate how transformation unfolds in corporate discussions in internal social media.

The research data consists of discussions in the internal social media discussion forum SocialCast during the period of the strategic transformation started in 2010. Discussion in social media provides a valid data source also regarding critical discourse analysis. The discussion can be viewed as naturally occurring talk since it is produced without the researcher’s intervention. Naturally occurring talk is considered a valuable data form in discourse analytical research: it illustrates the authentic situations of constructing the social world (Silverman 2001). On the other hand, social media is a valuable source of data because it allows the polyphony of organisational voices to be heard (Phillips & Hardy 2002), which is not possible to attain if the data consists for example of official communications materials or board room observation commonly used in previous strategy research. As Boje (1995) emphasises, it is important to study everyday communication processes which go beyond such managerial and public relations stories, because they enable multiple interpretations made by different organisational members.

Technical and analytical aspects alternated in the data production process (see figure 3). I began with data collection in the beginning of June 2012, which was done by downloading all current content from Nokia’s SocialCast tool into XML format. The data set contained all messages from all the 1921 discussion groups in purely chronological order, as well as the xml code tags defining the content. The data included all open group SocialCast discussions between end July 2007 and beginning of June 2012. The original data file was approximately 740 000 Word document pages long. To be able to read and manage the data better, I first divided it into documents chronologically by month. Since context is relevant in both CDA and the small story narrative approach, it was important to keep the chronological dimension to be able to locate discussion to the correct timeframe. Due to the large size of the files, the month-based documents were further splitted into up to twelve sub-files, creating 167 data files.
all together. This data set contains approximately 33,100 message threads entailing approximately 180,000 individual posts in total (see figure 3 for process and volumes).

The analysis was delimited to particular discussion groups where strategically relevant subjects were discussed. Following the constructivist approach, strategy and strategically relevant topics were not defined in advance very strictly but defined along with the analysis based on which topics the discussants themselves constructed as strategically relevant. Similar to Mantere (2005, 157), an issue can be considered strategically important when an individual agent calls it strategic, as well as when the issue is reported as crucial for the organisation’s success, survival or completion of its mission. Yet before being able to explore the data on this level, certain preconditions had to be set to be able to delimit non-strategy related discussions off from the vast data set. The delimitation of groups was based on their descriptions in SocialCast, the number of participants and posts, how long the group had existed, and finally on the content of the discussion. Furthermore, groups were chosen based on their popularity and the level of discussion activity. Words such as strategy and strategic were used in searches to confirm in which discussion groups strategy related discussions existed within the massive data set.

Based on this preliminary analysis, three most relevant discussion groups were identified: HR Strategy Sharing, Nokia Strategy and Sauna (Heated conversations about Nokia). HR Strategy Sharing was focused on sharing strategy information, especially related to human resources matters, and was one of the longest-standing discussion groups. Nokia Strategy group functioned in a way as a continuation to HR Strategy Sharing. It was formed only a while later than the HR group; the purpose was similarly to share strategy-related information, yet more on a corporate level. Sauna has to most variety in discussion topics, but as per its description the purpose is to discuss ‘hot’ topics, issues related to the transformation were discussed there as well.

At this point, messages in these discussion groups chosen to analysis were extracted from the rest of the data. The data was also cleaned from all xml tags except for tags indicating start and end of a discussion thread, and start and end of a post. Also names of the discussants were removed simultaneously. This does not only enhance the privacy of the discussants but helps the researcher to concentrate purely on the content of the discussion. Following the social constructivist tradition, meaning is created within conversation, and thus it is not relevant who says something but how she formulates it. For example formal positions in organisational hierarchy are not relevant
as such, but became interesting when if they are constructed in interaction in particular way. Some references to people were remaining within the discussions, but any discussion cited here is cleaned of references to private people; Stephen Elop as CEO and some other publicly know persons are an exception.

As the last step in the data production process, strategy-related discussion threads were extracted in each of the three discussion groups from rest of the discussion. Therefore, I needed to conduct a final analysis of what is constructed as strategically relevant in the discussions. As I read the discussions I noted that part of them revolved around key top management announcements or other key events touching upon strategic themes, such as market position, competition and the company’s core competences. As in analysing key themes of narratives, I searched for recurring subject matter in the discussions. Therefore, as I was searching for the strategically relevant, I also began to analyse the key discussion themes in strategy discussions. I soon observed that most of the discussion, as well as the themes, did not concern strategy per se, but central aspects of Nokia’s business, tightly yet by implication connected to strategy. I did not, however, treated all discussion about those themes as strategy talk but the discussion had to consider some strategy element at least in part of the discussion to be coded as strategy discussion. This analysis finally narrowed the data down into 172 discussion threads (457 sheets): 83 discussion threads in Nokia Strategy (229 sheets), 16 in HR Strategy Sharing (6 sheets), and 73 in Sauna (222 sheets) (see figure 3 for individual post volumes).
## SocialCast Discussions 07/2007-06/2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message Threads</th>
<th>Posts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>~ 33 100</td>
<td>~ 180 000</td>
</tr>
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</table>

## Three Discussion Groups for Analysis

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<tbody>
<tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HR Strategy Sharing</th>
<th>Sauna</th>
<th>Nokia Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Posts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td>9 232</td>
<td>724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>5 235</td>
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</table>

## Strategy Discussions - the Final Dataset

<table>
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<th>Message Threads</th>
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<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>959</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3  Data production process and datasets comprising of message threads and posts.
3.5. Data Analysis Process

Data analysis process partly overlapped with data production. In the analysis, I continued with the content analytical approach to examine the final data set of strategy related discussions in order to exactly define what are the key topics and themes Nokians discuss revolving strategy. This helped to set a context for the strategy related discussions because it illustrated what is regarded as a significant strategy incident and discussion-worthy topic within Nokia. Moreover, referring to the earlier notion that participation competence is required for participation (Pasmore & Fagans 1992), the topic of discussion may have an effect on participation possibilities and participation eagerness because it sets the basis for discussion; therefore it was important to identify the general discussion themes.

Next, I took a narrativist approach on the data, and analysed and coded the messages by storyline, speech act and voice; this builds the positioning triangle presented above. In the storyline dimension, I focused on what the discussants do with their exchange of comments within the whole conversation, defined as a discussion thread in this case. First, I began to look for forms of interaction that appear familiar and reoccurring. As particular types of interaction began to appear familiar, I defined them as specific storylines, labelled according to the discursive and social activities conducted within them. Secondly, I analysed these forms of interaction with the structural method and examined how the stories begin, end and evolve in the middle.

When I search for and analysed the storylines, I began to hear a multiplicity of voices participating in these storylines. What I was hearing was the subject positions, giving their different point of views on the strategic matters. The position dimension illustrated the varying identifications, point of views, rhetorical styles and also discursive resources of the discussants. They were recognisable in the different storylines as differing rhetorical styles and viewpoints. Particularly the variance in apparent access to strategy information and knowledge, and discursive resources drawn from in the arguments seem to define the voices and separate them from each other, and I defined and labelled the voices based on these attributes. Here, I applied a more CDA based perspective, as I became particularly interested in implicit power relationship dimension and how it manifested in the positions discussants gave and took.
Lastly, analysed what discussants *do with language*, as a separation to the storyline dimension of what they do with social interaction. Here, I applied a more linguistic perspective in analysing the speech acts within an account. I sought answers to questions such as does the discussant assert, question or maybe command with the posed statement. Here I concentrated on messages within discussion threads, and in statements within a message and even in particular clauses or words within the statements — which ever defined the action pursued. Analysing these three dimensions fulfilled my empirical framework presented in the preceding chapter.

While reading, analysing and coding the discussions, I took notice of how considerably the length of the discussion threads varied. To tap into this, I reversed back to the content level analysis and categorised the discussions according to their length. I divided the discussions into single-post discussions, and short, medium length and long discussion threads in order to see if the different categories in the aforementioned three dimensions of the positioning triad are linked to the length of the discussion thread. Single-post discussions included only one post with no comments. Short discussion threads included. The length and the possible link to the variances in positioning would provide information about participation possibilities, since it can be assumed that a long ‘popular’ discussion thread involves good participation possibilities. This analytical level was used mainly as guide for directing attention, and it in fact helped to specify what types of discussions are doomed to attract only few participants and *vice versa*.

After analysing the three components of the positioning triad separately, I combined my findings and examined how these components intermingle in interaction. Analysing how they interrelate I could illustrate how participation is shaped. I thus focused on participation: how did the positions participate in each of the storylines. To analyse differences in participation possibilities, I looked for differences in the variety of speech acts discussant could draw from. Furthermore, I analysed how occurrence of speech acts, positions and speech act/position combinations differ between storylines. This approach helped me to illustrate which are typical modes of participation, and further what shapes the modes of participation. In the following chapters I discuss the findings of these analyses.
4 ANALYSIS

4.1. Strategy Participation Framework

Strategy discussions and participation in strategizing formed in the positioning framework constituting of storylines, positions and speech acts. The dynamics within acts of positioning and the interrelations between the variables in positioning shaped discussants possibilities to participate in strategizing. What is more, my analysis illustrated the acts of positioning in strategy discussions were formulated by a specific strategy participation framework (table 2). Dimensions in the strategy participation framework emerged in interaction between organisational members in strategy discussions. Interplay between these dimensions further formed particular types of participation in the interaction: the participation types of accounting, planning, agreeing and understanding. The framework and its implications on strategy participation possibilities will be examined in the following chapters.

![Strategy Participation Framework Diagram]

Table 2 Strategy participation framework.

Firstly, strategizing discussions took place in a temporal dimension of past-future. In past-oriented discussions participants concerned the content or particular aspects of past events without elaborating their implications for the future. Participants did not seek to understand the impacts the events will have, nor tried to impact the future effects themselves. Therefore, when discussion oriented only to the past, participation was be focused only on feelings of participant, or merely on the content of events. Thus, past-oriented participation will take a form of accounting the events, or simply showing
acceptance for the event. When participation was on the contrary future-oriented, discussants elaborated events in order to understand their effects on the future, or planned future events themselves. Future-oriented participation is therefore more information-intense: information is needed to understand the events, and to plan and legitimise future actions. Secondly, strategizing could be categorised either construction or enactment of strategy (see Whittington 2001). Strategy construction participation was strongly action-oriented. Discussing previous strategy constructions involves accounting actions taken, and designing a future strategy implies planning actions to be taken. Strategy enactment in turn focused on implementation and internationalisation of a given strategy. Thus, more emphasis was on individuals’ cognitive processes and personal perspectives. Strategy enactment types of participation were attempts to internalise strategy by seeking to understand it and its effects on the future. Discussants could also participate in strategy enactment merely by accepting the strategy, and only expressing appreciation as prove of taking on the strategy.

Type of participation indicates how positioning is conducted in discussion: which positions can be assumed, what is the range of speech acts available, and what kind of storylines will be unfolded. Together these variables construct the acts of positioning, which are further shaped by their location in the strategy participation framework. Examining the interplay of speech acts, positions and storylines reveals typical modes of participation (see table 3; further elaborated in following chapters). Next, I explore these modes by analysing the three positioning variables, their internal dynamics, and how the participation framework affects them. I move from specific components towards the whole, by adding new variables as I proceed to a deeper yet more comprehensive level of analysis. I begin with speech acts, and examine what acts discussants typically do to participate. Second, I analyse which positions discussants can assume when taking part in strategizing. I examine how the positions’ participation possibilities differ from each other by analysing which speech acts they usually draw from. Finally, I combine all three variables in the analysis of storylines. I examine how the interactional frame of a storyline affects which positions can be assumed and further what types of speech acts they can account. In this part, I will also provide example citations to support the analysis and illustrate the three variables.

Moreover, I reflect my findings of the positioning variables to the strategy participation framework throughout the analysis. I seek to understand how the framework can
predict modes of participation and furthermore, how it can explain possibilities of strategy participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Assertives</th>
<th>Directives</th>
<th>Expressives</th>
<th>Commissives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Encourage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Involved</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Techie</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Analyst</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3  Typical modes of participating. Position-speech act combinations’ frequency in storylines (from 1 to 4).

4.2. Speech Acts

Speech act is an analytical concept illustrating what participants do with language, and further what discussants pursue when they participate in strategizing. The acts discussants conduct also implicate their position and participation possibilities. In this study, Searle’s (1979) classical categorisation of speech acts was not detailed enough to analyse and explain participants’ actions. Therefore, I created an additional categorisation of speech act types based on my empirical findings (see columns in table 3) where Searle’s speech acts are further divided into sub-categories: assertive description and perception; directive question, encourage and urge; expressive embrace, frustration and confusion; and commitment commissives.

In the detailed categorisation, description assertives refer to statements describing the state of affairs with objective, distanced voice, and perception assertives to statements describing the discussant’s personal perception or opinion. Question directives call upon others to provide information and to answer the presented question. Encourage
Directives are in turn statements that call upon others to participate in the discussion, to share their thoughts, and urge directives demand or plea others to take action. Statements that express feelings of support and embracing about a state of affairs are embrace expressives, and statements that express feelings of frustration about a state of affairs are labelled frustration expressives. Confusion expressives by name express feelings of confusion about a state of affairs. Finally, statements that commit the discussant to a course of action are commitment commissives.

In the strategy-related SocialCast discussions four out of five speech acts could be found: assertives, directives, expressives and commissives. Declaratives were thus non-existent. They did not exist at all, I argue, because discussion was only an echo of past events: decisions about the future were not made in SocialCast. Assertives were clearly to most common types of speech acts: most of the accounts in the discussions were done as assertives, and they also existed in every storyline and each position utilised them to participate. Participation in strategizing was most commonly an act of description; sharing knowledge about a strategic issue or event. Additionally, strategizing included sharing opinions about the issue, and accounting own perceptions from different point of views. Description and perception assertives are relevant in all types of strategy participation, since both past and future events related to strategy construction or enactment need to be described and accounted in order to elaborate them. Thus, it was expected assertives are the most common acts in strategizing.

Directives were also used to some extent; particularly question directives were favoured as a way to participate in strategizing. This relates to sharing knowledge, yet from a different perspective than assertives: assertives were used to account one’s knowledge to others, question directives were utilised to draw information from others to increase one’s own knowledge. Referring to the strategy participation framework, future-orientation predicts use of question directives, since information is needed to make legitimate plans as well as to understand an issue. Particularly the understanding type of participation relies on question directive speech acts for this reason. The frequency of descriptive and perception assertives and question directives reflects the main purpose of participation in SocialCast strategy discussions — exchanging information. However, Ford and Ford (1995) argued only assertives and expressives are used in conversations for understanding, whereas I found that almost all positions utilised especially directives to request information in discussions where the type of participation was understanding.
Other types of directives were not as common as questions. Encourage directives indicate participation was in fact desired; participation to both strategy construction and enactment was encouraged. However, encouragement directive speech act was a participation vehicle only for a few positions. Urge directives in turn were more widely utilised to participate. The need to urge action from someone is a strong indication of participant’s position as non-powerful, since she needs to resort to pleading others for action. One significant mode of participation was thus to use SocialCast as forum to try to promote strategic ideas when a participant was not able to take them further otherwise. Moreover, urge directive is closely linked to the planning type of participation: urging action implies both future orientation and strategy construction as well.

Expressives were relatively rare in number, which I consider expected since strategy is a topic in which discussants would rather draw on facts than emotions. Nevertheless, embrace and frustration expressives were used to participate in several storylines and also by several positions. Embrace expressives were common because they are useful in all but one participation type. Firstly, they are particularly typical in the agreeing type of participation since they can be utilised to express positive emotions of acceptance and approval. Secondly, the future-oriented planning and understanding participation types rely on other discussants’ input, either in form of action or information; embrace expressives can be utilised to emphasise the importance of one’s message. Interestingly, also the negative-toned frustration expressives were almost as common as the embrace expressives. They were utilised by three positions but only within two types of storylines. Frustration was related to action, and more specifically to the inability to act or cause action in others. Therefore, the strategy construction types of participation indicated frustration speech acts. Especially the accounting type of participation could predict frustration expressives: due to the past orientation, there was nothing for the participant to do anymore but to show her disappointment, whereas in the planning participation type there was still a possibility to make a difference in the future.

Though seeking information was one of the main reasons to participate in strategy discussion, expressions of confusion were very rare. I argue this relates to positions available to participants: in most positions, the most important discursive resource was information. Even if discussant did not have information about strategy, she drew from other sources of information to legitimise their participation and to back-up their perceptions. Thus, expressing confusion was not generally accepted as a form of
participation. Only the understanding type of participation enables using such a speech act in discussion. Lastly, commissives were also very rare; commitments were made only twice in the analysed dataset. Participation by committing oneself to a course of action was so rare because strategy discussion in SocialCast was reactive, not proactive. Discussion echoed past events, and new decisions were not produced in the forum. Furthermore, only one or two positions could have been able to make commitments about strategy. Therefore, I will next examine how this and other aspects related to positions shape participation possibilities.

4.3. Positions

Discussant’s position shaped participation through the structure of rights and obligations (see Harré & Langenhove 1999). Positions could be heard as voices speaking from a certain point of view, with particular argumentation style. Furthermore, the positions strongly reflected the discursive resources invoked in argumentation; positions were built on these discursive resources. The discursive resources related to information: position to strategy information in particular correlated to which resources were used. The positions divided into strategy positions and positions outside of strategy – the leading and the supporting roles. Strategy positions included omnipotent, involved and outsider, and the supporting positions techie, user and market analyst. In the strategy positions the discussant spoke on behalf of or as a member of the organization. This was shown in the usage of ‘we’ and ‘us’ positions when referring to Nokia or a subunit of Nokia. The discussants clearly positioned themselves within the organisation and as a member of Nokia. Furthermore, they referred to corporate information in their argumentation. Strategy positions were the most typical position when discussing strategy-related matters.

The supporting positions could also position themselves within Nokia, but they drew from different information in legitimising their participation. These information resources positioned them outside of the core of Nokia’ strategy, and identified them primarily with non-Nokian or non-strategy groups and roles. They based their authority either in expertise of a particular field, or in personal experiences. The finding is supported by Hazen’s (1993) argument that in organisations, members of groups that do not adhere to the dominant bureaucratic discourse can take courage to speak from their own experience, locating their authority in their own voices rather than outside
themselves in bureaucratic rules, roles, and hierarchy (Hazen 1993, 21). Therefore, also these positions provide important participation possibilities.

4.3.1. Omnipotent

The omnipotent strategy position was the true strategy insiders, with both knowledge and power. She spoke with the voice of Nokia as corporation, and positioned herself in a corporate representative role by providing answers to others question and by legitimating information as true or false. The main act of the omnipotent was to share information and to promote change acceptance. When sharing information she described strategic events and decisions, and to enhance change acceptance she encouraged participation and expressed embrace in her message. She made her accounts in a singular external perspective and thus excluded herself from the storyline. This created a sense of objective neutrality and an illusion of a rational, unbiased point of view in her voice. Such narrator position induces to forget the plurality of voices, and that strategic information is drawn and selected from a variety of sources — it is not an objective single truth (Barry & Elmes 1997).

Like in Ford and Ford’s (1995) study of change communication, analysis showed the omnipotent potent strategy position drew on assertives, directives and commissives in order to make all organisational members understand that it is necessary of them to engage in change (for speech act occurrence, see table 3). Description assertives and embrace expressives were the most common speech acts, which reflect the omnipotent’s main modes of participation — sharing information and promoting change. Moreover, the position as company representative was underpinned with the embrace expressives. Encourage directives and commitment commissives were the second most common speech acts. In fact, the omnipotent was the only position that could make commissives speech acts; such commitments emphasised her position of power.

Despite the power position, the omnipotent’s participation possibilities were limited. Perception assertives, question and urge directives, and frustration and confusion expressives were not possible forms of participation in the position. Since the omnipotent was positioned to possess strategy knowledge, she could not formulate assertives as her own perceptions: accounting opinions instead of ‘facts’ would have undermined her status as an insider. Additionally, confusion expressives and question directives would have been contradictory with the omnipotent’s status as strategy
insider. The omnipotent did not need or could not use urge directives to plead the company for action – she could commit to the action herself. Furthermore, for the same reason participation with negative frustration expressives would have not fit with the insider and corporate representative role either.

The omnipotent’s participation was thus rather restricted, which resulted in a very cohesive mode of participation: she concentrated only on the two most common and two second most common speech act types. Since the omnipotent typically participated to share information, the understanding type of participation predicts the position will be present in discussion (for types of strategy participation, see table 2). In addition, the omnipotent position can participate in planning by providing information for strategy construction. Finally, the omnipotent’s actions related to change acceptance makes agreeing type of participation also relevant.

### 4.3.2. Involved

The involved is the second sub-category in strategy positions. The position differed from the omnipotent in the way it was positioned towards strategy information, which further affected the discursive resources she utilised. The involved showed she had some knowledge of Nokia’s strategy, and thus was able to invoke this information in her argumentation. However, at the same time it was evident there were gaps in her knowledge. This shaped her discursive tactics and the way she formulated and phrased her arguments. The involved mainly participated in strategy discussions to describe strategic events and her perception of them. Yet, unlike the omnipotent, the involved shared her opinions in order to receive more information as well as to urge actions she considered necessary. She also showed embrace and encouragement, but on the other hand could urge and express frustration since she was not positioned as powerful enough to make decisions and commit the company to action.

The involved had the widest range of speech act types available: she could participate using all but two speech act types (see table 3). Nonetheless, the usage of speech act types varied greatly. Particular speech act types were used only in one storyline, while some types were utilised in all storylines. Most common speech act was perception assertive which enabled the involved to participate in all four storylines. With the perception assertives the involved accounted her opinion and understanding of the issue discussed. The second most common mode of participation was however
These two assertives well describe the position: she has some strategy knowledge and can at least make a personal perception in each case.

Because the involved did not have full access to strategy information, she occasionally participated by asking questions. In resemblance to the omnipotent, she also embraced the company and positioned herself as partially representing it, e.g. representing a subunit of Nokia. However, the involved could also capitalise on frustration expressives, which proves her lack of power to directly impact strategy. Moreover, the occasional use of urge directives emphasised this interpretation. There were only two speech act types the involved could not use to participate in strategizing; these separated her from the other strategy positions. Firstly, the involved did not participate with confusion expressives, like the outsider, since it would undermined her position as a partial strategy insider. On the other hand, she could not make commitments like omnipotent because she was not in a similar position of power.

All in all, the involved was the most active position with ample possibilities to participate. The involved may participate with any of the four participation types. Most likely the involved draws on planning type of participation, since it allows her to both share information and opinions as well as to urge actions. She can also utilise understanding type of participation to share her perceptions, her partial strategy insider information as well as to receive new information about Nokia’s strategy. Nevertheless, the involved can also take part by accounting past actions, since she has the information but is not restricted by her insider position like the omnipotent. She may also participate in just agreeing, since she identifies with the company and is set to promote change.

4.3.3. Outsider

The last of the strategy positions was the outsider. Also the outsider positioned herself as a member of Nokia and discussed strategic matters from the company’s point of views. Nonetheless, the outsider clearly differed from other strategy positions due to her non-existing access to strategically relevant corporate information. This in turn resulted in different discursive resources and tactics. The most important resource for the outsider was indeed the lack of information and her unawareness: ignorance allowed her to participate without corporate strategy information, by pleading others to provide her information. The lack of information and power dictated the outsider’s participation modes to be seeking information and sharing emotions and perceptions.
Interestingly, the outside still had almost as wide range of speech acts available as the involved (see table 3). Like the involved, the outsider participated with perception assertives in each storyline. Though she did not hold insider strategy information and thus could not account descriptive assertives, she could compose and share her perceptions. One storyline made an exception in description assertives; yet, the descriptions were related to information outside of Nokia. By sharing her perception the outsider in a way tested her understanding: she made her opinion public for others to judge either true or false. Like the involved, the outsider asked questions to receive information; questions were her most important discursive tactic making participation possible. Nonetheless, she used much fewer directives in general. The outsider did not have enough information to compose strategy suggestions and actions which she could have urged to taken. Also, as she participated mainly to receive information, encouraging others to share their opinions was not relevant – she sought only information, not opinions.

The outsider used the most expressive speech acts compared to other positions. I argue this is because she did not have information to which base her accounts, and thus she could only draw from personal emotions. The expressions of confusion emphasised the outsider’s ignorance. They were capitalised strategically to legitimise participation. Frustration was an even more common expressive speech act. It implies to the outsider’s powerless position: she could recognise flaws but was not able drive action to change them herself. Occasionally the outsider made also embrace expressives; despite positioning outside of strategic leadership, she did identify with the company proven in these embrace acts. Because of this identification, I argue, all types of participation are available for the outsider. The most likely type of participation, however, would be the understanding. Yet, the outsider can also participate by accounting; she can share perceptions of the past and express frustration. As merely agreeing with a strategy and participating by expressing support for it does not require insider information, also agreeing type of participation is available for the outsider. Finally, planning type of participation is the most difficult to adapt in the outsider position. Nevertheless, even the outsider could make some suggestions for future strategy construction, since she is able to comprise opinions of strategy.
4.3.4. Techie

While the strategy positions related to membership of Nokia and to shared interest to strategy, the rest of the positions referred to other groups not primarily part of the corporation and drew from expert-type of information. The techie spoke from a 'technologized' position: she spoke with the voice of an expert and made arguments about what Nokia’s systems and products can or cannot do. She was positioned close to strategy due to the specific context of Nokia, where technological issues are at the core of the company. Yet, the techie was positioned outside of strategic knowledge and decision-making. Even though the techie took part in strategy-related discussions, she did not always comment on the strategic aspects of the matter but discussed some specific technical features or technical questions related to strategic change. She participated in order to make a technological viewpoint visible and to propose technology-based improvement ideas, and on the other hand she took part to get more information about the strategy point of view.

Techie’s modes of participation were rather limited, as she used only two speech acts in participating: assertives and directives. Perception assertives and question directives were the most common types of speech acts. This is an indication of the techie’s position related to strategic information. She shared opinions more often than descriptions of facts, since her accounts were usually technologically oriented interpretations of strategy or strategic event. Techie could also participate by using description assertives when she made accounts about technological information, since she was positioned as expert in the area. She did not, however, make description assertives about strategy information. Questions the techie used to receive more information about the strategic aspects; with question directives she linked her technology account back to the core issue related to strategy. This proved that though she used expert information as discursive resource, her information was limited outside of strategy. Techie also occasionally used urge directives. Based on her technological expertise she was able to formulate opinions about how something ought to be done. However, since she was not powerfully positioned, she could not make Nokia act on the ideas and thus her only option was to urge others take her ideas forward.

Since techie had only few modes of participation, there were several speech acts she could not utilise. Firstly, the techie did not use any expressives since she was positioned as a technology expert; using emotions in discussion would have undermined her objective expert status. Commissives she could not utilise in participation since she was
not positioned as powerful enough in the organisation to commit herself to strategic action. In addition, techie did not participate by using encouragement directives for similar reasons as the outsider: she was not participating to enforce change acceptance or to hear other’s opinions. Instead, the techie participated to share her technology-based point of view and on the other hand, to receive information about the strategy point of view. Therefore, techie position is most likely to occur in the planning type of participation: she is able to contribute in planning by sharing her technologized expert viewpoint. Additionally, techie may sometimes apply the understanding type of participation since she also seeks to increase her strategy knowledge.

### 4.3.5. User

Like the techie, the user referred to information that was not directly related to Nokia’s corporate strategy. The user spoke from a product or service experiencer point of view. She invoked her own or her next of kin’s user experiences as her discursive resource and participation tactic. Therefore, alike the techie, the user did not elaborate the strategy-level issues even when participating in a strategy-related discussion. On the other hand, she was positioned outside both strategy and power, and thus she could only make experience-based accounts. The user participated in order to draw attention to the user experience and share her opinion from the user point of view, and again to acquire more information about strategy.

The user’s modes of participation are illustrated by the speech acts she used. She drew mostly on perception assertives and frustration expressives: taking part in order to share her personal opinions which are often negative. The user was not positioned powerful enough to make decisions and drive action, and thus she had to utilise frustration expressives and urge directives instead of declaring decisions and commitments. She was not positioned as strategy insider either, and thus like techie the user made question directives to receive information about strategy and on the other hand, to link her personal user experiences to the general strategic issue. Occasionally the user could also participate with description assertives when she accounted her user experiences; nonetheless, she never made similar descriptions of strategy.

The user’s participation modes were quite restricted, and there were quite a few speech acts the user could not utilise as participation vehicles. Firstly, she did not encourage participation because change acceptance and general opinion-sharing was no in her agenda. Secondly, she did not embrace with expressives because she did not identify
with the company similarly as the strategy positions. She did not either use confusion expressive since she based her accounts on her own her experiences; she would have not been confused about such personal information. Lastly, the user could not utilise commissives since she was not positioned powerful enough. The user would therefore most likely participate in planning type of activity; she contributes in strategy construction by sharing the user point of view. In addition, she may draw from the accounting type of participation, as she makes account about the experiences of using Nokia’s devices and applications.

4.3.6. Market Analyst

The last position occurring in strategy discussions was market analyst. The market analyst was similar to the techie as also she referred to expertise outside of Nokia’s core strategy. She positioned herself as expert of mobile phone markets. Therefore, the market analyst differed mostly from the other positions: she positioned herself outside of the company and did not identify with it like the others. The market analyst spoke with a distanced, objective voice. She participated only to comment on the general market point of view. This was reflected in the significantly limited participation modes.

The market analyst could participate only by using description assertives, since she was positioned both outside of strategy and power, outside of the whole organisation and also as an objective expert. She did not try to understand strategy better or to make suggestions about future strategic actions – she only accounted the external, market-related objective ‘facts’. Therefore, expressives and question directives were not possible; they would have undermined her objective expert position. For the same reason the market analyst did not share perceptions or opinions. Furthermore, she did not urge action since she did not identify with Nokia. It was either not relevant for her to encourage participation because she was not driving a change management agenda. Commitments the market analyst did not make for the same reason as other positions: she did not have power to make decisions about Nokia’s strategy. As speech acts available for the market analyst were very limited, also types of participation are significantly restricted. The market analyst position most likely occurs in the understanding type of participation; though she does not strive for better personal understanding, she may take a role in enhancing the understanding of others. Nonetheless, also the storyline of discussion has a significant impact on participation
possibilities: storyline defines which position can take part justly and furthermore which speech acts are relevant in the storyline's particular interactional context. In the following chapters I shall explore this dimension and how it affects the modes of participation.

4.4. Storylines

Storyline participants live out in discussion set a frame for interaction. Storylines define the main function of interaction, which positions are available, and which actions are considered appropriate. Storylines tie together the dimensions in positioning, and thus in this chapter I examine both speech acts and positions together with storylines in order to reach a full picture of strategy discussion participation. In the strategy-related discussions, four typical forms of interaction emerged: giving guidance to Nokia, making sense of Nokia, dwelling in failures, and cheerleading Nokia. The storylines were highly intertwined in one discussion. Nonetheless, usually one storyline rose as the overarching interactional theme, and I treated it as the main storyline of the discussion. The main storyline also defined the type of participation.

In the strategy discussions different positions had varying possibilities to conduct specific speech acts and take part in unfolding a particular storyline. Storylines in strategy discussions differed in both in their temporal orientation and orientation to strategy construction or enactment; these dimensions affected how discussants could take part in strategizing. Firstly, storylines varied in temporal orientation (past-future). Participants in cheerleading Nokia and dwelling in failures focused on elaborating past events, while participants in making sense of Nokia and giving guidance to Nokia storylines concerned what the past means for the current or future state of the organization, or what actions the company ought to take for the sake of a more successful future. When participation is defined as involvement in decision-making concerning self, participation in strategizing was in fact enabled only in the future oriented storylines: in the past oriented storylines decisions about the discussion subject had been made already and thus discussion was not actually participation in strategizing, only participation in strategy discussion.

Secondly, storylines differed in orientation to strategy enactment and orientation to strategy construction. Cheerleading Nokia and making sense of Nokia were focused on enactment from an individual organisational member's viewpoint: expressing emotions about an event or announcement, and seeking to understand the meaning of an event
or announcement. These activities can be seen as part of strategy enactment, particularly as part of strategy implementation processes where organisational members internalise strategy. Participants in dwelling in failures and giving guidance to Nokia, on the other hand, were oriented to strategy construction: they were interested in what had happened and what should happen in strategy. Such action orientation connects the storylines to strategy construction.

Participation in strategizing was shaped by the aforementioned dimensions, and thus participation possibilities were also different in each storylines. The more future-oriented the storyline was, the better possibilities discussant had to participate, as it is possible to be involved in decision-making concerning self when the decisions have not yet been done. On the other hand, impacting decision-making requires active influencing on decision-makers, and therefore if one wishes to participate, she needs to take action. The giving guidance storyline provided the best participation possibilities because participation in the storyline was an attempt to make an impact on the company’s future strategy and operations. Participants in the storyline contributed to the construction part of strategizing. Thus, giving guidance to Nokia storyline indicates to the planning type of participation (for participation types, see table 2). In the making-sense storyline participation was inward and but still future-oriented: by participating in the discussion discussants attempted to increase understanding of current and future effects of a past event or announcement. Thus, they participated in the enactment side of strategizing, and participation type was understanding.

Possibility to participate in strategizing through dwelling in failure and cheerleading Nokia storylines was rather limited. Both storylines concerned the past where decisions had already been done and put into action. Participants may have affected strategizing indirectly, though, by highlighting and bringing into general attention matters they perceived positive or negative respectively. Discussants in the dwelling in failures were more action oriented since they discussed what had happened; they for example commonly listed actions they regarded wrong or unsuccessful. Dwelling in failures therefore implied participation type of accounting. The cheerleading Nokia storyline provided the least participation possibilities as it was the most inward and past-oriented form of social interaction. It was the most inward because of the focus on personal emotions, and the most past-oriented due to attention to past events or announcement without further elaboration of their affects. In the storyline discussants did not try to affect decisions but merely echoed them from an emotional perspective.
They did, however, participate in strategy enactment by promoting change acceptance in their positive, embracive accounts. Participation type in the storyline was thus agreeing.

Participation possibilities varied depending on the particular frame of interaction discussants evoked in acting out a specific storyline. In addition, the range of speech acts available in a specific position differed from storyline to another. In the following chapters I discuss participation in each storyline by examining which speech acts were utilised in each position (for speech act/position frequency, see table 3). Moreover, I discuss the overall interactional frame in each storyline and how it shapes participation possibilities.

4.4.1. Giving Guidance to Nokia

The giving guidance to Nokia was usually related to a strategy announcement or event, and the function of this interaction was as per its name giving guidance to Nokia: what strategic actions top management should take, how the company could win the war of ecosystems, what would bring in more customers. Within the giving guidance to Nokia storyline, discussants proposed or urged market competition tactics and action for the company. Participants discussed how the company should reply to its competitors’ recent actions, how to adjust Nokia into current market situation or in general how Nokia could gain more success in the telecommunications market. The guidance storyline could start in two alternate ways: a corporate representative provided information and elaborated a recent strategy announcement or action, or the starting post was based on a question regarding Nokia’s or its competitors’ recent action or announcement, or discussed the urgency of action needed from Nokia also related to a recent event. Often this storyline was intermingled with the strategy sense-making storyline, and they usually rotated within one discussion thread.

The giving guidance to Nokia storyline provided the most participation possibilities for the different positions, both in general and discursively. Firstly, it offered discussant a chance to try to impact decisions concerning themselves. Secondly, on the discourse level, the giving guidance storyline included the most possibilities for participation. Participation was possible from all of the six positions, and on the other hand, the most positions were able to draw from multiple different speech acts. Nevertheless, participants had varying discursive opportunities to express their opinions about Nokia’s strategic actions, and they drew from different discursive resources in
legitimating their accounts. Speech acts as participants conducted reflected those opportunities and resources, and further their position towards strategic decision-making. Giving guidance included similar participation enhancing elements as Mantere and Vaara (2008) found in dialogisation discourse: authority positions involved other organisational members by requesting for their thoughts and ideas.

There was a distinct juxtaposition of the omnipotent and the other positions in the storyline, and also forms of participation clearly differed between them. The positions were divided into insiders and outsiders more distinctively than in the other storylines. The omnipotent was the only true insider. She set the stage and opened up discussion: she held legit information about strategic actions and plans which she shared with the rest, and encouraged them to share their opinions. The omnipotent did not participate otherwise, nor did she actually advise Nokia; she did not need to participate in the guiding since she had to power to make decisions and put plans into action. This explains why her participation in the storyline was limited to opening up a discussion; after that, the omnipotent rarely rejoined in the discussion. Should the omnipotent rejoin the conversation, she did it to encourage further participation. She could also answer questions and provide more information, but this redirected the storyline to making sense of Nokia.

The other discussants were clearly positioned as outsiders compared to the omnipotent, as their only option was to ask the omnipotent to do what they thought would be the best for the company. They replied to the omnipotent and shared their opinions, often formulated as a petition. They fully utilised the opportunity to share their opinions and filled the space of opportunity the omnipotent had opened for them, which is evident in the significant length of discussions started by an omnipotent directly asking proposals for improvement. In their accounts the other positions positioned themselves outside of top management and opposite to the strategy omnipotent by formulating their accounts into requests or demands directed to ‘the company’. As the juxtaposition between the omnipotent and the other positions characterised interaction most distinctively, other characteristics such as the difference between positions other than omnipotent was not as significant. Especially the line between strategy involved and strategy outsider was blurred in the giving guidance storyline.

Omnipotent position’s participation was in general very cohesive, and thus similar to other storylines: she utilised assertives to describe the state of affairs, directives to encourage participation in the discussion, expressives to embrace the actions taken or
plans constructed, and finally commissives in accounting actions she has committed herself to. Also the way she opened up a discussion was similar to other storylines. The storyline was commonly started by the omnipotent, a discussant positioning herself as a legitimate strategist, providing information and elaborating a recent strategy announcement or action regarding Nokia’s status in the mobile phone market as in the following citation.

I visited /.../ account team in San Diego 2 weeks ago. We agreed to work closely between Ovi Maps and /.../ account team to drive Nokia’s leadership in the US. We have early success with [company Y] and [company Z] in US /.../. How can we make Ovi Maps more successful in the US? Please share your ideas!

In the citation the discussant was evidently positioning herself as a leader, as she was able to agree on actions for how ‘to drive Nokia’s leadership in the US’. This position was confirmed with a rare commissives speech act where she accounts they ‘agreed to work closely’ with an account team. The omnipotent continued with more common speech act of assertives. She often accounted recent events related to what Nokia does or have done in order to become more successful, for example how they develop a particular device or service, occasionally accompanied with comparisons to telecommunications market situation. In the citation the omnipotent conducted such a descriptive assertive speech act as she summarised her recent actions and Nokia’s market status regarding Ovi Maps and American telecommunications operator companies. The omnipotent also often draws from encouragement directives. In the above citation the omnipotent conducted two consecutive directive speech acts with which she encouraged others to share their opinions about the topic. First the omnipotent invited others to elaborate ‘how can we make Ovi Maps more successful in US’ and then further encouraged to ‘share your ideas’ on the topic.

Occasionally the omnipotent added an expressive speech act where she thanked for work well done or expressed how she embraces the events or announcements at hand:

In recent weeks I’ve enjoyed great face to face discussions with employees.

Yet, expressive speech acts were not common in the omnipotent position as she was more concerned about factual information or encouraging others to share their ideas with her. Though the omnipotent encouraged others to give their advice, she never gave market competition guidance herself as discussed above. The omnipotent did not either formulate her accounts as opinion assertives. As she could be identified with the company, her descriptive assertives could be viewed as her or the company’s opinion. Strategies and other corporate information were commonly presented as the objective
truth. Thus a company representative, such as the omnipotent, would highly unlikely formulate her accounts as opinions because it would undercut her status. On the other hand, as she was positioned to have access to all official information, she did not need to construct personal perceptions since she knew the ‘truth’ and the official strategic plan. Moreover, she was positioned to have power to construct the very strategies. Due to this status, the omnipotent did neither conduct question or urge directives, nor expressions of frustration or confusion: she did not have to ask, because she knew, and she did not have to urge, because she could rule operations.

The strategy involved was by far the most common position in the storyline, implying the involved had the best means to participate. The involved had the second most speech acts to draw from. Her addresses were outlined similarly to the omnipotent, but she could use assertives, directives and expressives in a more varying way. For example, if she opened up the discussion, she commonly wrote with more urgency in her voice and demanded for action as in the following citation:

We need to take Ovi Maps to more platforms then ours, GEB decided not to do so, but I really hope that we can revisit that ASAP. Especially in the US, where we have really LOW market share right now, if we want to get active users and be able to advertise our devices to them we need to change our mentality. Really be the challenger and stick our necks.

On the other side I do understand that we want to focus on getting amazing solutions on Symbian and MeeGo...but if it costs us only 4-5 engineers to get it on a competitors’ platforms (Blackberry, Android, iPhone) let's get a basic version of Ovi Maps (without free navigation of course) and start the ATTACK!

thoughts?

Here, the discussant first connected the post to a recent strategic action, ‘GEB decided not to do so’, with a descriptive assertive speech act. As the involved was not identified with the top management as tightly as the omnipotent, she could add and opinion assertive concerning her hope that the decision ‘can be revisited ASAP’. The involved could also utilise a variety of directives. Occasionally, she asked clarifying questions which proved she did not possess all strategy information. The involved did not express confusion in expressive speech acts. In the above citation, there are two examples of participation encouragement and urging directives which the involved could also use due to her status. First, she proposed what Nokia should do to succeed in the market and urged for action by using phrases ‘we need to change’, ‘really be the challenger’ and ‘start the attack’. Secondly, she encouraged participation by asking other’s ‘thoughts’ on the matter, which enabled the storyline to proceed. Frustration could be read between the lines in the example, but the involved also made clear frustration expressive speech acts occasionally:
I have **sense of urge** of where Nokia is heading. **I am afraid** continue this trend, Nokia will just sink, like Titanic.

Most commonly, though, the involved did not express such deep frustration but accounted more objectively about the actions Nokia ought to take. The main speech act was still directive. It could be either in the form of request, where she used directive forms of verbs:

**STOP initiatives** that require reassessment while corporate strategy becomes clearer.

Or her viewpoint was formulated as a plea:

**Please create** a corpus fund to assist the affected employees financially.

Both forms of formulating the speech act imply the requests are directed to someone who has power to take action, which also implies that the involved herself does not have such power. The involved still did have some access to corporate information and strategy, and she was able to draw on this information in her accounts. She knew what the ‘GEB decided not to do’ and that ‘it costs us only 4-5 engineers’ to develop certain solution. With such accounts, together with commonly using the ‘we’ pronoun she positioned herself partly involved in corporate operations but outside of the group of decision-makers. Thus, she had to ask or urge the ones in power to do what she thought was best for the company.

The outsider position was rare in the giving guidance to Nokia storyline. Although discussion in the storyline focused mostly sharing opinions, some knowledge of the matter at hand was required to make statements credible. As the outsider was positioned within the company but without access to information or decision-making, it would have been difficult for her to justify her advice. She was overruled by the omnipotent and involved, who had the ability to legitimate their claims or to position themselves in the power position. On the rare occasions the outsider did find ways to participate, her addresses were somewhat unfit in the storyline since she was not actually giving guidance like the involved nor receiving it like the omnipotent. It was evident that the outsider did not share the same knowledge and stereotypes required to participate in unfolding of a shared storyline (Harré & Langenhove 1999), and thus her accounts did not receive much attention from the more legit discussants.

The outsider still attempted to participate in the giving guidance storyline occasionally. Because the outsider could not draw on corporate information, she used other sources and could for example quote external announcements or publications, such as in the below citation where the discussant referred to ‘Apple’s announcement yesterday’:
Do we have any video strategy for Ovi? With Apple’s announcement yesterday, it is clear we are falling far behind in the area of connected entertainment, and I am starting to feel that we have an insurmountable challenge for North America: Apps, Games, Music and Video. This means that we cannot credibly claim that any of our devices will have any relevance for entertainment in North America.

The outsider conducted descriptive and perceptive assertives, but mainly concerning the external information. Above, she based her perception that ‘it is clear we are falling far behind’ in the external information source. She could also conduct frustration expressive speech acts such as stating ‘I am starting to feel that we have an insurmountable challenge’. Such accounts were the closest substitute for actual advice-giving: she indicated a problem requiring action, yet she was not able to suggest any actions herself. As in the above citation, the outsider also drew from question directive speech acts as a strategy to participate in discussion. Due to her restricted resources and limited speech acts, she sometimes used only question directives possible with inserted citations as information reference, such as in the following example that was followed by a long direct citation from an external announcement:

Should Nokia produce fewer devices?

And will the new numbering scheme help or hurt our ability to differentiate in the market?

The techie position was also rather rare in the storyline based on bilateral interaction between the omnipotent and the involved — a strategy power position and her eligible strategy advisor. When the techie positioned herself as a technology expert and drew on technical knowledge as her discursive resource, she made evident that she did not evoke quite the same knowledge and stereotypes as the omnipotent and the involved. Thus, it was difficult also for the techie position to participate in unfolding of the giving guidance storyline.

Nevertheless, due to that the context of discussion was a technology company where technological expertise is naturally relevant; also the techie position could make fairly relevant accounts acknowledged by other discussants. She was could utilise assertives and directives in various ways in participating the discussion. As she was positioned as an expert, she often conducted descriptive and opinion assertives of declaratory nature, similar to the strategy omnipotent. This was well evident in the below citation taken from a storyline where the discussants were pondering how Nokia Maps could help fragment and weaken its rival Android. In the excerpt the discussant covered the technological aspect of the matter with similar certainty as with which the strategy involved talks about corporate strategy, using only descriptive assertives, and thus positioned herself as a technology expert. In addition, she further emphasised this
position by stating her argument ‘as a developer who has invested hundreds of hours in developing web mapping software’.

Thought the techie identified mostly according to the technological expertise, often she also identified with Nokia by using the ‘we’ pronoun; this again resembled the strategy positions, such as in the following citation. First, the discussant told her opinion about Nokia’s market situation accounting with a description assertive that ‘we are just missing one “best product in the market”’. In another context, this could be interpreted as a strategy position. Yet, looking into the context of the conversation, it is evident that the discussant had picked up a more technical point of view because she explained Nokia’s market status with the lack of a product, when the discussion concerned Nokia’s new strategy and CEO Stephen Elop’s results announcement. The technology expertise resource was invoked as the discussant began to elaborate and reason her argument with ‘N8 specs’, ‘faster UI’, ‘lack of HW’ and ‘problems in SW’.

We are just missing one “best product in the market”. **N8 specs** are cool and would be beating iPhone and Androids but it’s just so damn slow. With **faster UI** it has already **functions** that I could promote anywhere against iPhone users :) Don’t know is it lack of **HW** (CPU, RAM, **GPU**) or **problems in SW** but it’s just too slow for today needs

In the aforementioned citations the techie used his expertise as a resource to legitimate her participation in the giving guidance storyline. However, in neither of the addresses the techie did actually provide any advice to Nokia. Commonly the techie merely accounted the technical state of affairs, and though she always pinpointed a problem or explained another discussant’s viewpoint is problematic, she did proceed to suggesting a solution. In such cases, the techie might draw on question directives with which she asked others to make the suggestion and advice ‘what are we going to do about this’. With the directive also she demonstrated her lack of power. She could also use directives to ask for more information about Nokia’s strategy or the status of a particular business unit; information that was outside of her area of expertise.

Occasionally, the techie complemented the problem elaboration with a suggestion or request for improvement. She used urge directives similarly as the involved and also otherwise formulated her account in a similar vein, though with less desperation or insistence in her voice:
So if Nokia is going to be committed to Microsoft and Windows, I suggest we get a Windows 7 tablet to market ASAP, and at the same time delight Intel by bringing them back into the loop with their new mobile Atom chipsets they were hoping to use with MeeGo. /.../

Make the first tablet in the world with a PC-like hardware architecture that a customer can freely put/upgrade his/her own OS of choice in it, but ship it with Windows 7 by default.

The techie did not, however, use any expressive speech acts to participate in the giving guidance storyline. I argue her participation was limited in the expressives due to her position as technology expert. Firstly, a professional would base her accounts on facts instead of viewpoints; expressing emotions or confusion could weaken this status. Secondly, though positioning herself within Nokia, she mainly identified with a more general group of technology professional. As she was not primarily positioned as ‘Nokian’, it would have not suited her position to show emotions of embrace or frustration towards the company.

The user position did not have good participation possibilities either, as occurrence of the position was very rare. Moreover, usually the position was taken only shortly, for example in one sentence within a longer account. In such occasions, the position was used to provide a wider perspective to an issue, or to make a practical example related to more abstract advice. The user position was thus taken as a complementary position.

Already the themes and topics of discussion hindered the user to participate: since the discussion concerned strategy suggestion, it was not quite applicable to draw from practical, personal user experiences.

Nonetheless, participation was occasionally successful from a pure user position. In these accounts, the discussant formulated her address quite similarly as the strategy involved, such in the below citation that was taken from the same discussion thread as the aforementioned strategy omnipotent’s question ‘how can we make Ovi Maps more successful in the US’. In the address the user did perception assertives to share her opinions and to present the issue, such as that she ‘can’t seem to get it [an application] to do anything other than show the route’. She also used question directives to receive strategy information in some addresses, and urge directives to demand ‘give us Turn By Turn directions’ or other applications or devices. Finally the user conducted frustration expressives to highlight the urgency or desperation.

*Give us Turn By Turn directions on the N900!!! I can't seem to get it to do anything* other than show the route on the screen and that is no help especially when you are on a motorcycle trying to navigate through cities/towns. *I cannot keep looking down* at the phone *I need* something that will tell me in an earbud where to go. *FWIW I tried* my TomTom Go 900 and that doesn’t even have a headphone jack only the aux out which does not seem to work with headphones. *Jesus I don't want to have to buy YET ANOTHER navigation device for my motorcycle.*
As the above example shows, the user position could participate in the storyline and give her advice. She was able to participate because she could use her personal experience as a discursive resource to legitimate her demand, and most importantly, because those demands where formulated as strategic improvement suggestions. She adapted a similar position towards the strategy omnipotent as the involved, and was able to pick up the idea of the storyline: non-power positions are given or take voice in order to make an impact on strategy at least ostensibly. However, what should be noted is that the user always focused on a specific application, service or device and how it should be improved; the link to strategy usually remained very vague. Therefore, thought the user was able to participate in the storyline of giving advice, she did not reach the level of participating in actual strategizing.

The market analyst had clearly the poorest participation possibilities in the giving guidance to Nokia storyline. The position did not exist as the sole position in any address but was more of a supporting position, similar to the user in some of her addresses. Discussants adapting the involved position sometimes changed to market analyst as a discursive strategy to make their account more legitimate. The below citation exemplifies this: the discussant started with an opinion statement '+1 for not going for too small portfolio' from the involved position indicated in her that ‘we are differentiating our products, but she justified her argument with market analysis of Apple:

> +1 for not going for too small portfolio. We are differentiating our products as per different needs and even if differentiation is possible through software, it is not enough to have one or few products that would cover all categories. **Apple is doing it but they are of course playing a top-skimming game which is expanding by changing the people's preferences.**

As the market analyst drew from market ‘facts’ and was positioned as an expert like the techie, she could make statements convincingly and confidently. However, the only available speech act for the market analyst was description assertive. Due to the adapted objective outsider professional position, it would have not been appropriate for her to tell her opinions or show expressions. Nor could she use directives to ask questions since she was in the expert position, or use encouragement or urge directives when she was not identified with Nokia.

To conclude, the market analyst’s participation possibilities were extremely restricted in the giving guidance storyline because she did not fit in the interactional frame where a power position gives voice to her subordinates. The market analyst could not identify with similar internal power position as the omnipotent despite her deep knowledge,
because her knowledge was from the outside of Nokia and Nokia’s strategy. On the other hand, she could not take a similar position as the involved, or even the techie or user, because she was not positioned as a member of the organisation.

4.4.2. Making Sense of Nokia

In the making sense of Nokia storyline, discussants tried to make sense, interpret and define the company and its strategy from their points of view and in their particular organisational context. This resembles Mantere’s (2005) finding of sense-making practices as part of strategy formation practices. The storyline represented almost a ‘strategy Q&A’ column: others shared information and provided explanations, while others asked questions and requested for more insights. Furthermore, the discussion usually concerned and was started by a recent top management announcement. The strategy in general key theme was most represented in this storyline. Also the other themes were present in the discussions, since the top management announcement often touched upon services, devices or ecosystems and operating systems. The starting point and main source of discussion in sense-making storyline could also be an external announcement or news concerning Nokia or its competitors, for example a newspaper article about current status of competition in the mobile phone market.

The making sense of Nokia storyline provided participation possibilities for all positions except the user position. Nonetheless, speech acts and thus also forms of participation available varied significantly between the positions. The most involved positions in the storyline were the strategy positions: omnipotent, involved and outsider. Positions with the widest variety of participation possibilities, counted by the number of different speech act types they used, however, were only omnipotent and outsider strategy positions. The omnipotent had the most available speech acts as she was able to utilise acts from all of the four categories existing in the strategy discussions. I consider this logical and natural, since the storyline concerned understanding Nokia’s strategy – a subject which the omnipotent had full access to, accompanied with decision-making power. Interestingly, the second most resourceful position was the outsider who was in a completely opposite position, as she had almost no access to strategic information; yet she was able to draw from three types of speech acts. Active participation of the all-knowing omnipotent and the ignorant outsider underpins my aforementioned conclusion that the making sense of Nokia storyline is
similar to the classic storyline of education where teacher-student dynamics frame interaction.

In such an interactional context, it was difficult for other positions to gain ground if they did not accept the dynamics and cultural stereotypes of education called on in the storyline (see Harré & Langenhove 1999). The strategy involved, the techie and the market analyst positions participated using only assertives and directives, though in somewhat differing ways respectively. The strategy involved in a way fell through the net in the interaction characterised by teacher-student dynamics: holding partial access to strategy information marginalised her between the classic positions, which limited her participation possibilities. The techie and the market analyst were in a somewhat similar position. Both of the positions represented themselves as experts, which would have positioned them as teacher if the discussion and the storyline had concerned their respective fields of expertise. Nevertheless, they were not positioned as experts in Nokia’s strategy which participants were trying to make sense of in the storyline, and thus they could not be identified with teacher role. On the other hand, as they represented themselves as specialists and drew particularly on their expert knowledge as their discursive resource, they simultaneously eliminated the possibility to identify with student role either. Therefore, participation from the techie and market analyst positions was quite restricted.

The absence of the user position is explained by both the content of the discussion and the form of discursive interaction. Firstly, the function in the storyline was to make sense of Nokia’s strategy by providing information (omnipotent - teacher) and receiving information (outsider - student). The user position is characterised by use of personal user experiences as discursive resource. I argue it would be very difficult to link personal user experiences to corporate strategy, since one simply cannot have user experience of strategy. On the other hand, the user is in a way positioned as the expert of her own personal information, which is a form of information that cannot be taught to her or she would not teach to anyone else. Thus, the user position fits poorly to the storyline where teacher-student dynamics formulate participation.

The omnipotent typically started a making sense of Nokia storyline, by posting an address formulated as a strategy announcement. In her accounts she conducted several speech acts: using descriptive assertives she provided information about a recent strategic change, with embrace expressive she expressed her support for the strategy, with directives she encouraged group members to share their thoughts about the
subject, and occasionally she also used commissives to commit herself to certain actions. The following citations provide illustrating examples of such a case. In this post starting a discussion, the omnipotent used mainly description assertives in sharing information. Firstly the omnipotent referred to a recent event when ‘we announced the new Nokia strategy last Friday’ and positioned the discussion to this topic. Simultaneously she positioned herself within the group of people (‘we’) who make and thus ‘own’ Nokia’s strategic announcement. As Samra-Fredericks (2005) note, such use of pronouns in strategy discussion invoke authority through the use of ‘our’ or ‘we’ which works to attach speakers to status-inducing others and objects.

Furthermore, as the discusssant showed her concern for ‘discussion and healthy debate’ which had followed the announcement and offered to address one of the issues recently discussed, she positioned herself outside of her audience (I’ve been).

…I’ve been following the discussions and healthy debate on both Socialcast and various international media outlets. One issue that I thought I would address (this was mentioned to me in a hallway conversation this week)...

Positioning oneself always implies positioning other relationally (Harré & Langenhove 1999), and thus the other discussants were in turn positioned as not having access to strategic decision making. This is enforced later with similar formulations:

In the months leading up this announcement, we had a team investigating...

I tasked my team with examining...

Although we have not made a decision...

After locating the address to the particular strategy event, the discussant began to elaborate it by stating ‘to be clear’ and thus showed this post was meant to provide answers and clarification; this also explains the vast use of assertives. When elaborating the situation she provided explanations and background details to clarify the strategy announcement. In addition to providing information, she encouraged participation by telling she is ‘curious to know whether anyone out here has thoughts on how we should proceed in this area of cloud computing’; here, she used an expressive to instead of directive. She continued with embrace expressives and told how she is ‘genuinely excited about the opportunity that lies before Nokia’ and encouraged not only discussion participation but more abstract participation in Nokia’s change:

It would be interesting to see if there are strong opinions one way or the other.

... you can take part in this historic moment in time, or just watch it pass by – the choice is yours.
In other occasions, the omnipotent used encouragement directives formulated linguistically either as directives such as ‘please share your thoughts’ or questions such as ‘what are your thoughts’. The omnipotent, however, never used pure question directives to ask for information — she only asked for opinions and perceptions of others. She also might paraphrase questions she had received. As the omnipotent was positioned as having insider access to strategy and strategic information, asking for information would have jeopardised this position.

Rarely, the omnipotent also conducted commissives; this was the only position where they were even an option. In the commissives accounts, the omnipotent committed herself to taking a particular matter forward:

> I think this is a great idea to more frequently and informally communicate the priorities and progress against those priorities! **I will see how I can push this forward for us.**  

The omnipotent was able to participate through commissive speech acts due to her special position towards strategy. Since she was positioned not on as having access to strategic information but also as having power to impact strategic decision-making, she could make promises regarding them.

In the typical, long making sense of Nokia storylines discussion continued with posts where discussants, mainly involved and outsider positions, shared their interpretations and opinions, and tried to help each other to make sense of the topic at hand. However, it was evident in their comments that they did not have all the available information and thus could not give the correct answer as would the ‘teacher’ position. The omnipotent therefore returned to the discussion every once in a while to fill in these voids. She gathered all questions presented so far and answered them again with descriptive assertives:

**A lot of good points.** The important thing is from what perspective you are addressing a problem...

Even though the omnipotent could utilise a wide selection of speech act types in participating in the sense-making storyline, certain types of participation were not possible for her. The omnipotent did not share her opinions as perception assertives for the same reason she did not ask questions to receive information: accounting personal opinions and perceptions would have compromised her position as some with access to the actual, factual strategy information and decision-making. For the same reason the omnipotent did not express emotions of confusion; she could present herself confused if she had the information. Neither did the omnipotent use urge directives or
frustration expressives. Participating with such accounts would have cut the ground under the omnipotent’s feet: since she was positioned as having decision-making power and power to put matters into action, it would have been contradictory if she would demand action from Nokia or its leadership in the same way as the other positions.

The involved took part in the making sense of Nokia storyline usually in accounts commenting the strategy announcement or elaboration by the omnipotent. After the basis for conversation was set with announcement, elaboration and encouragement to participate, the making sense of Nokia storylines continued to the middle part of the story, where evaluations are made (Hollingsworth & Dybdal 2007). In these posts discussants presented their own interpretation of the topic and posed questions to further clarify the matter. With elaborating statements or asking questions discussants took a position of information recipient or a position similar to student in storyline of teaching.

As mentioned, the involved position did not fit well either to the teacher role or to the student role, occupied by the omnipotent and the outsider and thus her participation was restricted and speech acts limited to assertives and directives. Still, she managed to find a way to participate in her ‘in-between’ position, and was actively involved in the discussions. The involved shifted between the teacher and student positions: she conducted both description assertives to share information, and question directives to receive information. Using assertives the involved described the state of affairs and recent events, and occasionally accounts her decisions and actions related to a particular business area. She also shared opinions about the events and announcements, and could reply to others’ questions by sharing her perception of the issue.

The following citations capture well both of the accounting and questioning actions. Firstly, the involved told the information she had received from the preceding discussion was ‘very interesting’ and that ‘personally I think that going with Microsoft makes a lot of sense’ and continued by explaining the rationale behind this opinion; here she takes a similar ‘teacher’ position as adopted by the first, omnipotent positioned discussant in the starting post.

    Last October, I wrote “the business we are in” [blog post] /…/ I think that the future of our business...
Until 11.2.11, I was thinking that Nokia could alone be the “single entity” that would be “in charge” of an entire mobile solution offering. But as Stephen [Elop] pointed out, there were many critical elements missing in our plate of spaghetti...

Then, she returned to the original topic, the strategy announcement and collaboration with Microsoft, and elaborated the reasons why she considers it ‘simply brilliant idea’:

**So combining the Nokia assets with some of the Microsoft assets is a simply brilliant idea!** There is no end to the list of synergies and this is very exciting indeed.

With these actions she demonstrated to the first ‘teacher’ positioned discussant and to other participants that she had internalised the available information, and that she had processed it and was able to make sense of the topic. Finally, she adopted a different position of a ‘student’, as she wrote there is a ‘big question in my mind’ and conducted two question directives because ‘this is not clear enough for me’:

*The big question in my mind* is: what is the “single entity” that is “in charge”? What is its legal structure? I keep hearing words like “synergy”, “partnership” but this is not clear enough for me...

With such question directives, involved exposed her lack of access to strategy information; on the other hand, this positioning abled her to participate using question directives unlike the strategy omnipotent.

There were several speech acts the involved did not utilise in participating the storyline. Firstly, she did not use encourage or urge directives. The discussion encouragements accounts were the exclusive right of the omnipotent position, since she was the only one positioned as having access to the original strategy information. She could encourage others to share their thoughts about the topic, while the others were more concerned receiving more information not just hearing each other’s opinions. Urging action, on the other hand, would not fit in the interactional frames of the making sense of Nokia storyline because the function was to share and receive information, not advise and demand actions; demand to share information did not take place either. The involved also refrained from showing emotions and using expressives, though she might express support towards strategy announcements. Frustration was commonly linked to urging action, which was not conducted in the storyline in general. As for confusion, the type of expressive speech act would have undermined the involved’s position as having at least partial strategy information.

The outsider position represented the ‘student’ in the making sense of Nokia storyline as it resembled a classical instruction interaction. As the second ‘main actor’ alongside the omnipotent, the outsider had good participation possibilities. The outsider was thus
able to turn her ignorance into resource, and conducting question directives was her main tactic to participate in the storyline. Notably, the most important resource for the outsider was indeed the lack of information and her unawareness, illustrated in the following citation:

Why did we sell MetaCarta 3 months after purchasing them? **This is slightly confusing.**

Here, the discussant participated in strategy-related discussion by posing a question with a question directive, and with confusion expressive confessing ‘this is slightly confusing’ for her. Her discursive resource was in fact ignorance, which allowed her to participate without corporate strategy information by pleading others to provide her more information.

The outsider could also use prescription speech acts and propose her interpretation of a strategy-related matter. Yet, she still referred to her ignorance, which was evident in the phrasing of her arguments. She emphasised it with expression such as ‘curious’, ‘perhaps’ and ‘guess’:

Interesting! **I'd want to hear the underlying thinking as well.**

What was **curious for me** was that the future-oriented third leg is now about "sustaining" ourselves as "mobile manufacturer". **To me, this is a surprisingly** limited future vision.

Anyway, **I guess** that this future stuff is still very much in flux with Nokia. And, paradoxically, the short-term actions that we do (and everything that happens in marketplace, and **perhaps** in mergers/aquisitions/divestments area) are the things that define our future now more than any future-oriented stuff we do in the labs.

p.s. if you click it open, the detailed description of "Sustain our future..." / "Future disruptions" talked still only about MeeGo. **Is this still our sustaining future strategy?** Bottom line: **I guess** we shouldn’t try to interpret the tea-leaves too much here...

Like the involved position, the outsider did not account using encourage or urge directives, nor embrace or frustration expressives; they were not applicable in her position and in this storyline for the same reasons. The outsider differed in the use of descriptive assertives, though. As she took a position of not having access to strategic information or decision-making, it would have not been possible in such a position to participate using this type of speech act: making statements formulated as ‘true’ information or ‘fact’ would have been in contradiction with the unawareness.

The supporting positions, techie and market analyst, did not have good participation possibilities because they did not fit in the teacher-student dynamics of interaction, as stated above. Especially techie position was very rare in the making sense of Nokia storyline. The techie could only utilise perception assertives and question directives.
Using assertives, the techie shared her technological interpretation of the issue at hand, such as in the following example where she accounted her opinion from a technical point of view:

Some quick thoughts on the new strategy. As we get the right to tweak the UI, I expect the Nokia flavor of WP7 to feature our new brand visuals as well as additional exclusive elements...

The techie also used question directives similarly as the involved and the outsider to receive information about a matter she is not familiar with; this type of speech act was used as a discursive tactic to enable participation. In the following citation the techie discusses Yahoo partnership, but again from a technical perspective:

Our Yahoo partnership will obviously be limited to S30/S40 mobile phones, but what will happen to the "Nokia account"?

Firstly, the discussant showed her technical knowledge by referring the ‘partnership will obviously limited to’ particular mobile phone models; with words such as the ‘obviously’ the discussant emphasised weight of her opinion. Yet, in the second part of the sentence the discussant posed a question about the future of Nokia account, making it evident the discussant did not have access to complete strategy information.

The techie thus used quite similar participation tactics as the strategy involved: on the other hand shared her perception of a matter, and on the other hand she asked for more information. Similarly, encouragement and urge directives, as well as different expressives were not possible modes of participation in the techie position within this storyline.

Like in the giving guidance to Nokia storyline, the market analyst could draw from the least modes of participation: description assertives. The market analyst used these speech acts to describe the state of affairs and recent in events outside of Nokia, in general in the communications technology market. The market analyst used her market knowledge as a discursive resource, and as a tactic to legitimise her accounts she formulated them as statements of facts. Though this may have given legitimacy for her participation, it also limited it significantly: the market analyst had positioned herself in such a distant, objective position that sharing her personal opinions, asking questions or expressing emotions was not possible without undermining the position.

Yet, making sense of Nokia storyline provided the market analyst position a slightly better participation possibility due to the teacher-student dynamics defining
interaction. Since market analyst was positioned as an expert and was able to share her knowledge to others, she could identify at least partly with the ‘teacher’ role similarly as the omnipotent: when others asked questions and requested for more information, the market analyst could participate by providing information. This is evident in the following citation which illustrates a typical address conducted in the market analyst position and intended as a reply to another discussant’s question or comment:

@/…/ MS already owns the ecosystem. They own the OS, they own the developer tools, they own the marketplace, they own Bing, they own XBox, and they own all those millions of user accounts and thousands of apps, and they also have a very large developer base who have been using MS technologies long before our new strategy. So, MS currently owns the ecosystem and that’s currently a fact. ...

In the citation, the discussant directed her address to a discussant who had shared her perceptions about the matter previously. The market analyst’s account was formulated as a fact statement by using a distanced, object voice; she did not use conditional form, referred to the statements as her opinions or thoughts, or used any other formulation that would have made the account sound subjective. She further emphasized this formulation by directly stating ‘that’s currently a fact’.

Even though the market analyst could use this participation tactic, the position was not very common in the making sense of Nokia storyline, which implies market analyst did not good participation possibilities. I argue this is due to the market knowledge drawn from as discursive resource. Because the characteristic intent of discussants participating in the storyline was to make sense of their own company’s strategy, general communications technology market analyses were at the most only partially relevant. Thus, the very discursive resources and tactics utilised to enable participation simultaneously set limits to it.

4.4.3. Dwelling in Failures

Occasionally, discussants were dwelling in Nokia’s failures and accounted actions they considered unsuccessful. Focus was in criticising Nokia and elaborating the company’s failures and misfortunes. Discussants shared their opinions about recent strategically relevant events or announcements, and elaborated them in a historical perspective. Unlike the sense-making storyline, the discussants did not strive for understanding; they might pose questions but they were usually rhetorical in nature. Moreover, they did not try to be constructive and give suggestions about how to overcome the failures as would been in the giving guidance to Nokia storyline. The main purpose in the
storyline was accounting failed actions and sharing feelings of disappointment. Dwelling in failures on thus represented a form of counter-talk. Similar cynicism and sarcasm was found by Mantere and Vaara (2008) in the strategy mystification discourse; as they argue, such acts reproduce non-participation (Mantere & Vaara 2008).

The dwelling in failures did not provide many opportunities for participation: only strategy involved and outsider as well as user participated, drawing from just a few different types of speech acts. The absence of the omnipotent position was in my view expected. As she identifies with the company and decision-makers, she would have been complaining about herself or her own sphere of operations. Moreover, it is likely it would not be culturally appropriate for such a position to publicly malign her organisation. The omnipotent did admit past failures occasionally in other storylines where the function of discussion was more constructive. The market analyst and techie positions on the other hand were not eligible to participate since they were positioned as more or less objective experts; they did not share their opinions or expressed emotions in other storylines either.

Because the function of the storyline was focused on airing one’s feelings and past events, the discussants did not need to establish their statements on recent strategy information. Therefore, because the positions differ mainly based on the information they draw from as their discursive resource, in this storyline positions did not differ from each other substantially. Each position except the outsider was participating using descriptive and perception assertives, and frustration expressives; the outsider did not account description assertives but otherwise took advantage of the same types of speech acts. The frustration expressives were often embedded in the accounts, instead of being separate direct statements about one’s emotions.

The main objective in the dwelling storyline was not to understand the problematic issue, which was evident in the formulation and content of accounts. Furthermore, it impacted which speech acts were available to discussants, and thus affected forms of participation in all positions. Firstly, discussants did not use question directives which would have been used to receive information, but instead accounted only rhetorical questions. Secondly, the fact that discussant did not elaborate reasons behind the issue but only the reasons why it was considered so negative demonstrated that focus was not on understanding the problem, like in the making sense of Nokia storyline, or on finding a solution to the problem, like in the giving guidance storyline. Therefore, a
question-answer type of interaction was not a possible frame for participation in the dwelling storyline. This further explains why only assertives and expressives were used to participate. Directives in forms of questions participation encouragement or urging action, and embrace or confusion expressives simply did not fit in the interaction where ventilating feelings was the main purpose.

As the lines between different positions were somewhat vague due to the non-information focus, discussants shifted between positions. Multiple positions could be assumed within one address such as in the following citation:

Why do we do things like publically announce killing of services? I just talked with my sister-in-law in Finland. She said she downloads things from Ovi Music (AKA - buys music) but she stopped when we announced we will stopping it (announcing we are stopping Comes with Music). This is a multiple fail. /.../ I do not have enough fingers on my hands to count the numbers of ways we have shot ourselves in the foot in the last few years.

In the beginning of the address the discussant assumed a user position; she was not discussing her own but her relative’s experiences, though. Similar to the other storylines, the discussion was first connected her account to a recent event, announcement or news. The discussant started the thread with rhetorical question about ‘killing of services’. The question already had a critical tone, and also the event at hand was framed as something negative by referring to it with the phrase ‘why do we do things like’ it and using a strong expression ‘killing’ when talking about ending a service. The user continued by elaborating the experience using descriptive assertives. Criticism towards the event grew even blunter as the discussant judged it to be ‘a multiple fail’. Here, she moved the strategy involved position and continued elaborating the situation in the company, linking the event to a chain of ‘ways we have shot ourselves in the foot in the last few years’. The involved then listed using description assertives several service and device related strategic decisions as examples to her point; drawing on such information as discursive resource positioned her partly to the strategy insider’s group and thus to the involved position.

The outsider position was usually assumed only in short addresses briefly commenting another discussant’s posts, such as the following example:

I hope 11 Feb won’t bring another suicidal announcement (like embracing WP7 which could have a huge publicity impact on MeeGo).

The outsider’s participation differed from the involved and user positions only in regards to lack of description assertives. She was not positioned as having strategy
information like the involved or ‘expert’ information as the user, and thus she could not make similar descriptive statements.

4.4.4. Cheerleading Nokia

The fourth storyline of cheerleading Nokia was an opposite of the former; it included showing support and spreading joy to the other discussants. In the cheerleading Nokia storyline discussants expressed their support for a recent strategy-related announcement or event. The storyline differed from the making sense of Nokia and giving guidance to Nokia storylines, because either sense-making or suggestions for action was not included—only expressions of positive feelings, encouragement and support. As in the other storylines, the discussion began with reference to a recent strategy announcement or event. In some instances, the starting post itself was formulated as a strategy announcement, yet it usually referred to some bigger strategy announcement. However, the storyline did not exist separately very often, or at least it did not emerge in the beginning of a discussion thread. Cheerleading storyline was most likely to begin after a post belonging to the making sense of Nokia; often it followed a sense-making storyline post that was formulated as a strategy announcement.

The cheerleading Nokia storyline provided the least participation possibilities both regarding general strategizing and regarding discussion participation. Firstly, as it was the most enactment and past-focused form of interaction, participants merely echoed past events and announcements, but did not try to affect decision-making concerning themselves. Secondly, only the strategy positions were able to participate in unfolding the storylines; they were also able to utilise only assertives and expressives. All of the strategy positions utilised assertives and expressive, and within those categories they used only opinion assertives and embrace expressives with the exception of omnipotent who described instead of telling her opinions. The positions were thus equally able to participate in what comes to the number of different types of speech acts. Characteristics of the participation impeding mystification discourse (Mantere & Vaara 2008) were evident in the cheerleading Nokia storyline. Discussants adapting an authority position were praised similarly as religious preachers (see Mantere & Vaara 2008). They were often heroified for their achievements, which links the storyline also to another participation impeding discourse of disciplining that Mantere and Vaara (2008) found in their study.
Like in the dwelling in failures, function of the cheerleading Nokia storyline was to share emotions without further elaborations of the subject at hand. Similarly, as sharing emotions do not require insider information, the storyline could have in fact provided multiple ways to participate. Yet, the interactional frame in the storyline prevented part of the positions to participate altogether, and restricted the types of speech acts available for the positions who took part. Discourse-wise the cheerleading storyline also provided only few modes of participation, and only for the strategy positions. The storyline was completely lacking techie, user and market analyst positions. As the discussion concerned mostly abstract general strategy topics, it would have simply been very difficult to include technology or user point of views in such discussion. On the other hand, as the storyline was very inward and focused on emotions, expert viewpoints would have not fitted in either. This I argue is the reason market analyst position was absent in the storyline. The position draws on strategically relevant market information and thus could have contributed to general strategy discussion, but since the focus was on expressing emotions and opinions, the market analyst did not have any suitable speech acts in her repertoire. This argument is fortified by the notion that market analyst did participate in making sense of Nokia storyline, which concerned similar topics from a knowledge point of view.

When the omnipotent took part in the cheerleading, she did it by starting a new discussion thread. Her starting posts were similar to the making sense of Nokia storyline as they included elaboration of a recent strategy event; similarly, the omnipotent used description assertives in these accounts. In the following citation CEO Stephen Elop provided a status update regarding the reception of Nokia’s strategy announcement; the post was also a sense-making post as it explained the recent situation.

While we are still in the middle of all of the activities here at CES, **I wanted to do a quick post about the reception of our announcements** here over the last 24 hours. ... 

**The big news, of course, was the launch of the Lumia 900. /.../ I know there have been some questions about "why launch now and ship a little later", and the short answer is /.../**

As well, **we announced a series of partnerships /.../**

**We have build a strategy and now a product ...**

Yet, due to the cheering expressions of support, the post is also part of a cheerleading Nokia storyline. The tone of the post was set right in the beginning, as Elop was telling that the ‘various announcements around our strategy for the US have been VERY well received’. The positive tone of the post was reinforced with expressions like ‘there is a
lot of excitement’, ‘big news’, stunning’, ‘great’, and ‘very positive’. Like in the dwelling in failures storyline, expression speech acts were mostly embedded, and thus such expressions operated as embrace types of expressive speech acts. The omnipotent concluded the post with supporting and cheering comments that ‘this is another great example of how urgency has led to an increased clock speed at Nokia, and how through empathy... we can do our best work’. Again, the statement was accounted using description assertives instead of opinion assertives; as mentioned before, the omnipotent cannot formulate her statements as opinions since it would undermine her status. In addition, as the main function of the storyline was not to understand strategy or to share ideas, she omnipotent did not have possibilities to use encouragement directives common in other storylines.

The involved and the outsider positions participated similarly using perception assertives and embrace expressives. They only differed in the information they drew from in their accounts. The involved participated using assertives where she referred to deeper level knowledge and understanding of a recent strategy event or announcement, such as in below example:

I love what I just heard at the Nokia House town hall meeting. **Going forward Nokia will be an ecosystem shaper.** We’ll innovate to differentiate and if the innovation is good for the entire WP ecosystem (Samsung, HTC, etc... and developers) we’ll ask MS to integrate our innovation into the WP platform for the benefit of others. **This makes it clear that war of ecosystems is not inward facing. It is not about differentiation at the cost of the entire ecosystem.** We have to beat Android and Apple.

I loved the quality of questions from the audience. It shows we are already working on completing the gaps in the strategy.

I loved the sense of optimism Stephen instilled. Not just in me but I believe the entire audience.

A **perfect ending** to a tough week.

The address was not, however, a making sense or giving guidance storyline account, since the discussant merely stated what she had learned but did not proceed to asking clarifying question or suggesting actions. The ‘love’ embrace expressives further emphasised this interpretation.

The outsider position had similar participation possibilities even though she did not exhibit possessing strategy information. This was possible due to the interactional frame of the storyline focused only on sharing positive emotions. The following two outsider position citations illustrate well how in this storyline the main purpose of participants was sharing feelings; making an embracing account was enough to participate.
— Is it just me or do others find this brutally honest assessment from Stephen Elop truly refreshing? ...

— Absolutely... spot on, invigorating, inspiring and refreshing! Looking forward to embracing our new strategy!

The outsider did however link her account to a strategy announcement or event as well, for example like in the first citation where discussant published a link to a blog post. She then accounted an embrace expressive, linguistically formulated as question ‘is it just me or do others find this brutally honest assessment from Stephen Elop truly refreshing’. She did not elaborate on the announcement nor tried to interpret it; she only showed her sympathy for this ‘truly refreshing’ blog post. The storyline continued with similar statements of support from the outsider position, defining the announcement as ‘invigorating, inspiring and refreshing’. The discussant also showed their support for Nokia and the strategy which they are ‘looking forward to embracing’.

The above analysis of different storylines, positions and speech acts illustrated the complex interplay in positioning. The acts of positioning indicate what kind of participation occurs in strategizing discussions. Furthermore, I presented that a general framework of strategy participation shapes the acts of positioning and (re)creates participation possibilities for organisational members. Next, I will draw conclusions of these findings and discuss their implications.
5 DISCUSSION

5.1. Conclusions

Currently, most strategy scholars and practitioners acknowledge the importance of organisational participation, as it has been discovered to have a significant impact on the success of both strategy implementation and strategizing in general (Floyd & Wooldridge 2000, Westley 1990, Mintzberg 1994, Balogun & Johnson 2004). Though the effects of participation and the lack of participation in specific have been explored, there is little cumulative knowledge on the reasons behind different modes of participation. To better understand what enables or limits organisational members to take part in strategizing, I turned to the discursive construction of organisational social interaction. By taking a discursive perspective on strategizing I aimed to explore the subtle, embedded and often unnoticed power relations and structures impacting organisational members’ possibilities to take part in strategizing. I applied a theoretical framework of positioning and empirical methods of discourse and narrative analysis to gain insights into the detailed discursive and interactional frames enhancing or limiting participation possibilities.

The analysis of strategy discussions in Nokia’s SocialCast discussion forum demonstrated that modes of participation are shaped and predicted by a general strategy participation framework. The framework constitutes of a temporal dimension past-future and a strategy dimension construction-enactment. When focusing on past, participants do not seek to understand the impacts discussed events will have, nor do they try to impact the ir future effects. Thus, past-oriented participation is either accounting of past events or accepting a past event by agreeing to it. When discussion orients to the past and to strategy construction, participation type is accounting. If past-oriented discussion concerns strategy enactment, participation type will be agreeing. When participation is on the contrary future-oriented, discussants elaborate events in order to understand their effects, or they plan future actions themselves. Participation type in strategizing discussion is planning when discussant orients to the future and to strategy construction. When future-oriented discussion focuses on strategy enactment, type of participation is in turn understanding.

These types of participation predict how acts of positioning will be formulated. The type of participation affects which positions can be assumed; which speech acts are available; and which storylines will be unfolded. In the SocialCast discussions about the
transforming Nokia, accounting participation type was linked to the dwelling in failures storyline. The accounting participation type further predicted participation from involved or outsider position, utilising frustration expressives as main speech acts. The planning type of participation in turn occurred typically in the giving guidance to Nokia storyline. Any of the positions could take part, but the strategy involved was still the most likely position in the planning participation type. The planning type also implied urge directives will be used, even though almost all other speech acts were possible as well. Strategy participation type of agreeing was connected to the cheerleading Nokia storyline, and further to the use of embrace expressive speech acts and strategy positions, of which outsider was most likely assumed. Lastly, the understanding participation type interrelated with the making sense of Nokia storyline. The understanding participation type was commonly assumed by the outsider position; yet, most other positions could participate with the understanding type as well. Moreover, the understanding type of participation predicted particularly confusion expressives and question directives will be the most common forms of speech acts.

In Nokia’s SocialCast discussion forum some types of participation were more common than others. Typically, participation took place as in the forms of understanding or planning. Therefore, storyline unfolding in interaction was usually either making sense of Nokia or giving guidance to Nokia. These were also the storylines where multiple positions/speech act combinations were possible; thus, they enabled good participation possibilities for different organisational members. Most often discussants assumed a strategy position. In the making sense storyline the outsider was the most common, while in the giving guidance storyline the involved position commonly assumed. Most common speech acts in SocialCast were assertives, since they were enabled in every participation type. However, since understanding and planning types of participation were the most common, question directives, confusion expressives and urge directives were also typical in the discussions.

To conclude, participation in strategy discussion typically related to giving or receiving strategy information, and to giving or receiving suggestions for strategic actions. Differently positioned participants had varying, yet equally important roles in driving discussion and promoting participation. Particular participants helped others to understand strategy or some specific aspect related to strategy. Certain participants encouraged others to make their opinions and ideas heard. Others in turn focused on seeking new information and thus enhanced also their colleagues’ strategy participation.
competencies. Therefore, participation is best enabled when the whole spectrum of positions are given a voice. Embracing polyphony is the most significant factor in making strategy participation possible.

The findings of this study contribute in building the currently narrow body of knowledge in strategy participation (Mantere 2005, Mantere & Vaara 2008). I brought together organisational development and strategy research traditions in order to form a deeper, more comprehensive picture of aspects affecting strategy participation possibilities. Therefore, also the theoretical implications of this study are twofold. Firstly, the study provides novel insights into organisational participation theories based in organisational development tradition. In fact, some of the findings are somewhat contradictory with Pasmore and Fagans’ (1992) argument that lack of competence prevents participation. This study proved that organisational members can overcome such incompetence with specific discursive tactics. The outsider is an explicit example, as she is able to reverse her unawareness into a participation-enabling discourse tactic. Instead of trying to position herself as competent, she on presented herself as confused. Secondly, the study illustrated the dynamic, multidimensional nature of discursive elements shaping participation. While previous studies (Mantere & Vaara 2008) have sought to understand participation by analysing how strategy discourses are constructed, I turned focus to the very acts through which strategy discourses are constructed. With positioning theory (Harré & Langenhove 1999) I showed that this dimension is crucial in understanding complex phenomena such as participation.

5.2. Limitations

Nonetheless, there are also limitations in this study. First, I explored only corporate social media discussions, while strategizing and strategy discussions take place also in other locations. Participation and participation possibilities may be significantly different in varying venues. On the other hand, I focused only on how participating takes place in the strategy-related discussions, but I cannot comment on whether such participation is in fact beneficial for organisational members or the company. I have not studied the change in time and how the change in Nokia possible changes the nature of strategy conversation. Temporal changes in strategy discussion would thus be a relevant topic for future research. Lastly, it should also be emphasised that narrative and discourse analytical studies present the researcher’s particular interpretation
(Pinnegar & Daynes 2007). Subjective interpretations and varying readings are the norm in such analyses, since they depend on all the attributes of the interpreter. Therefore, even though I have aimed to objectivity, I acknowledge this study represents only one possible interpretation of the phenomenon.

5.3. Suggestions for Future Research

Studies of strategy participation possibilities remain scarce, and therefore there would be plenty good opportunities for succeeding research. Since this study analysed only social media discussions, future research on strategy participation could focus how organisational members take part in strategy in different settings. Scholars could especially examine whether organisational members employ similar discursive resources and tactics in different contexts. Future research should also study the link between positions in discussion and positions in organisational hierarchy; presumably these are tightly connected, but it should be still confirmed in future studies. On the other hand, social media discussion forum would be an interesting topic in itself. Following researchers could examine what effects this particular context has on strategizing. Furthermore, further studies could doubly widen the temporal perspective of analysis. First, the historical change in strategy discussions and strategy participation should be explored; it could also be compared to the historical change in the organisation in general. Second, it could be investigated what happens after the social media discussions. Does participation in strategizing in the discussion forum actually translate to participation in strategizing in general, i. e. do the discussions have any impact in the organisation?

5.4. Managerial Implications

The study has several practical implications related to strategy communications and strategy implementation. Firstly, the study indicates that strategies should be communicated in a way that takes into consideration all the different positions. A strategy announcement could thus include something for everyone, so to speak, in order to attract participation and to provide room for the varying perspectives. Furthermore, strategy communications should follow the interactional structures of giving guidance to Nokia or making sense of Nokia storylines to enable good participation possibilities. This indicates that management should actively share strategy information and encourage participation, and especially be ready to answer to
employees’ questions. Moreover, management should openly encourage employees to share their ideas. As the giving guidance storyline and multiple urge directives illustrated, employees do have opinions and are eager to share them when given opportunity. Managers should also acknowledge the ‘non-strategy’ voices, and the contributions and efforts of these positions. If there is space for participation for these different points of view, participation possibilities grow significantly. Listening to these voices may help strategists to formulate more effective strategies with the help of bottom-up information, and on the other to increase strategy implementation success through involvement. Thus, creating space for polyphony of voices and letting them be heard through giving guidance and making sense storylines would assure a good basis for discussion and participation. Through better participation possibilities also the positive benefits of effective participation will increase.
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