

Course: SKOM12
Term: Spring 2022
Supervisor Mats Heide
Examiner B

Emergence of strategy in practice: Strategizing processes of communication practitioners

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Master's thesis



Abstract

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Despite increased interest for process-oriented and complexity driven research in strategic communication, much research is still based on traditional definitions and assumptions of strategy and communication. This is problematic, since research increasingly suggests that organizations are constituted bottom-up through interactions and communication, where strategy is influenced and co-created throughout organizations. To further conceptualization of strategy and strategic communication practitioners, this qualitative case study aims to analyze how strategic communication practitioners are strategizing in practice. Based on observations and interviews conducted during a three week period, analysis was conducted through a lens of social constructionism, with influences of sensemaking theory, communication constitutes organizations perspective, theories of strategizing and emergence of strategy. The results yielded a framework of strategizing, where two overarching processes were identified: *stimulating interaction and co-creation*, and *inoculating a communicative perspective*. These two processes are brought to life by several subprocesses of communicational practice. Through which practitioners reach intersubjective understandings and definitions of strategic needs, which garnered peripheral and emerging strategy. This materialized through in-group discussion, strategic listening, and ongoing identity negotiation. Furthermore, a tension of role-expectations was identified and analyzed by applying the proposed framework of strategizing. This showed that practitioners actively strategize in their in-group interactions to work through organizational tensions and tensions of role-expectations, which impacts both strategy planning and formulation.

Keywords: Strategizing, Strategic communication, Communication practitioners, Strategy as practice, Emergence of strategy

Word count: 19 674

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1. Introduction

With increased critique of communicators value in the public sector (Arnqvist, 2021) and threat of strategic communication becoming “too important to be left to communication professionals” (Falkheimer et al., 2017, p. 100), communications strategic value seems to be at risk. Issues for communicators to do the right things in the contemporary organizational landscape (Falkheimer et al., 2016; Falkheimer & Heide, 2018) and increased attention to communication as constitutive of organizations (Heide et al., 2018) provide reasons to engage in research focused on unraveling what communication practitioners actually do strategically. To defend the value of communications in a strategic sense, researchers need to continuously seek to understand what strategy *is*, what it *can* be, and how practitioners strategize in their work.

Despite arguments and growing interest in how interactions and narratives form strategic practice (Ville & Mounoud, 2010), research on communication professionals' actions are sparse (Heide et al., 2018). Similarly, research regarding strategic communication on an interaction and micro-level is nearly absent. A reason for this might be because of dominant views of: “strategy as a rationally planned prerequisite for organizational structure” (Guldbrandsen & Just, p. 71). However, this view has been heavily challenged in the 21st century by perspectives such as strategy-as practice (SAP), strategy as sensemaking, strategy as emergent, and communication perspectives that takes communication beyond the traditional transmission perspective (Guldbrandsen & Just, 2020). Through these perspectives, strategy is rather understood as something people do (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007), something emerging through narratives (Winkler & Etter, 2018), and as something created through enactment and talking (Weick, 1995). Through these perspectives, actors, their interactions, and communication within organizations are at the core of strategy and strategic communication.

Communication, especially in an organizational context, has been fundamentally challenged similarly to the concept of strategy. In response to the

traditional understanding of communication as a linear process of transmission from sender to receiver (Guldbrandsen & Just, 2020), perspectives and theories have been developed that embrace processes of communication and its constitutive effect. Through growing perspectives such as the communication constitutes organization (CCO) perspective, communication is understood as both the creator of an organization and as a process forever keeping it alive, where each individual's communication contributes to the entity's continued survival and success (Heide et al., 2018).

Employing a social constructionist perspective, and theories such as strategy-as-practice and CCO, have very interesting implications for how strategic communication is conceptualized and understood. From the perspective of strategic communication as emergent:

(...) strategies may come into being without preceding purpose or goal; that strategizing is not restricted to formal practice, but is crucially dependent on peripheral forms that in many aspects contradict formal logics of strategizing; and that the very definition of what counts as strategy is open for debate in ongoing negotiations in the organizational domain and beyond. (Winkler & Etter, 2018, p. 384).

This means that strategy, as well as strategic communication, must broaden its focus in research to include the study of informal processes, interactions, and narratives of strategic practice in order to get closer to understanding what strategic communication is. If strategy emerges bottom-up through actors' interactions and conversations, the value of uncovering this process is clear. If we understand how strategy emerges, it might be possible to create an environment where strategizing can prosper. Researching strategic communication on a micro-level might also uncover arguments for why communication practitioners are valuable members of meaning creation, strategizing and strategy development. Strategic communication research through such perspectives are sparse, but have been conducted by scholars such as Andersson (2020) and Marchiori and Bulgacov (2012). Where research has shown that by engaging with strategy discourse, communication practitioners are empowered to claim intra-organizational power (Andersson, 2020), as well as interesting discussions on how “socially constructed communication practices legitimated and

institutionalized strategic practices based upon social interaction” (Marchiori & Bulgacov, 2012, p. 209). Through research from these perspectives it is apparent that strategy and strategizing might not be what we most often think. This gives further reason to research how strategy, and strategizing, emerges and develops through communication and interaction throughout all levels of hierarchy.

Another issue that research through SAP and strategic communication as emergent perspectives can assist in unfolding is the tension that exists in communication practitioners' logics. It is argued that strategic communication practitioners should adhere to a professionalism logic, thus “being communication advocates and seeing and analyzing important organizational decisions from a communication perspective (...)” (Falkheimer & Heide, 2018, p. 83). But, evidence from previous European Communication Monitor reports (2014-2016) suggest that practitioners are mostly adhering to a managerial logic in their work in order to gain status in their organizations (Falkheimer et al., 2016). This managerial logic employed means that communication activities and communication as a function is tethered down to simple measurable goals and key performance indicators, thus reducing communication to a mere tool for growth. This is especially problematic if communication as an occupation is to gain more power in the organizational context, since it depletes communicators to executors of activities, where strategy is something the organization has, rather than viewing strategy as something organizations do (Simonsson & Heide, 2021).

If we are to understand strategic communication, I argue that we need to view communication as fundamental for organizations, and strategy as something organizations do. Therefore, it is immensely important to understand how communication practitioners are ‘doing’ strategy to uncover what processes and interactions are part of sustaining and developing strategic communication. To increase knowledge about how communication professionals work in accordance with a ‘professionalism logic’, I argue that one must understand how strategy is done in practice, through identity, narratives and interactions. Where practitioners are actively navigating the dynamics of pleasing management with measurables, while simultaneously creating intangible value and defending their professionalism as strategic communicators.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this research is to increase knowledge of how communication practitioners are actually ‘doing’ strategy in practice. To acquire this knowledge, theories of strategy as emergent (Winkler & Etter, 2018; Guldbrandsen & Just, 2020) are employed, guided by a social constructionist perspective, including sensemaking (Weick et al., 2005) and CCO (Heide et al., 2018). The subject of research is communication practitioners working in strategic roles in a Swedish municipality. Hence, this is a qualitative case study, where a municipality was deemed a suitable case due to its public and democratic function. Empirical material was gathered through qualitative observations and semi-structured interviews which was analyzed through an interpretivist stance, guided by previously stated perspectives and theories. To increase knowledge of how communication practitioners are ‘doing’ strategy, I intend to answer the following question:

- How do communication practitioners strategize in their daily work life?

The research question regards to the act of strategizing, which is defined as a: “(...) process of making communication work strategically for an organization; as the streams of purposeful decisions made and actions taken over time regarding how, when and with whom to communicate in order to fulfill an organization's goals” (Guldbrandsen & Just, 2020, p. 34). Strategizing is in this sense purposeful acts to benefit the organization and its actors. However, this view is broadened through a consequentialist practice approach, where strategy and strategizing are not only purposeful use of communication with clear cause and effect, but also something that emerges through actors’ actions and practices, which scholars may identify as strategic (Jarzabowski, 2021; Guldbrandsen & Just, 2020).

This research contributes to the field of strategic communication by deepening understanding of how strategic communication takes form in practice and how it is conceptualized by practitioners. It will also contribute to the strategy-as-practice field by broadening the scope of research subjects, by including communicators as subjects and therefore increasing the knowledge of how strategy emerges through narratives and practice in different organizational functions.

2. Literature review

This chapter mainly covers the development of research on strategic communication and organizations in regards to strategy. Firstly, major studies on communication practitioners are presented in order to give an overview of what is perceived as main issues in practice. Following is a section devoted to the paradox of communication logics in organizations: managerialism versus professionalism. Where research on tensions is explored to understand how strategic communication as an organizational function is driven in two different directions, in pursuit of the same goal of more power in organization. This is followed by an overview of the rising management perspective: strategy-as-practice, where strategy is understood as something organizations do, rather than something organizations own. This opens up for research on strategizing communication, which is covered at the end of this chapter to give an overview of the sparse strategy research conducted from a micro-perspective in the field of strategic communication.

2.1 The landscape of communication professionals

Two major studies on communication as a profession and communication in organizations (among other aspects) are the European Communication Monitor (ECM) and the Communicative Organizations project (Heide et al., 2018). The empirical material that these two studies have garnered are heavily present in academic articles within the field of public relations and strategic communication (for example: Heide et al., 2018; Falkheimer et al., 2016; Falkheimer et al., 2017). The ECM is an annual report that started in 2007, with several thousand participants from over 40 countries, many of which having managerial responsibilities, academic backgrounds, and many years of experience (Zerfass et al., 2021). In the latest issue (2021), they investigated communicators' work time spent in five roles identified from literature and tasks: Ambassador (23.7%), Communicator (42.8%), Coach (27.7%), Manager (31.1%), and Advisor (26.2%) (Zerfass et al., 2021). The most common role is the communicator which, like the ambassador role, are mainly

outbound roles where the focus are external stakeholders and relations. The coach and advisor roles are more inbound, focusing on supporting internal organizational actors, and the manager role involves more typical managerial tasks and leadership. A major takeaway is that practitioners most often are switching between roles based on their time spent on different tasks.

In the report, they also investigated the most important strategic issues according to communication professionals, with ‘building and maintaining trust’ being the most important (38.9%), followed by exploring new ways of creating and distributing content (32.4%), dealing with sustainable development and social responsibility (31.3%), and linking business strategy and communication (30.5%) (Zerfass et al., 2021). This is the fourth year in a row that building and maintaining trust is deemed the most important issue, where it had previously been ‘linking business strategy and communication’ (2013-2016) and coping with the digital evolution and the social web (2017) (Zerfass et al, 2021).

While the ECM report is a great study, its pure focus on experienced communication professionals excludes perceptions on communications from other organizational members, which is important if one is to understand communication as something that constitutes organizations (Heide et al., 2018). This issue is something that Heide et al. (2019) considered in the communicative organization report. The aim of the study was to “(...) improve understanding of the importance of communication for reaching goals and attaining success in an organization” (Heide et al., 2019, p. 5), with empirical data being a mix of approximately 8,000 survey respondents and about 140 interviews from communicators, managers and coworkers in Swedish cities, municipalities, regions and organizations. Their goal was to find out what constitutes a communicative organization, where communication is a way of life rather than a tool to be utilized. A communicative organization values dialogue and furthers mutual understanding, always has communication on the agenda with a view of communication as the fundamental factor of the organization's existence. This allows for great adaptability and reaction to changes, where each coworker's communication is valued and communication practitioners are the driving force of communicative development (Heide, et al., 2019). The communication practitioners' part in creating a communicative organization is to move towards development and strategic actions, support coworkers and managers in their reflection on communication, create and work in accordance with communication

plans, and improve evaluation of communications, rather than working with operative tasks (Heide et al., 2019). Communication practitioners should be heavily tied to value-creation in their work, whether it is tied to stakeholder interests, intangible assets, strategy emergence or supporting communication throughout the organization.

From these two reports, some major issues for communication professionals can be highlighted. Organizations are still mainly viewed through a traditional management logic, which creates a skewed view of communication and value-creation. ‘To build and maintain trust’ is the most important issue for practitioners (Zerfass et al., 2021), but evaluation of communication is severely lacking, largely due to the traditional logic (Heide et al., 2019). Linking business strategy to communication is still a major issue for communication professionals, which further shows the problematic logic that is dominating organizational life. If communication practice and professionalism is to develop, communication needs to be understood as fundamental for the survival of organizations, as running through all levels of organizations bottom-up, and expectations on communications must ultimately change to really grasp its value. Lastly, it is apparent from both studies that operational work is deemed ‘unworthy’ for the strategic communication practitioner.

2.2 Expectations of communications: Managerialism vs Professionalism

A theme that has developed through research is the discrepancy of expectations on communication practitioners and their roles (Falkheimer & Heide, 2018; Steyn, 2009; Zerfass et al., 2014). These expectations have a major impact on the perceived value of communication practitioners, highlighting the importance of finding out what practitioners are actually doing and what discourses exist in strategic communication practice.

A critique against research on communication practitioners is that it usually only includes a single perspective on the expectations of communications (Zerfass et al., 2014), thus hindering a more holistic, or institutional, understanding of the role of corporate communications. This has major practical implications for communication practice, since expectations from CEO’s and managers affect the power and influence communications can have. In a way, it creates a context where

communication practitioners have to adhere to managerial logic, rather than being a professional (Falkheimer et al., 2016). As described by Zerfass et al. (2014): “In the end, the relevance and power depends on the perceptions, beliefs and expectations which Chief Executive Officers and other top managers hold towards communications and its contribution to organizational goals” (p. 62). Stemming from these issues, empirical suggestions from several ECM reports (2011-2013), and the *Communications and Public Relations General Accepted Practices* studies (The Gap study VII) (Swerling et al., 2019, as cited in Zerfass et al., 2014), Zerfass et al. (2014) decided to research both CEO and communication professionals' expectations and understandings of corporate communication, transparency, and roles. In their findings, there are several overlaps in CEO and communication professionals' view of communications, as well as some discrepancies that might hinder communicators practice. While the information and motivation of employees is a major concern for top executives in regards to communication, communication professionals rather focus on image reputation (Zerfass et al., 2014). Although there are some overlaps in expectations, the authors main conclusions are that: “(...) perspectives diverge quite often and attention should be directed towards a better alignment between top management and those leading the strategic communication function” (Zerfass et al., 2014, p. 62). This notion of discrepancy is echoed by Falkheimer et al., (2016), who argues that expectations of communications, and a wish to be part of the main coalition, may have damaging consequences for communications main values. They argue that a major issue for communication practitioners is the paradox of two conflicting logics: managerialism vs professionalism. In their study, they present empirical data based on the 2014 ECM report and “The Communicative Organization” project. Where practitioners describe: “that ”linking business strategy and communication” is the main challenge” (p. 153), and their described way of doing this adheres heavily to management logic, where: “The actions described follow traditional management logic: organizational strategic goals are broken down to communication goals and the effects of communication efforts are measured” (Falkheimer et al., 2016, p. 153).

As argued by the Falkheimer et al. (2016), managerialism reasoning focus on being a part of the managing coalition at the cost of the communication profession, since for example, there is a tradeoff of communication values that cannot be measured as performance or improvement, in order to show measurable results

(Falkheimer et al., 2016). While Falkheimer et al. (2016) do discuss different aspects and understandings of professionalism, questions arise about what actions are considered as part of the professionalism logic, something that Simonsson and Heide (2021) tries to answer. According to Simonsson & Heide (2021), the reputation of communication and PR practice have developed in a positive direction in the last two decades, while still being the object of criticism for: “(...) acting as spin doctors or as advocates of the interests of various organizations” (Grandien, 2017; Gregory, 2020), as cited in Simonsson & Heide, 2021, p. 253). With critique like this comes difficulties in legitimacy, not only due to negative notions of spinning information and hiding truth, but also due to lack of professionalization of communication practitioners (Falkheimer & Heide, 2018; Simonsson & Heide, 2021; Falkheimer et al., 2016). Simonsson and Heide (2021) base their study on the particular issue of communication practitioners striving to be part of the managing coalition, and issues of adhering to a managerial logic (Falkheimer et al., 2016; Simonsson & Heide, 2021). The empirical material in Simonsson & Heide’s (2021) study comes from the previously mentioned four-year research project: The Communicative organization, where managers, coworkers and communicators were surveyed and interviewed on several topics between 2014-2018.

In their attempt to understand professionalism in communication practice, they identified three themes in previous research and literature: the *professional roles* in occupation, *access to the dominant coalition*, and *status and legitimacy of the occupation* (Simonsson & Heide, 2021). First two of which are very similar to Frandsen and Johansen's (2015) identified themes in their review of public relations research on practitioners. The first theme stems from research that has tried to position or understand what roles communication practitioners have, and can have, in organizations. Research on roles have been present since the 70’s, with early studies defining five specific roles:

Among the earliest research is Broom and his colleagues (Broom, 1982; Broom & Smith, 1979) who have developed a role typology based on consulting literature. They found five consulting roles: expert prescriber, communication technician, problem-solving process facilitator, communication facilitator, and acceptant legitimizer. (Simonsson & Heide, 2021, p. 258).

Despite being fairly old, these definitions show great resemblance to more recent research. For example, Steyn (2009) researched two different role definitions of PR: Steyn's three roles and EBOK's (European body of knowledge) four roles. Steyn's three roles are: the strategist, manager, and technician; and the EBOK roles: reflective, managerial, operational, and educational. In both Steyn's and EBOKs definitions we find similarities to Broom (1982) and Broom and Smith (1979) in e.g. the communication technician-operational, and communication facilitator-educational, showings signs that Broom's definitions have partly stood the test of time. Further similarities can be found in Tench et al. (2017), where the authors review communication excellence based on previous ECM reports (2017 and earlier) where four (strategic) roles are present: Business advisers, strategic facilitators, isolated experts and operational support. Also in these role definitions, we find similarities. However, role research has gained criticism for making a clear distinction between the strategist and the technician, since tasks attributed to each often overlap and for its lack of focus on the process of role-creation (Simonsson & Heide, 2021). It is argued that it might be more interesting to look at narratives and discourse of practice as well as contextual aspects.

The second theme Simonsson & Heide (2021) identified (as well as Frandsen & Johansen, 2015) is *access to the dominant coalition*, this regards the view that if communication practice is to gain legitimacy and have a chance of working more strategically, practitioners need to join managerial and executive powers, and in doing so, stop taking orders and start working at a higher hierarchical level. This notion is rooted in an institutional understanding, where it is necessary for communication professionals to join the dominant coalition in order to work correctly (Frandsen & Johansen, 2015). According to Tench et al. (2017), the importance of getting a seat at the table of decision makers is tied to the ECM reports top strategic challenge according to professionals between 2013-2016, that of "linking communication to business corporate or business strategies" (p. 120-121). They argue that this issue shows that the communication profession is still very much fighting for positions of strategic management. However, as mentioned, suspicions have been raised regarding this perspective, since getting a seat at the table might mean following a managerial principle that might take communication practitioners away from doing the right things, by simply doing things right (Falkheimer et al., 2016). Doing the right thing is not simply a matter of being part of a dominant coalition,

although heavily tied to having influence, it is also a matter of working proactively in manners that create future opportunities (Dahlman & Heide, 2021). The third theme, *status and legitimacy of the profession*, which is tied to the previous theme, regards internal and external legitimacy of the communication profession. Since internal legitimacy is low, organizational control over communication practices is high. But the practice of strategic communication deals with organizational legitimacy externally, which shows a discrepancy between external view of practice and internal position.

In their results, Simonsson and Heide (2021) highlight the paradox of viewing communication through the lens of managerialism, since managerialism praises the rationalization of processes, defragmenting communication to a simple form of transmission of information in a linear manner (Simonsson & Heide, 2021). This renders communication less useful since it diminishes the value-creation of communication to measurable results. This is further discussed in regards to the previously mentioned ECM report that states that the most important issue for communicators in recent years has been to link business goals to communication. If business goals are not built on a communicational foundation, communication activities rarely match strategic goals, instead consisting of broken down measurables. While this rationalization of communication practice makes little sense for furthering the professionalization of communication, it is rather used as a way for practitioners to defend their value as an organizational member (Simonsson & Heide, 2021). Breaking down communication activities to measurable ‘hands-on’ values also has problematic implications for evaluation (Dahlman & Heide, 2021), which is deemed one of the most important aspects according to communication professionals. Yet something they report spending very sparse time doing (Simonsson & Heide, 2021).

A main difference between managerial logic and professionalism logic is the view of communication (see table 1). Communication through a professionalism lens is fundamental for all organizations as it is through communication an entity is produced, reproduced and meaning is created (Simonsson & Heide, 2021). Through a professionalism communicative logic, communication is something that organizations do (Jarzabowski et al., 2007), through all levels of an organization (Heide & Simonsson, 2011), where interaction and conversations between coworkers is what creates value and ultimately strategy. Working professionally is to

accept uncertainties of organizational complexity, resist expectations of managerial logic and give room for reflection.

Table 2. Contrasting logics and implications.

	Managerial logic	Communicative logic
<i>Epistemology – what are the conditions required for a belief to constitute knowledge?</i>	Rationalism	Social constructionism
<i>Communication – what is the function of it?</i>	Communication as information distribution and a tool for control	Communication as sensemaking and social construction
<i>Value creation – how is value proved?</i>	Quantitative values, tangible assets, shareholder focus, linear value chains	Qualitative values, immaterial assets, stakeholder focus, complex value networks
<i>Strategic communication – how is it understood?</i>	Direct link between business goals and communication goals, communication as conducted by a separate function	Indirect relationship between communication and business goals (obliquity), communication as conducted by the whole organization
<i>Strategy – what does it entail?</i>	Strategy – something an organization has, controlled and executed by managers	Strategy – something an organization do, emergent and materialized by coworkers
<i>Role of communication practitioners – what should they do in organizations?</i>	Communication practitioners as executors – demand-delivery	Communication practitioners as enablers and developers – strategic partners
<i>Focus of communicative ability – who is the target group?</i>	Managers	Managers and coworkers

Table 1. Contradictions and implications of managerial and professional logics in strategic communication (Simonsson & Heide, 2021, p. 266).

As previously discussed, the issue of communication being fragmented into something organizations can use as a tactic, or as a separate asset, is a major issue when trying to understand the value-creation of communication and strategic communication. Organizations can not only be understood as discrete unities, it needs to be understood as a system of many different interdependent components (Miller, 2015) or as created through networks of interactions (Guldbrandsen & Just, 2020), if we are to unravel how communicative interactions constitute organizations.

2.2.1 Summary of communication practitioners in research

This brief overview of communication practitioners' own account of their work, and other organizational actors' expectations, highlight several current issues tied to communication practitioners' practice and research on practitioners. There is a tension between professional and managerial logics, where expectations from managers can damage communications function and value-creation. There is a perceived value in gaining more power by getting a seat at the managerial table in order to implement a communicative strategic view, but there is belief that this might hurt the profession and field of strategic communication if it is done in accordance with managerial principles. The main current issue for communication professionals is

tied to building and maintaining trust, indicating that the main issue for communicators is of strategic nature. However, the way to solve it might be governed by managerial logic. These issues combine to create the issue of legitimization of the profession ‘communicator’, which ultimately means that communicators feel a need to defend their work and value.

2.3 Strategy-as-practice: a strategic management perspective

During the early 2000’s there was a rise of a constructionist approach to strategy: “treating strategy as something people do” (Whittington, 2006, p. 613), challenging the dominant approach to strategy as something owned by an entity or something an organization has (Jarzabowski, 2005; Whittington, 2006; Golsorkhi et al., 2010). According to Whittington (2006), the growing link among scholars between strategy and engagement adheres from philosophers and thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau, and Anthony Giddens, in the sense that the individual and society is something that must be studied in relation to each other, without claiming either an individualistic or societal ontological approach. In that sense, the practice approach to strategy stems from growing interest in the inclusion of both micro- and macro-level activities (management research) and forces (social theory) (Whittington, 2006). The SAP perspective is ultimately the research of practice as a phenomenon, where the everyday activities are of interest to understand the organization of organizations (Jarzabowski, 2005; Orlikowski, 2010).

With the rise of a practice perspective on strategy, Whittington (2006) noticed that research up until that point had focused “either on strategy activity at the intra-organizational level or on the aggregate effects of this activity at the extra-organizational level” (p. 613), and that this in terms leaves a feeling of incompleteness in many research articles. To tackle this problem, he proposed a framework for strategy practice research based on three concepts: strategy praxis, practices and practitioners (Whittington, 2006). These three concepts are deeply interconnected, but not necessarily researched together, and presented four implications for broadening the scope of strategy practice: Strategy practices in use, the creation of strategy practices, practitioners as carriers of practice, and preparing practitioners for praxis (Whittington, 2006), where the latter two are especially interesting from a

communication practitioner perspective. Jarzabowski et al. (2007), continued on Whittington's work by introducing a consequentiality view of strategy:

There fore, we adopt the broader view that activity is considered strategic to the extent that it is consequential for the strategic outcomes, directions, survival and competitive advantage of the firm (Johnson et al., 2003), even where these consequences are not part of an intended and formally articulated strategy. (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007, p. 8).

With the SAP research growing wider, Vaara and Whittington (2012) made an attempt to align the research perspective by reviewing progress and identifying shortcomings. They recognized three important insights that SAP research had brought so far: “tools and methods of strategy-making (practices), how strategy work takes place (praxis), and the role and identity of the actors involved (practitioners)” (Vaara & Whittington, 2012, p. 1). They also identified five directions to explore and develop to further enable the field to grow: “placing agency in a web of practices, recognizing the macro-institutional nature of practices, focusing attention on emergence in strategy-making, exploring how the material matters, and promoting critical analysis” (p. 1).

While the field still stands on the same pillars as presented by Whittington in 2006, the directions for the field by Vaara and Whittington (2012) are more focused and mature compared to the questions facing the field as argued by Jarzabkowski et al. (2007). During the first decade of SAP research it had mainly been published in strategic management journals. The most apparent theoretical perspectives had been social theories of practice and Wieck's sensemaking theory (Golsorkhi et al., 2010), with a recent rise of non-profit organizations as the place of data collection (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). The five directions presented for future research are underlined by the strength of the field, which is also a difficulty when researching with the SAP perspective: “It is demanding to study the micro-level while aiming at understanding the macro. It is hard to hang on to practical relevance while promoting a critical spirit” (p. 41).

Two interesting focuses on the future directions for SAP research presented by the authors are the actor-focused approach and the need to understand the concept of emergence in strategy-making (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Strategy as

something that emerges in organizations challenges the notion (and predominant understanding) of strategies as planned, often written, documents and agendas. Giving room for strategy to be understood as something that also appears through interactions, individuals and narratives (Ville & Mounoud, 2010). The emergence of strategy is not only a highly relevant topic for strategic management scholars, but there has also been a growing interest of emergence in strategic communication research in recent years (Winkler & Etter, 2018). Before discussing the field of strategic communication in relation to strategy and practice, contemporary questions about emergence in SAP management research must be discussed.

In a research article appropriately titled “It’s Practice. But is it Strategy?”, Jarzabkowski et al. (2021) argue that the field's main focus remains on articulated strategies, and instead further develops the ‘consequentialist’ approach to strategy within an emergence of strategy perspective. Jarzabkowski et al. (2021) discuss two main ways that the concept of consequentiality has been approached by SAP scholars: performance (pre-determined measures, e.g. economically) and process (practitioner’s perception of consequential). These two dominant approaches are problematic according to the authors, since they both rely on determined practices that are deemed strategic. This makes it easy to miss processes and actions of practitioners that may be strategic in nature and activity, but not pre-determinately strategic. In this practice focused perspective, consequentiality is not predetermined, rather they are strategically inclined consequences of practices that are not articulated as strategic (Jarzabkowski et al., 2021). Apart from opening up for a wider understanding of strategy in action, and ‘what’ is actually researched, this view also allows scholars of SAP to renew ‘who’ the subject of research is, since the practice view includes a wide arrange of actors that might not have outspoken strategic responsibility (Jarzabkowski et al., 2021). Consequentiality then, is defined as: “(1) something that is important or significant, and also (2) an action or effect that arises indirectly from another action, rather than as an intended cause and effect” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2021, p. 6), and it is the second aspect that is the focal point for the authors, since indirect strategic actions might entail a lot about strategic practice. An example of an identified indirect strategic action identified by the authors was that the clothing of underwriters differed depending on if the context was a competitive or communal, arguably a strategic, yet unspoken, strategy.

2.4 A practice perspective in Strategic communication research

As presented earlier, strategy-as practice has evolved into its own perspective since the early 2000's, mainly from fields such as organizational theory and management journals (Jarzabowski et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski et al., 2021; Whittington, 2006; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Despite recent traction, there is a clear absence of defined SAP perspectives in the field of strategic communication. However, concept such as strategic communication as emergent (Winkler & Etter, 2018), discussions on alignment in relation to SAP (Volk & Zerfass, 2018), increased coworker focus in research (Heide & Simonsson, 2011) and acknowledgment of the fields lack of focus on SAP (Zerfass et al., 2018) shows an openness and perceived value for strategic communication to engage in research regarding strategy as emerging and strategy-as-practice. One of few studies in the International Journal of Strategic communication who take on such a perspective are Marchiori and Bulgacovs case study from 2012, where they researched strategy as communicational practice. They employed a social constructionist approach on organizations, where organizations stay alive through both informal and formal interaction and shared meaning-creation (Marchiori & Bulgacov, 2012). They take great inspiration from Whittington (2006) and Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) in their definition of strategy as practice and:

(...) assume that a communicational practice, due to its procedural and interactive nature, constitutes strategic practice. It must be noted that this communication-strategy relationship is essentially dependent on the interlocution held by and between those involved with the process. Strategy as a practice is a translation of such a reality once it is understood to take place in micro activities. Strategies are essentially processes of interaction and construction of meaning whose expressiveness comes from communication and language. (Marchiori & Bulgacov, 2012, p. 203).

Since communication is a precursor of strategic practice, it is through communication activities that strategy can exist. They found that strategy is created through meaning-construction that creates intersubjectivity through communicative

practices by interlocutors (Marchiori & Bulgacov, 2012). Through communication practices (that are influenced by context, history and dynamics), interlocutors create meaning and process that they will practice:

Looking at strategy as a communicational practice reveals that the contexts, history and interactive dynamics constitute the environments and meanings for these interlocutors, establishing the existence of diverse organizations in contemporary society. (Marchiori & Bulgacov, 2012, p. 209).

This means that through language and communication, a collective structure is created through which common meaning can be created (Marchiori & Bulgacov, 2015). The constructed common meanings in terms legitimizes strategic practice through interactions. Strategic practice, or strategizing, is in this way heavily tied to change in behavior at a micro-level, since strategic practice that is rooted in interactions create a greater level of reflection and knowledge within individuals (Marchiori & Bulgacov, 2015). This view is similar to Guldbrandsen and Just's (2020, p. 48) most emergent level of strategy: "Strategizing communication as perspective", where acts are not made in accordance to a defined strategy, but rather derive from a collective organizational understanding of how to act.

It is essential then, that research on strategy in practice, comes from a foundation where communication constitutes the setting of which strategy takes place, and that strategy is dependent on the actors and their interactions at a meso- and micro-level. One scholar who researched strategy at a meta- and meso-level is Anderson (2020), who studied communication practitioners' own accounts (interviews) of how strategy discourse is affecting them and their work. He found that engaging with the strategy discourse enabled practitioners to produce themselves as "strategists" by doing the right things. This was done by separating one-self from non-strategic work (often in relation to others who worked non-strategically). To be a strategist was heavily tied to internal power and strategic managerial work. This is in relation to the operational communicator, who was deemed as less valuable and non-desirable in relation to the strategist.

An interesting account that Andersson (2020) presents is an interviewees account of communication work in the organization that highlights what he suggests is an example of a more emergent strategy practice Where strategy is not created

from the top and sprinkled down, but rather as an emergent process in all parts of the organizations. Engaging with the strategy discourse also allows communicators to claim internal power by positioning themselves as coaches and producers of operationalists (Andersson, 2020). A problem with this view, or discourse, is that it devalues operationalists due to their lack of strategic work, making it hard for communicators to become the 'strategist', while devaluing themselves when they are working in an operational manner. Aggerholm and Asmuß (2016) similarly researched discourse at the micro-level tied to legitimacy of strategic communications practice. Their angle was to look at how strategic actors legitimize strategic decisions, and how that in terms constitutes strategic communication as a managerial practice. Basing their analysis on videos from a large public organization, they found three communicative legitimizations: "Legitimation of the strategic practice", "Legitimation of the management decision to downsize" and "Legitimation of interpersonal relationships" (Aggerholm & Asmuß, 2016, p. 207). The first legitimization regards management framing downsizing in a wider socio-economical context. The decision to downsize was thereby legitimized at the micro-level (by explaining the situation) by including the macro-level as a strategic reasoning for downsizing. Secondly, the downsizing was legitimized by framing it as an extraordinary event (Aggerholm & Asmuß, 2016). In the context of being a public organization in Denmark, commonly known for being socially responsible and sustainable and safe as a work place, this framing makes sense. It reinforces the organization as safe, while legitimizing the strategic decisions to downsize due to the abnormal circumstances. Thirdly, they found that idiomatic expressions were used by management in order to distance themselves from being the enforcers of action, while simultaneously positioning the event as extraordinary (Aggerholm & Asmuß, 2016). These three communicative legitimizations relate to the CEO distancing himself, and management, and in that distancing also legitimizing the downsizing by drawing attention to the wider context and extraordinarily. In his attempt to handle the situation, the CEO both purposefully handled the actual downsizing decision, and reflexively distanced himself in order to shape organizational members' perception and acceptance of his actions (Aggerholm & Asmuß, 2016). Aggerholm and Asmuß (2016) argue that this shows how strategic communication needs to be understood both from the macro-level (the actual decision and communicative action of downsizing) and the micro-level (interpersonal agenda). Therefore, one

single strategic communication action might pertain to more than one purpose, making the concept of strategic communication more complex. To understand these complexities, one has to differentiate macro-and micro-level perspectives, as well as understanding that strategic communication is an emergent process.

3. Theory

In this chapter, theoretical assumptions and perspectives are presented and discussed. Taking foot in interpretivism, a brief history of social constructionism and interpretivism within organizational research is presented, followed by connections to contemporary perspectives such as sensemaking and communication as constitutive of organizations, of which this paper is positioned. Lastly, theoretical concepts and definitions of strategizing and strategy as emergence are discussed, as they, together with previously presented perspectives, acts as lenses for the subsequent analysis.

3.1 Interpretivism in organizational research

Since the early 1900ths, scholars such as Weber, Selznick and Barnard have conceptualized and studied organizations from a perspective of interpretation and meaning (Hatch & Yanow, 2005). This focus on interpreting the surrounding world coined the term interpretivism, which challenged the positivist view of knowledge as objective, and instead approached knowledge from a Kantian perspective, where knowledge about our surroundings began to be understood as subjective (Hatch & Yanow, 2005). Although scholars researched the world through perspectives of meaning and interpretations, the interpretive turn is generally considered as: “The growth of social constructionism within disciplinary discourses in the social sciences in the early 1970s” (Oxford Reference, n.d, p.1). With the rise of interpretative perspectives such as symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics, and sensemaking within social sciences, the framing of the social world as constructed took shape and formed a firm grip on qualitative and organizational research we are familiar with today (Mottier, 2005). Within a social constructionist approach of organizations, the communication constitutes organization perspective has gained traction in the last decades. It partly stems from Taylors (2011) understanding that organizations form from a bottom-up perspective, rather than the traditional top-bottom, opening for explanations and avenues for what communication is in an

organizational context (Schoenborn et al., 2019). This perspective also influences the concept of strategy, which Heide et al. (2018) argue as being overlooked in strategic communications research. By understanding strategic work as something emerging in all levels of the organization, and communication as constituting, strategic communication as a research opens up for all organizational actors as subject of research, which the field could benefit and evolve through.

Employing an interpretivist approach, with an emphasis on social construction of knowledge within a CCO-perspective allows for a process and construction-oriented understanding of organization, strategy and strategic communication. This can open up for theoretical developments within strategic communication and goes in line with Heide et al. (2018), who argue that researchers have not really focused on theoretical discussion and progress of the concepts of communication and strategy in and of themselves, which is a good reason for implementing the CCO perspective.

3.2 Sensemaking

“Sensemaking involves turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard into action.” (Weick et al, 2005, p. 409).

This excerpt describes the sensemaking perspective in a short and concise manner, pinpointing the central aspects of what actors are making sense of. Acts of sense-making are retrospective acts of comprehending and explaining acts in relation to identity in a social context (Weick et al, 2005). By making sense of current circumstances, actors make sense of what actions they can and should make. In this sense, action is a very central concept in sensemaking, since interpretation of the ongoing circumstances is happening to be able to act (Weick et al, 2005). Through communication (language, symbols etc.), actors bracket and label experiences in order to organize them in comprehensive manners (Weick et al, 2005). For example, when preparing a communication plan for an Instagram campaign, the different steps of creating, planning, and executing a campaign are bracketed (through words as these) to make them comprehensible. Through these labels and brackets, actors can create plausible actions that otherwise would have been impossible to comprehend.

These processes of sensemaking are especially apparent in situations that challenge previous understandings, outside of the normal frame of actions and interpretations (Weick et al, 2005), e.g. in contexts of change, crises or issues that require strategic thinking.

Sensemaking is highly tied to the actor(s) and their identity, where the identity of an individual, or organization, is rooted in how actions are determined by outsiders. Organizational actors act accordingly with who they think they are, which has an impact on the actor's image (what outsiders think they are), which in terms has to be made sense of by the actors, which might change action due to reimagined perception of oneself (Weick et al, 2005). Again, in the case of identity through the lens of sensemaking, it is through action of organizing that our social reality is reduced to a comprehensible chunk.

A common critique of sensemaking comes from an institutional perspective because sensemaking often gives too much power to the actor (micro-level), which neglects the effects of socialization and institutionalization. From an institutional perspective, it is widely assumed that possibilities of sensemaking (the frames of what is possible) are indoctrinated through powerful actors such as states, professions and mass media (Weick et al, 2005).

A core understanding in the sensemaking perspective is that organizations do not exist in an objective reality, organizations are rather created through talking (Weick et al, 2005; Guldbrandsen & Just, 2020). Weick (1995) believes that through enactments with the environment, actors produce part of the environment they act in. There is not an objective organizational reality 'out there', rather, through enacting norms, rules and laws, lines are drawn through actions that create categories and labels, thus creating new realities (Weick, 1995). Organizations as such always suffer from loss of information due to their nature of intersubjectivity, where understandings have to be boiled down to a more generic sense (Weick, 1995). Habitual patterns and routines are a way to reconcile the tension between controlled generic subjectivity and innovative intersubjectivity. All of these enactments, intersubjectivity, patterns of actions, and so on, are based on ongoing communication activities that create these patterns which create the social form of organizations (Weick, 1995).

A critique of Weick's retrospective view of sensemaking is that he misses half of the sensemaking process: prospective sensemaking (Guldbrandsen & Just,

2020). In Weick's view of sensemaking, "strategy emerges from concrete acts of sense-making (Guldbrandsen & Just, 2020, p. 155), strategy is therefore formulated after it has already been implemented. Prospective sensemaking includes the view that actors envision a future to some extent, and that this envisioning also acts as an impetus to action. In a study on strategic change efforts in a University by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991), they found that organizations go through four phases when attempting to change perceptions (in what the authors deem sensemaking and sensegiving) in change processes/initiatives. According to Gioia & Chittipeddi (1991) these phases are each different steps of sensemaking and sensegiving, with step one being a sensemaking phase (for initiator of change), step two sensegiving (initiator communicating change efforts), step three is sensemaking (for stakeholders, making sense of communicated efforts), and lastly phase four is a sensegiving process where stakeholders communicate their interpretations of proposed (and to some extent realized) change efforts. In this view of strategy through sensemaking, strategy is a process of feedback-loops that eventually gets implemented and energized. This view of strategy is similar, but not the same as previously presented strategy-as-practice theories, where it is argued that strategy should be investigated at the micro-level through actions, rather than cognitive processes (Whittington, 2006), and understood in relation to the macro-level. Through development of classic sensemaking, and incorporation of SAP research on strategy, attention has been drawn to perspectives that view strategy as emergent processes and communication as constitutive of organizations through meaning creation.

3.3 Strategizing

While strategy is something traditionally seen as something actors can have and create, perspectives such as sensemaking, CCO, SAP, and emergent theories shift this understanding (although not necessarily excluding strategy as something formal). In this shift, the term strategizing (communication) becomes important, since it is the "(...) process of making communication work strategically for an organization; as the streams of purposeful decisions made and actions taken over time regarding how, when and with whom to communicate in order to fulfill an organization's goals" (Guldbrandsen & Just, 2020, p. 34). In this sense, strategizing is what actors are doing when purposefully working towards a goal (Guldbrandsen &

Just, 2020). In the same manner, being strategic is what actors are when strategizing. One way to understand different levels of strategizing is through Gulbrandsen & Just (2020) five P's of strategizing: Strategizing communication as: a plan; plow; pattern; position; & perspective.

Deliberate			Emergent	
Strategizing communication as plan	Strategizing communication as plow	Strategizing communication as pattern	Strategizing communication as position	Strategizing communication as perspective
A deliberately intended formulation of a course of action, before action is taken: a set of guidelines on how to deal with both general and particular communications, based on a forecast of the effects of the communicated.	A specific and measured, but not planned, communicative manoeuvre made in order to react to a specific but unforeseen current development.	A temporal regularity of purposeful communicative behaviour: a consistent way of communicating derived either from previous deliberate actions and/or naturalized/routinized communicative conduct.	A 'match' with the peripheral environment: a communicative practice that arises from, or is an answer to the external context, whether intended or not.	An ingrained way of perceiving the world: an unconscious and unquestioned communicative behaviour, where strategy is to an organization what personality is to an individual – its <i>raison d'être</i> .

Table 2. The five P's of strategizing (Gulbrandsen & Just, 2020, p. 38).

As seen in table 2, these five P's of strategizing move on a scale from deliberate to emergent strategizing, where some forms are more deliberate and outspoken, while others are more emergent and implicit. Strategic communication as perspective and as position are on the emergent end of strategy, tied to the discussed CCO, strategy as emergent and SAP perspectives on strategy and organizations. This table of the five P's show an important aspect of strategizing, it is not only in clear deliberate strategizing scenarios that strategizing is apparent, neither is it only in more emergent contexts. Rather, it is through understanding that all of these forms exist, that we can come closer to a more holistic understanding of strategy as something planned, parts of patterns, as positions and as emerging through perspectives.

Strategizing communication as perspective can be understood as when strategy is so ingrained in the organization, where “strategy is to an organization what personality is to an individual” (Gulbrandsen & Just, 2020, p. 48). Acting strategically in this manner, means to act in accordance with the organization's culture, where behavior is conducted on the basis of shared organizational understanding. Of course, strategizing communication as perspective is in no way secluded from the other forms of strategizing. Most often, different forms of strategizing overlap. Although simplified, the obvious and traditional way to view their overlap is to

think of how a deliberate strategy creates patterns of behavior that through time becomes ingrained in the organizational culture. The not so obvious way to view the overlap is to look the other way, on how shared organizational understanding influences what actions are logical and reasonable to take when dealing with an issue (ploy), and how this shared understanding influences the planning of strategy bottom-up.

3.4 Strategic communication as emergent

Assuming that strategy, or strategic communication, is emerging through processes of interaction and transactions is not a simple task. With the assumptions comes several issues with historically dominant perspectives, where strategy is something you create and act upon, and communication is something an organization can utilize when necessary. As argued by Winkler and Etter (2018), an emerging perspective on strategy: “comes with several definitional, methodological, and programmatic challenges” (p. 382). To simply disregard the fact that strategies are often written documents, forged and formed to be implemented, cannot be disregarded. In their endeavors, they discuss three fundamental issues with an emergence perspective on strategic communication. The first challenge comes with the field being multidisciplinary, and attempts to build an integrated paradigm (Winkler & Etter, 2018) since it challenges fundamental definitions of strategic communication. The second challenge lies in the understanding of what strategic communication is and what should be researched:

In other words, the prevailing emphases of strategic communication research lies on formal communication as particular strategic practice. However, taking the idea of emergence seriously does not only mean that all sorts of formal and informal strategic practices are in fact communicative by nature (Fenton & Langley, 2011; Mantere, 2013), but also that all sorts of formal and informal communication can become strategic (Cooren et al., 2015). (Winkler & Etter, 2018, p. 385).

The third challenge comes with who the subject of strategic communication research should (and can) be. If all communication, both informal and formal, can be

strategic, it would not make sense to only research communication professionals and their activities (Winkler & Etter, 2018). Instead, research from an emergent perspective should include not only strategists, but also coworkers, operational communicators, middle managers and many more actors that contribute to the organization's survival. This notion that several organizational actors are interesting research subjects have been seen in CCO oriented research, where it is argued that “A greater focus on coworkers in strategic communication research will give a better understanding of the complex relationship between communication and organizing as coworker interpretations and actions constitute an organization” (Heide & Simonsson, 2011, p. 201). Simultaneously, there is a fear that strategic communication might become too important to be left to communication professionals (Falkheimer et al., 2017), indicating a tension between the ‘strategic communicator’ and ‘strategic communication’ at both academic and practical level.

To be able to handle these issues with a strategy as emerging perspective, Winkler and Etter (2018) created a framework for the dual narrative of both the strategizing process (practice) and strategized communication (product). The framework is based upon two different types of emergent strategies (hence the dual narrative): “Preceding emergence addresses phenomena that have impact on a future strategy, and proceeding emergence addresses phenomena that accompany the ongoing strategy process” (Winkler & Etter, 2018, p. 388). Preceding emergence is in that sense related to previously presented prospective sensemaking, encompassing emergence of strategic communication that has an impact on the future. Proceeding emergence of strategic communication is instead a more “reactive” form of emergence, for example “informal change attempts of establishing strategy narrative” (Winkler & Etter, 2018, p. 389).

Table 1. Preceding and proceeding forms of emergence in strategic communication research.

Phase of Emergence	Form of Emergence	Practices of Strategic Communication	Products of Strategic Communication
Preceding	Fashion	Translation	Story
Prior to strategy	External narrative with impact on future strategy narrative	Narrative adaption to fashion in strategic communication practice	Narrative genre mediating between fashion and established organizational strategy
	Peripheral	Dwelling	Culture
	Informal stories apart of established strategy narrative	Narrative adaption to peripheral stories in strategic communication practice	Narrative genre mediating between central organizational and peripheral stories
Proceeding	Attribution	Agility	Dialogue
Accompanying strategy	External assumption of strategy underlying organizational narrative	Narrative adaption to attributions in flexible strategic communication practice	Narrative genre mediating between attributions and organizational strategy
	Reframing	Joint accounts	Co-creation
	Informal change attempts of established strategy narrative	Narrative adaption to reframing attempts in strategic communication practice	Narrative genre mediating between reframing attempts and established organizational strategy

Table 3. A dual narrative of emergence in strategic communication. (Winkler & Etter, 2018, p. 389).

Through the framework, the authors have identified four types of emergence: strategic fashions, peripheral strategizing, strategy attribution, and strategy framing (Winkler & Etter, 2018). They also show (as seen in table 3) how these forms of emergence impact the process of strategizing and the product of strategic communication. This framework puts emergence in the front and center, allowing for research on emergence to be integrated with current research without subordinating it (Winkler & Etter, 2018). The duality of the framework allows for both the product (strategized communication) and process (strategized process) to be analyzed, in line with both strategy-as-practice initiatives and strategic communication research (Winkler & Etter, 2018).

3.5 Theoretical perspectives

Combining these theoretical frameworks and understanding allows for an analysis with heavy emphasis on practitioners' own accounts and narratives through a sense-making lens, while making it possible to understand observed or articulated processes as strategized through presented theories within a social constructionist perspective. The theories provide a process-oriented perspective, with an emphasis on emergence and narratives, where strategy, accounts, structures and actions can be interpreted through narratives and processes that are (re-)produced socially, interpreted intersubjectively and materialized collectively. All theories share assumptions about organizational life-world as socially produced, where communication

and interactions are at center, although the actual focus of the theories differ. Strategizing is a difficult concept to grasp in a practical sense, since it is always ongoing to some degree. The theoretical framework presented allows a perspective where practice is at center, challenging views of strategy and plans as linear process top-bottom

4. Methodology

This qualitative thesis is rooted in social constructionism ontologically and epistemologically. Within a social constructionist approach, this research is influenced by sensemaking theory and a CCO perspective with a highly interpretivist approach. In this chapter, these methodological influences are discussed in relation to the purpose of this thesis. The choice to conduct a qualitative case study, using observations and interviews as methods, is presented and clarified. Challenges and arguments regarding selected methods and ethical considerations are presented and discussed, followed lastly by a brief explanation of the chosen analytical approach.

4.1 Interpretative approach

This is a qualitative case study rooted in interpretivism, where the goal is “to develop an understanding of social life and discover how people construct meaning in natural settings” (Neuman, 2006, p. 88). Within interpretivism, this thesis is placed within a social constructionist perspective of reality, where the thought of an objective reality is questioned, in favor of understanding the world as constructed through social processes (Burr, 2015). In this way, knowledge is not something objectively existing, instead it derives from social processes of interactions and communication (Burr, 2015). Through a social constructionist perspective, there is no ‘essence’ within people who make them who they are. Instead, identity is formed by our cultural and historical surroundings, effectively being constructed by our context, interactions, and the social structure. As explained by Berger and Luckmann (1966, p. 354): “The social processes involved in both the formation and the maintenance of identity are determined by the social structure”. This view of the world has severe implications for research and the quest to seek knowledge. In research, “The researcher must view the research as a co-production between themselves and the people they are researching” (Burr, 2015, p. 172). This ontological and epistemological background is especially relevant to the study of strategy-as-practice, where strategy is created in concrete situations and contexts (Grand et al.,

2010). Through a constructionist perspective, taken for granted concepts can be questioned (e.g. the concept of strategy) in order to reconstruct what something can be (Grand et al, 2010). The aim of this thesis is not to find an objective truth, but rather an attempt to engage and examine the social world of an organization, or more specifically, communicators accounts and interactions regarding strategizing. Therefore, a qualitative case study is suitable and reasonable as a means to reach the aim of the thesis.

4.2 Qualitative case study

In order to understand the processes of strategizing in a consistent manner, it was deemed necessary for participants to be actors in the same context, in the lines of a case study. Case studies are suitable approaches when researching social processes and interactions, where perceptions, values, mutual relations and “(...) processes within social institutions” (Swanborn, 2010, p. 13) are researched. The term case study however, is a fairly vague term according to Heide and Simonsson (2014), and should not be seen as either a methodology or as a specific research design. Instead, it should be viewed as a perspective to be employed when research is aiming to study one or a few units, with more than one method in order to gain in-depth knowledge about the phenomena (Heide & Simonsson, 2014). It is also of great use when trying to understand organizational members' experiences and how some processes and practices within a certain context functions (Heide & Simonsson, 2014, p. 218). Since the aim of this study is to increase knowledge of how communication practitioners are actually ‘doing’ strategy (processes/interactions), a case study was a suitable decision.

While quality factors such as validity and reliability are debated in qualitative research (Northcote, 2012; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015), especially research of social constructionistic nature (Heide & Simonsson, 2014), it is still important to consider and discuss what quality is. The historic positivistic nature of quality terms/criteria's have influenced an abundance of terms and quality criteria's that adheres to qualitative research, making some pose questions of whether such criteria should be used at all (Northcote, 2012). I argue, in line with Heide and Simonsson (2014) and Northcote (2012), that it is more fruitful to adhere to and choose suitable criteria in relation to the specific case study conducted, rather than adhering

to and strictly follow overarching criteria within qualitative research. Therefore, I utilize Heide and Simonssons (2014) six fundamental quality factors that can be considered when working on a case study, in order to enhance quality in this thesis. These were used as guidelines in preparation for gathering empirical material, as reflection points during the process of continuously analyzing empirical material, and as discussion points in presenting the case and process in conducting this thesis. Utilizing these quality factors as guidelines for discussion rather than as clear-cut criteria for quality puts emphasis on transparency and reflexivity. The following section is dedicated to these quality factors in relation to methodological decisions, the case organization, and the work process.

4.2.1 Choice of, and within, the organization

In choosing an organization, the public sector was chosen above the private sector. Although the public sector in Sweden (municipalities, cities, and counties) vary vastly in size, there is a considerable amount of similarities in their governance, rules and work. These similarities can have interesting implications for future research, and on the value of this research, since the context is fairly accessible and similar across the nation. Another reason for choosing the public sector was for pragmatic reasons, since it allows for many potential subjects within the same geographical area, which is important since the time-frame of the thesis is fairly short. After reflection, and pragmatic considerations of accessibility, medium to large sized municipalities were deemed suitable. Mainly due to their size (sufficient number of communicators), organizational complexity, and focus on one main object (the city) through different means and sub-organizations. The organization that was ultimately used as a case for this thesis is a large sized municipality, with over 25 000 employees, and more than 100 communicators. With the city office being of particular focus.

When deciding on participants within the organization, a contact person is of major importance, since they can guide the researcher to interesting and relevant subjects (Heide & Simonsson, 2014). When suitable organizations were decided upon, I contacted two strategic communicator from different municipalities. The first one declined, while the other was happy to assist. She was initially contacted

through email with information about the thesis, followed up by a phone call, after which we met at her office for a planning meeting.

4.2.2 Multiple perspective

Highlighting different voices is of importance in qualitative research, especially when dealing with case studies. Giving a voice to different actors and material is a way to broaden the description of the perceived organizational reality (Heide & Simonsson, 2014). While this thesis focus is communication practitioners, multiple perspectives are still considered by observing and interviewing communication practitioners in different focus areas (e.g. leadership communication, intranet communication, strategist). Other organizational members were also observed in meetings, as well as external actors, where they interacted with the communication practitioners.

4.2.3 Work process

An important aspect of case studies is to describe and reflect upon the research and empirical investigation (Heide & Simonsson, 2014). This mainly involves reflection on the interaction between researcher and subjects to clearly discuss how the researcher might influence the participants. While changes in organizations, and its dynamic with the researcher might be more apparent in a longer case study or a purely ethnographic study, it is still important for shorter studies like this one to discuss and bring forth how interactions have been, and how the context is influenced by the researcher's presence (this is discussed further in chapter 4.4).

4.2.4 Multiple methods

The aspect of multiple methods in case studies is fairly straightforward. By gaining access to a case to study, it is possible to gather empirical material in a variety of ways, for example through documents, interviews and participatory observation. By using different methods, the researcher might discover contradictions, or similarities, in the organizations, which can be highlighted and discussed in relation to each other in understanding the complexities of organizational life (Heide & Simonsson, 2014). As discussed further in chapter 4.3, the methods for gathering

empirical material are both semi-structured interviews and observations, in order to gain different perspectives and angles on the same phenomena.

4.2.5 Participant validation

Participant validation regards continually checking if the researcher has understood or interpreted things in a way that is coherent with the subjects or case organizations understanding (Heide & Simonsson, 2014). This is not in order to validate if results or interpretations are ‘correct’ in any way, but rather to get a receipt that basic information or facts are understood. This was done throughout my time spent at the case organization, mainly through discussion with my contact person. She would help clarify the organizational structure, documents that were referenced in meetings, and other things regarding the organization and its members. It was also done throughout interviews, where I would occasionally ask if I had understood information and accounts correctly

4.3 Methods for gathering empirical material

In order to understand how communication practitioners materialize and position their work as strategic, a combination of observations and semi-structured interviews was chosen as a suitable mix of methods to gather empirical material. Combining interviews and observations has allowed me to get different types of knowledge/perspective on the same phenomena (Eksell & Magnusson, 2014). Interviews allowed access to personal accounts, narratives and explanations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Platen & Young, 2014), while observations gave access to social interactions and what people are actually doing (Eksell & Magnusson, 2014).

Interviews are in a way arenas for identity building, where the subject will react according to the identity they are interviewed as (e.g. as a woman, leader, coworker etc.) (Alvesson, 2011; Dingwall, 1997), which puts emphasis on transparency from the researcher. Observations as a method are highly tied to ethnographic studies, where the goal is to see what is ‘actually’ happening, often by employing one of two perspectives: seeking out the truth (realist-objectivist), or: seeking out interpretations of a socially constructed reality (constructivist-interpretivist) (Yanow et al., 2012), the latter perspective being in line with this paper. The major difference between interviews and observations is to whom the subjects are

attempting to appear rational towards, as Dingwall (1997) discusses about observations: “No longer is it a matter of members trying to make themselves appear rational to us: now it is a question of how they appear rational to each other” (p. 61). In trying to understand and unravel how strategizing emerges through interactions, observations are very suitable, since it makes it possible to get a glimpse of otherwise hidden, or tacit, dimensions of interactions and meaning-making (Yanow et al., 2012, p. 333). Combining interviews with observation has thus made it possible to both analyze communication practitioners' own accounts of strategizing, as well as observing what is actually being done in practice.

The interviews conducted were semi-structured (for interview guide, see appendix 1). It was deemed necessary to have some sort of structure to keep focus on discussion surrounding the research question, while simultaneously allowing freedom and flexibility in our discussion (Merriam, 2009). However, the interview guide was rarely used, since listening to the interviewees narrations was a priority and proved more important than asking specific pre-determined questions. Each interview was recorded on a phone and all except one interview was transcribed within three days to still have the conversation fresh in memory.

4.4 Interviews & Observations

When gathering empirical material through interviews and observations, it is important to explain and discuss the context, timeline and potential effect the researcher has on participants. Following is a brief overview of my interactions with the organization.

I had access to the organization for three weeks. During which, I was allowed to hang out in their offices, got to take coffee breaks with different colleagues and bosses, and had several opportunities to interact with the communicators informally. I was granted a personal office space where I could spend time writing, interviewing and preparing, which gave me several opportunities to interact and get a sense of the office space and interactions between the team-members. This office space proved instrumental in the ability to get a sense of the environment and interactions, since it allowed me to spend time among the participants even when I did not have a scheduled interview or observation. I also believe that the ability to hang around the office in-between observations and interviews made me seem less

“threatening” as an outsider and researcher, since the practitioners could see me and interact with me outside of formal meetings and interviews.

Firstly, one semi-structured interview with a communication practitioner in a highly strategic position was conducted. The purpose of starting with an interview was to acquire accounts about the context of this public organization. To first listen to the subject's account allowed me to finetune aspects that I would focus on in observations. Following the first interview, an initial observation took place, a monthly meeting was observed. During all observations, only quick reflection and memory notes were taken, to be able to focus on listening and observing. After each observation, I sat down and wrote in depth field notes based on memory and reflection notes. Following, two interviews were conducted with two of the meeting participants. The following week I conducted observation 2 (weekly update meeting), observation 3 (external project startup meeting), observation 4 (internal project development meeting), observation 5 (external project alignment meeting) and observation 6 (internal project alignment meeting). For a full schedule, see appendix 2, for table of interviewees, see appendix 3. During meeting observations, all members were informed verbally by the meeting leader or manager about my presence and aim. I kept out of discussions and maintained an outsider's point of view throughout all observations, but would sometimes engage in discussion about meeting content with some members after meetings were concluded.

4.5 Translation & Transcription of interviews

All interviews, and most meetings observed, were held in Swedish, along with all transcriptions and field notes. This was most suitable since the organization mainly operates in this language. It is also my birth language, making it easy for participants and myself to communicate and construct knowledge together. This does have some implications for the findings in this thesis, since excerpts showcased in the analysis and result section have been translated by me. The act of translating is not without issues, since the knowledge constructed in each interview is bound to its context and the language within (Cassinger, 2014). To conduct interviews and observations in Swedish was without question, since the participants should not be forced to change their behavior more than absolutely necessary by my presence. The need to translate excerpts must however be noted, since it adds a layer of

meaning-construction by me as an interpreter.

When it comes to interviews, there are no objectively true or valid ways to transcribe, rather when transcribing the issue should be of what type of transcription fits the aim of the study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). While stuttering's are interesting for someone researching language and speech, it is not of interest for the aim of this thesis. Instead, it is practitioner's accounts and explanations that are interesting, therefore the emphasis of transcriptions was not on linguistic issues, rather it was on the meaning of their accounts. The initial transcripts were kept relatively close to the interviews spoken language, where I did not refine their formulations or meaning structure, however stuttering was not included. I would at times return to audio recordings when reading through the transcriptions if meaning or intonation was unclear from the text alone. While translating excerpts, the structure of their sentences were often slightly changed, to be understandable and coherent when presented in English. While translating, excerpts would also be slightly refined to a written language style for coherence and clarity.

4.6 Ethical considerations

When observing and interviewing subjects in their context, many ethical concerns need to be addressed. In this thesis, I adhere to four general ethical principles for science: Participants' interests are protected, participation is voluntary and based on informed consent, the researcher should work transparently in regards to the study, and research should follow national law (Denscombe, 2016). The confidentiality of the empirical material and the participants is considered by not referring to any of the participants with their real name. Interview recordings were stored on a password protected phone, and deleted after the studies completion. Field notes were also destroyed after the purpose of the thesis was fulfilled.

Before each interview, the subjects had to read and sign an informed consent form (appendix 4) stating the purpose of the thesis and their rights to decline to participate, or later withdraw. Informed consent is important to ensure voluntary participation, to make sure that the subjects know what they are signing up for, and understand the purpose of the study (Denscombe, 2016; Guest et al., 2013). This works well when doing interviews, since it is a practically simple way of ensuring the subjects. This was not the case when observing wider organizational meetings

with several participants in a short time-frame. While written consent is preferred, there are situations like this when it is pragmatically hard to obtain. Instead, everyone participating in the meetings I observed were informed about the studies purpose in advance through their manager and/or the meeting leader. This goes in line with Bos (2020) passive consent, where subjects are informed about the purpose of the study and the researcher proceeds as long as participation is not actively refused. It is also in lines with Guest et al. (2013) implied consent: “If you are making your role as a researcher clear to others in the participant observation venue, their observable behavior and interactions with you can often be considered to fall into the implied consent arena” (p. 103).

4.7 Thematic analysis

Because of the nature of the empirical material, a thematic analysis was conducted through a bricolage technique, where reflection and inventiveness supported the analysis in connecting the empirical material with theoretical frameworks (Kvale & Brinkman, 2015). Throughout the transcription process, and when reading through field notes, early analysis took place through reflecting on the events and conversations. Once all empirical material was gathered, transcripts were read through several times, where initial notes, reflections and labels emerged through the material in an inductive sense. The notes and reflections from the interview transcriptions were used to interpret and thematize field notes from observations. In this step of the process, where connections between different types of empirical material was made, there was a heavy emphasis on bricolage technique. After the first read-through and reflection, the notes and reflections were read through in assistance of theories, which guided the reflection and analysis in reaching themes. This process was non-linear, since the interviews and field notes were approached several times before and after theoretical connections were made.

Themes that had already emerged from interview transcriptions were used to interpret and thematize field notes. In this step of the process, where connections between different types of empirical material was made, there was a heavy emphasis on bricolage technique, where theory, previous research, and literature were used to enhance perspectives and interpretations. Articulated themes and labels were constantly questioned in order to broaden the view of emerging concepts

through different theoretical and subjective interpretations. In this sense, the analysis was neither strictly inductive or deductive, but rather in line with what some would call an abductive approach (Eksell & Thelander, 2014). This allowed me to use both empirical material, as well as research articles and theories, in reaching themes that emerged while conducting the analysis.

Interview excerpts guide the structure of the analysis, where important, analytically interesting, and/or representable excerpts were chosen. Observations will be presented in two ways: as a means to assist the presented interview excerpts, and as narratives of what was taking place

5. Analysis

The analysis of the strategizing in the city office yielded two major themes, or processes: Stimulating interactions and co-creation and inoculating a communicative perspective. These themes were identified as two overarching emerging processes of strategizing that practitioners co-create and enact. They formed the basis of a proposed framework of strategizing, consisting of these two strategized processes (the process that the practitioners are creating and enacting), communicational practice (the context in which the process and product is materialized through communication and interactions), and strategized product (the sum of interactions and process). In this chapter, I will firstly present an analysis of the processes and concepts I have witnessed and gotten accounts about that lay the foundation for the proposed framework of how the city office practitioners strategize and use interactions and communication to produce strategized outcomes. After the two major themes are explored, the proposed framework is presented. Lastly, an identified tension regarding role-expectations is presented, in which the framework and identified processes are applied in order to explain how practitioners work through such a tension by strategizing.

5.1 Stimulating interactions & co-creation

The first theme identified is the strategizing of stimulating interactions and co-creation. This theme is mainly built on three communication processes that practitioners are partaking in, in order to stimulate communication flow and co-creation of organizational narratives: *Manipulating organizational structure, partaking in boundary spanning activities, & pointing in the right direction*. These settings and processes are a product of both formulated plans, policies, and structure, as well as their own interpretations and constructs created through emerging strategies, i.e.: strategizing.

5.1.1 Manipulating the organizational structure

When analyzing observations and accounts of communication practitioners' every-day meetings and interactions, it was clear that communication practitioners use, interact and manipulate the organizational structure. This is in order to enable and stimulate interactions and discussion between others and between themselves and others throughout the organization. This in terms, creates interlocution (network) possibilities where communication practitioners can listen, discuss, and reformulate communicational needs. Through a CCO perspective, this can be understood as a partly self-structuring and ongoing membership negotiations processes/flows (Guldbrandsen & Just, 2020). In these networks, membership negotiation takes place throughout structural borders, where each member positions themselves and are allowed to position themselves in the organization. Simultaneously, the organization self-structures reflexively through the formal forums since it allows for a spread of members to work with explicit policy documents and/or strategies (Guldbrandsen & Just, 2020). The actual process within these meetings adheres to activity coordination, where emergent day-to-day actions are reformulated and negotiated. In this practical sense (SAP-perspective), these networks and forums are important arenas where practitioners get to practice and develop praxis of strategizing (Whittington, 2006).

Throughout my observations and interviews, it became clear that the city office function is to lead and coordinate the city (administrations). But in this shared sense of purpose, a hierarchical clash is reoccurring. Their purpose in their roles as communicators in the city office is influenced by a lack of formal power. Each administration is sovereign to a large degree, which means that as long as they follow the highest directives from the city council, they are free to choose communication strategies, focus and actions. This creates a situation where city office practitioners have a purpose to lead and coordinate, but no mandate or formal power to actually do so, making it necessary to find other ways to lead, as described by one practitioner:

One could say that all boards are independent and all administrations make decisions on their own. In that sense it is really only decisions made by the city council that govern all boards and administrations, and that of course is a challenge for us at the city office who has a mission to lead and coordinate. But at the same time,

we cannot rule by pointing with our hand: “do this, to that”, so to speak, just because we work for the city office, and I don’t believe in that either. It’s a thing we are talking about here, people who want more decisional power versus me who think that, well isn’t it the core of communication in a way that you steer and lead by communicating, and reach the best solutions together.

In this way, the structure of power, and of the city administrations, makes it impossible for the practitioners to actually decide or control any of the administration's communicational activities. To work around this issue, and to gain control over the interactions and structure, practitioners have created a context that perpetuates what they in a meeting called ‘organic growth’. A context created and continuously strategized to enable organic interactions and networks to grow within the organization, and between the organization and its surrounding. This is similar to what some would consider as organizational culture. A similar thought is expressed by another communicator, who emphasizes that firm directions is not the way to lead:

So, there is also a sort of agreement where we and other administrations support each other. And it is there that I mean that the hierarchical structure of communication where you point with your whole hand probably isn’t the best one. Instead this with making agreements, to work with great trust, quality, is more successful.

This context, culture, or peripheral structure, is based on formal forums (e.g. a forum for all editors, web-forum etc.) and organic networks that are created when there is a perceived need to share knowledge or communicate. These are called networks or “experience groups”, one of the practitioners described this structure to me with the aid of an organizational scheme:

And then there’s a forum for web, the web-forum, and also on for regular press and social media activities. Then on the right side we have these experience groups that are necessary, and anyone is free to create a group like this willy nilly. Cause as a communicator you are permitted to start whatever network you want or deem necessary.

This possibility to create networks is seemingly very important for the practitioner's purpose and ability to strategically listen to the organization internally, since it allows practitioners in the city office to oversee and often lead these networks. The ability to have emerging networks (experience-groups) can be understood as strategizing as a position, where communication fashions or developments (e.g. social media usage/digitalization/sustainability) creates a need for a new network. This was described to me by one of the practitioners, who explained that the social media experience group emerged out of necessity. In this way the external context forces the organization to react and/or answer to something out of its control (Guldbrandsen & Just, 2020).

The networks are gatekept in a way by practitioners in the city office, since they often hold expert positions and an overarching perspective on the organization and its members. They are the ones who define the boundaries and focus, and tie the network's discussions together with management and the rest of the organization. This is expressed by one practitioner, who describes how the communication executive forum is completely voluntary for each administration to participate in, but that in order to have access and be part of the communication in-group, they need to participate in this forum:

We said it like this when we created this group, how you organize yourself is up to you of course, that's up to the administration director. But, if you are going to be a part of our group then you have to come in with responsibility and mandate over communicational activities.

This manipulation of the structure is a way to 'freely' force administrations to engage in communication, effectively enforcing alignment within the organization. Through having knowledge of each administration and overarching activities, they become beacons for other parts of the organization that wants to develop their communication functions. Interestingly, if viewed from Simonsson and Heide's (2021) contrasting logics of managerialism and professionalism, the function of communication in this structural sense seems to adhere to both logics. Although their explicit rationale is communication as a tool for co-constructing realities, which heavily adheres to professionalism, the consequence is more managerial: in that

communication and structure becomes a tool for control (Simonsson & Heide, 2021).

5.1.2 Partaking in boundary spanning activities

Enforced by the manipulation of the structure, the practitioners are continually creating ways for organizational members to share knowledge and interact, while indirectly creating opportunities for themselves to strategically listen to what is going on in the organization and its administrations. This gives them room to control the direction of the communication for the city (e.g. how they engage with social media), and it gives them possibilities to engage in a boundary spanning function, effectively enabling co-creation of narratives. This can be understood as communicational practices that are created and enacted by and through these interlocutors (Marchiori & Bulgacovs, 2012). The practitioners of the city office keep track of the organization, and the communication within, and have the ability to discuss and talk about the organization's communication together with the in-group, be it in formal meetings, or informally by the coffee-machine.

Internally, practitioners at the city office have worked with the formal organizational structure in a way that enhances co-creation and simultaneously gives themselves more organizational power over narratives and interactions. The co-creation gives more room for listening to ongoing strategy re-negotiations, making emerging shared and divergent organizational definitions more accessible in development and strategy making. In this co-creation and narrative of organic growth of networks, the practitioners put emphasis on the free will for administrations to participate in communicative activities. This process of enabling co-construction of ongoing strategy negotiation can be understood as Winkler and Etter's (2018) emerging form of strategic communication: reframing. The practitioners allow and enable informal and peripheral contextualization and interpretations of strategy, effectively creating joint accounts of strategic practice (Winkler & Etter, 2018). The product created through this strategic communication practice is the co-creation of strategy narratives, where each contextualization and strategy narrative can be expressed and re-negotiated to create alignment and clarity in everyday work.

There seems to be a shared understanding between the practitioners that free will to participate in their activities and interactions enhances the level of

engagement and commitment, since everyone who participates has chosen themselves to do so. This free will to choose what to focus on, what to develop, and what to participate in runs through the city office practitioners as well. While observing a longer in-group meeting, a decision to leave specific communication development activities was unanimously supported, letting both communication teams in the city office decide what to focus on, on their own.

Although free will is fundamental for the practitioners when enabling co-creation, one interesting account described how they could stimulate boundary spanning interactions bottom-up to force cooperation at higher levels. When discussing how power, distance and relation is an issue of most large organization, she said that:

The way to success is to make sure that you have super concrete tasks to solve together, and eventually relationships higher up will be solved. Because, when these super concrete collaborations happen, they are forced to make decisions together at higher levels.

This excerpt shows a clear communicative perspective from the practitioners, where coworkers communication activities, regardless of hierarchical position, are considered important and useful for organizational survival and as a means to reach their goals. It directly indicates an awareness of sub-processes constituting organization and, in this case, its internal strategic communication (Heide, et al., 2018).

Both internally and externally, I observed meetings where the practitioners were taking on roles more keen to that of a project leader. This included teams made up of several communicators from the different administrations (most projects are usually in collaboration with administration), as well as projects led centrally in collaboration with external communication bureaus. In these settings, the practitioners from the city office took on roles as experts and/or project leaders in boundary spanning projects, managing and coordinating larger scale projects involving several parts, or all parts, of the city. In these interactions, or planning/project meetings. The function as project leaders were heavily influenced by their expert status, their intense knowledge of, and helicopter-perspective over, the city's function. This was made clear in one of my observations, where one of the practitioners brought up weekly meetings with managers regarding an ongoing crisis. She asked

the other practitioners in her team if they saw a purpose in joining these meetings. The colleagues were at first unsure, so she exemplified if maybe the graphic design expert should join to make sure that they cover knowledge gaps in that area. The colleague agrees that it can be a good idea, but mostly if the need arises. Discussion continued and the communicator said that it is good if more joined to show the managers that they, as communicators, are closely following the process. The team-manager filled in that the main purpose would be for his team of communicators to be part of the processes, but that it is up to each individual to decide when the timing is right. At this point they seemed to agree that some of them should partake in these meetings. The practitioner who brought this topic up continues by arguing that it is also great for those who rather explain and support the managers verbally, than doing it via digital chat functions. In this example it is clear that the discussion and interaction between the in-group members resulted in practitioners partaking in yet another boundary spanning context. The strategic value is made clear through their discussion: to signal to managers that the practitioners are available; for the practitioners to be part of the ongoing process; to cover knowledge gaps; and in case anyone rather supports verbally. This is a clear example of ongoing strategizing, where they discuss if there is a need, once a need is identified, they discuss solutions and maybe most importantly: what implications a potential solution can have for different actors/perspectives. Effectively, strategic communication and strategic practice has thus been created through establishing an intersubjective understanding of 'what is going on' and what they should do to make sure that communicational needs are met. In the same meeting, a contrasting example of participating and listening in, where a practitioner brings up another weekly meeting where practitioners from the city office did not seem to be invited. She expresses that the meeting participants have identified needs, but that these needs are not communicated to the city office practitioners which is a problem. She expresses that they need to make this group understand that communication practitioners from the city office need to take part in this. At this point, a colleague brings up that the group is supposedly going to do a communicative action similar to what had been done in another situation, and that someone from the city office should participate in order to make sure it is done correctly, in accordance with policies. The team manager fills in, saying that it is a good idea to try to join to fill knowledge-gaps, and to make sure communication activities are conducted correctly. This shows that despite efforts to make

sure that communication practitioners from the city office are included in most overarching activities, they are still left out occasionally.

5.1.3 Pointing in the right direction

In these meetings then, a core function I observed was that a main function of practitioners was their knowledge of who to contact. This might be a by-product of their continuous work to clearly define their roles and expertise, to make it clear about who is working on what, which gives clarity to what function needs to be included in a project or task. This seemed to work as a built-in guideline to make sure that although no practitioner knew all functions or coworkers in each administration, each practitioner covered an area of their own. This was visible in meetings I observed, where a major aspect was the practitioner's abilities to listen in on what the issue or focus was, and then recommend who (and how) they need to turn to for answers. This was very apparent in a meeting that two practitioners (as project leaders) had with a communication bureau where they discussed digital tools and opportunities for a campaign. None of the practitioners knew how to create this function, so they had booked a meeting with a colleague at the city office who knew more about digital tools. I got to observe this meeting too, where they again discussed their ideas, and the 'expert' practitioner confirmed that it was do-able, and guided them to contact the right person within the city. He did not stop there however, he also explained how they should approach the person/function and explain their needs to receive what they actually wanted. Additionally, he recommended them to go back to the bureau and align their work with this intended digital tool so that the campaign visuals are aligned. In this setting, the practitioner points the others in the right direction (enablers of communication), and explains the perspective and focus they should have to make sure that the digital experts (who are not working in the communications team) they should turn to can understand what they need to do communicatively.

5.1.4 Strategized outcomes of stimulating interactions & co-creation

By manipulating the structure, the practitioners are increasing their control (by participating and enabling networks and forums) over the organizational narratives of communication. This increased control is based firstly on the fact that they are the

ones in expert positions, enabling networks and coordinating knowledge. Secondly, by creating networks and interactions, they have created a platform for strategy narratives to be co-created and constructed in a partly controlled context. This co-construction enables the narratives of strategies and organizational development to be shared between different administrations and organizational members. It also enables communication professionals to have increased control over narratives of communication and discourse of strategies, since they themselves often oversee or facilitate (co-creation) networking-areas. The outcomes of the processes of stimulating interactions and co-creation then, are:

- Increased control over narratives
- Platform for co-creation
- Shared narrative development

The practices and outcomes of stimulating interaction and co-creation can be understood as an emergence strategy process of the strategy narrative (Winkler & Etter, 2018). Strategy will most often be re-contextualized and situated within organizations, which means that formal strategy will have different meanings throughout different areas (Winkler & Etter, 2018). In larger organizations, this renegotiation of strategies and meanings is unavoidable, since many paradoxes and contradicting narratives of organizing and strategizing exist and need to be worked through in order to reach shared meaning (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). The immense freedom over development actions and strategies that all administrations have makes it very difficult to control and oversee overall alignment of communication. It is rather clear that instead of clear power and control, the city practitioners try to enable reframing and re-contextualization of strategy in order to make sense of them.

The process of stimulating interactions & co-creation can be understood as the strategic communication practice of joint accounts, where strategic communicators partly control the reformulation and recontextualization of rolled out strategies and development plans (Winkler & Etter, 2018). This in terms, creates a context where the practitioners can mediate between narratives of established strategies and emerging renegotiations, in effect stabilizing a shared meaning of ongoing strategic practice. The meeting and networking possibilities enabled by the communication structure can be understood as interlocutions which enables a

communication-strategy relation (Marchiori & Bulgacov, 2012). Essentially, the practitioners enable and enforce interlocution between different organizational functions, where strategizing processes can take place and develop through (a co-created) language, where shared meaning and interpretations can be created and developed.

5.2 Inoculating a communicative perspective

During both the interviews and observations, a pattern emerged around a shared sense of purpose as practitioners at the city office: to create communicative organizational members, and in doing so, creating a communicatively aware organization. This shared sense of purpose materializes in two main ways, that of *indoctrinating a communication perspective & reformulating needs*.

5.2.1 Indoctrinating a communication perspective

The most explicit aspect of this strategizing process was the facilitation of knowledge. Several practitioners seemed to share the sense that their roles at the city office included educating other organizational members in communication. A major purpose of educating other organizational members are to make them better communicators, as expressed by one practitioner:

We usually say that you must make your administration communicative. Then it is probably most impactful to work a lot with the communication climate and get non-communicators to plan their communication. Not to communicate more, but to plan it. That's the important part, to reduce it and not just force it out, because I would say that there's already too much communication.

It is noteworthy to point out that she is talking about a “we”, implicating her own understanding that this is an intersubjective idea that she shares with her coworkers. This shared sense of responsibility, to make the organization more communicative, was present in interviews and observations, where the practitioners continuously talked about different ways in which they together can enforce a communicative organization. As she expresses, there is a need to create a more communicative co-worker in order to reduce unorganized and non-strategic communication. By

educating and supporting co-workers and leaders, and by enforcing a communication climate, communication is developed throughout the organization which can reduce issues for the practitioners at the city office. She continues problematizing communicative coworkers through a metaphor:

And that's a difficult equation, cause it's like this: Should I walk and blow my nose and have a cold every week of the year, or should I go and get vaccinated?

This illustrative example regards how coworkers can choose to either continuously be sick (lack communication perspective/knowledge), or to be vaccinated against it. It showcases a shared understanding between the practitioners, that it is in their purpose at the city office, and important for the organization, that they educate organizational members to plan communication and improve their communication skills, as explained by another practitioner:

I want to help them so that they become better at communicating, and what can I give them then? Sometimes it's tools, sometimes it's frameworks, sometimes it is a good intranet that enables them to work self-instructed. I think that's the best perspective/viewpoint.

She later elaborates this point with an analogy of a highway:

I want to be part of building the highway in a way. So that others can drive on it. To support, like being a help so self-help, to communicate on their own. I think that's, I don't know, I say it a lot because that's how I want it to be

This perspective and focus on educating coworkers and organizational members to be more communicative is deeply rooted in the previously mentioned structure, where the practitioners emphasize that the educational material and workshops they provide are fully optional. Where their shared sense of responsibility and purpose is to facilitate communication knowledge and lay the ground-work for better communication throughout the organization. This function, to educate and develop communication in the organization is rooted in their development plan as one of the development areas, although there is no clear strategy or plan to make the

organization more communicative. Instead it seems to be more of an ongoing process of educating and facilitating their expert knowledge, and a shared sense of purpose in doing so. This sense of purpose to vaccinate and educate coworkers adheres to Simonsson and Heide's (2021) view of a professionalism logic, where communication practitioners are "enablers and developers – strategic partners" (p. 266) rather than executors of communication activities. This sense of supporting self-help rather than executing was prevalent in a weekly meeting, where a practitioner described how she supported an administration during a crisis by giving them tools to handle press-contact, rather than stepping in and handling press contact on her own.

5.2.2 Reformulating needs

As a way to enhance a communicative perspective, an important function for the practitioners is to reformulate the communicative needs that other functions have. One way of doing so is by controlling the narrative of communication development, as I observed in an internal meeting. Another way is to make sure to question what other organizational functions ask for in terms of communication, to make sure that their support as practitioners actually builds something solid. One of the practitioners recalled a process where she supported HR with what in her mind was a fairly simple communication tool, where she realized that there was a major difference in perspective:

What happened in that dialogue or in that work was like, a simple tool. But when we were talking about it and kneading it, several questions arose that made the HR department say: we never thought about that.

This function, to come in with a communicative perspective and questioning what is asked of a communicator, is a way to enhance others perspective and in doing so, reformulate their needs to fit a communicative perspective. Again, this can be understood as internalized shared understanding of their roles as communicators, to be strategic partners that enable and develop others communicative understanding (Simonsson & Heide, 2021). She continues by explaining the necessity of changing others perspectives:

That was also enormously important, and the learning outcome that it is actually so important to take your time in the beginning (of a project/task) to just knead. What do we need to achieve, what's your purpose? Then you get them to think a bit differently, changing their perspective, and that's what I felt happened in that mission in that work context with those who worked in HR at the time.

This identified role or function as a communicator at the city office to reformulate others needs to be communicative is highly related to enhancing others perspective, which in terms serves a great purpose for the outcome of the support, and for future work focus. It adheres to a professionalism logic since the targets of communicative ability are both managers and coworkers, where the goal is an organization where everyone can think and act communicatively.

Apart from the fairly explicit purpose, this facilitation and educating has an interesting peripheral effect. While explaining her part of educating leaders in communicational perspectives and skills, one practitioner discusses how those leaders who chose to participate have become better as asking for communication assistance:

They [communicators at administrations] see that the managers become better at ordering communication tasks, because they see their own responsibility more clearly, and ask us more long-term strategic questions instead of: do a powerpoint for me I'm panicking, next week I'm going to... Like, on that level.

This outcome was an unintended consequence of their facilitation effort that they managed to notice and grasp, making it possible to focus on in future activities. This function was neither planned or articulated, rather it was an unexpected consequence of strategic action. This strategic effect cannot be disregarded, since it is the effect of purposeful communication, albeit a peripheral and non-planned effect (Jarzabowski et al., 2021). The consequence of the strategic work is increased value-creation not only for the intended purpose, but for strategic communicators as well. This should increase efficiency and internal communication flow, making the organization both more effective and communicative.

5.2.3 Strategized outcomes of vaccinating

By continually educating and developing non-communicators' communication, and perspective of communication, the practitioners are creating a more communicative organization, which has many interesting effects on the organization and the communication practitioners. By vaccinating others from a communicative perspective, they reduce the amount of requests they get by other organizational members, since they now can perform simpler communication tasks on their own, giving practitioners more time to focus on developing communication and strategy. To have a more communicative organization makes it possible for communicators to not only focus more on strategic communication, but also gives them more ownership of the communication discourse in the organization. Since they can control and reformulate needs, they reformulate perspective of, and language about, communication, enhancing its importance as an organizational function.

While the workshops and education packages are formal and planned, reformulating the needs of other organizational members is a much more convoluted process, where 'on-the-spot' thinking and strategizing is necessary to successfully grasp the communication need. It is through their interactions with other members where they, through questioning needs and negotiating terms, are enforcing a communicative perspective. They are effectively strategizing communication as an ingrained perspective, where the city office practitioners have created an ingrained shared identity that seeps through their work with other administrations (Guldbrandsen & Just, 2020). By enforcing a communication perspective on the proposed communication need, they create an interaction that results in two things: a deeper understood need, and a reduced operational function.

5.3 Strategizing Framework: process-interaction-outcome

The framework presented (figure 1) is a result of presented analysis and pertains to the practical strategizing processes practitioners are creating, how they manifest and are continuously re-created through interactions and communication, and what the outcomes of this strategizing is. The framework has no hierarchical structure, since the different processes are highly interrelated and interdependent, but does show how the processes and interactions produce settings and outcomes that are strategized in practice, not necessarily connected to a formulated strategy.

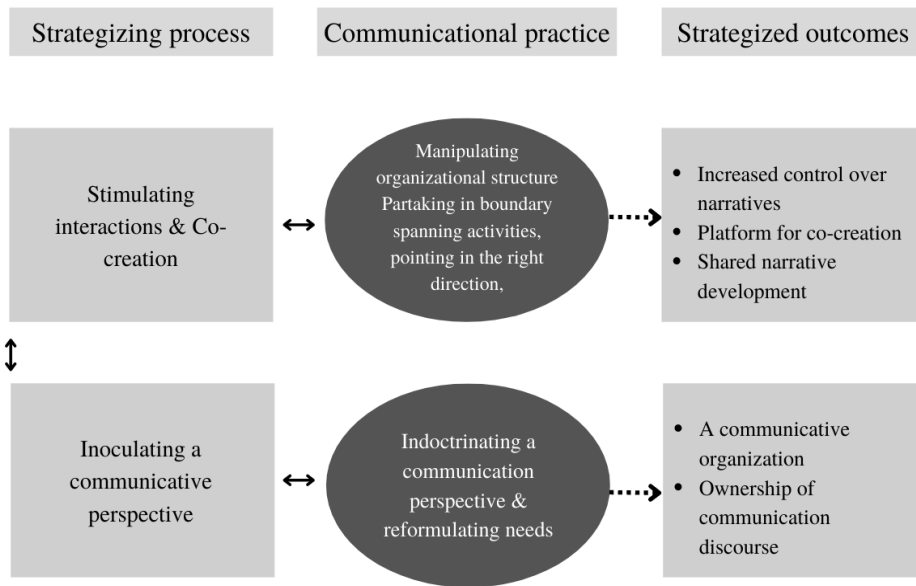


Figure 1. Strategizing processes.

5.4 The tension of employing a supporting role

From the previous two processes identified, we see that strategy emerges throughout the organization. These processes are enhanced due to communicators and strategists' ability to enable co-creation, collaboration and interaction between organizational members. This process is in and of itself also a process of ongoing strategizing, where interactions and discussion within the city office group of practitioners, combined with an ability to strategically listen to organizational narratives, results in direct and peripheral strategic actions, which have both intended and unintended strategic consequences. To highlight the emergence of strategy, the following is a brief overview of an identified tension for the city office practitioners, and how they strategize to work through it. These differing expectations seem to be tied to notions of operational and strategic work, in relation to supporting administrations. What practitioners seem to want, is to support strategically, by reformulating needs, asking questions and educating. What administrations seem to expect (according to practitioners) is for reactionary responses and guidance in every-day work.

5.4.1 Supporting strategically

The first type of support is strategic, which is what practitioners want to do, and view as important in their own roles.

As previously discussed, there is a shared sense of identity within the city office communication practitioners that one important part of their role is to support the administration's communication. This is expressed both explicitly and implicitly by some of the practitioners, and was visible in meetings I participated in. But this support function, that is central to their purpose and roles, seems to be plagued by differing expectations from the city office practitioners and administration practitioners. While the administrations have expectations of the practitioner's support function as partly being able to answer questions and guide them in daily work, city office practitioners do not share this view. Their view is rather that as a support function, they should come in more as consultants, engulfed in one particular project or need at the time, giving them space to work strategically. Their discourse suggests that 'consultants' is preferably used to describe their role: *Then we become some sort of communication consultants, or communication bureau, for the whole city.* Identifying as a consultant seems to be a shared understanding of their roles and identities as city office practitioners, as expressed by another practitioner:

So there I work, well, both operatively with those accounts and also strategically, I also function as a, what should I say, an internal consultant, supporting each administration.

In this supportive 'consultant' function, it is rather clear that the city office practitioners want to focus on strategic work and enforcing a holistic communicative perspective (i.e. inoculating a communicative perspective), since this is what they identify as: strategic practitioners responsible for overall communication and planning. When describing an instance of supporting another organizational function, one practitioners expressed that she worked strategically, when asked what she meant with that, she problematized the view of operational work versus strategic, and how difficult it is to make a distinction between non-strategic and strategic actions:

If we were very operative in that sense we would've said: yes, if you want a film we will do it, if you want a brochure, okay. But here we chose to be super difficult and

say: wait wait wait, before you approach us with this, what is it that you want to achieve? So then we have to spend some time kneading and working through it in the beginning, that is something that pays off later on. That was probably what I was thinking when I started to give strategic support instead of operative. But this is difficult, with strategic and operative, because you are so strategic in operative questions too. So... I think [working strategically is about] the time horizon.

She makes a distinction that working strategically is about having a longer time perspective, and making sure to understand the ‘need’ rather than the proposed question for help. Interestingly, in her distinction, operational work is not defined by the actual work done, but whether or not the work produced is thought through and “kneaded” to fit strategically. It seems like the major difference between operational and strategic communication practice depends on two things relating to a time-perspective: the time spent in the earlier processes of a task/project (spending time thinking), and the inclusion of a longer time perspective (how will this affect us/be used in the future).

The use of the word strategy, strategic, and strategically was fairly ambiguous in observed meetings and interviews, where some did not seem to reflect on it further than implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, talking of strategic work/strategic communication as their main focus, and operational work as secondary. There seems to be a tension in the practitioners own understanding of what strategic work is, and whether operational work (especially support) is strategic. Despite this, working strategically is their primary articulated focus. I argue that this indicates an ambiguity to the discourse of strategy within the organization.

5.4.2 Reactionary guidance

The second type of support is reactionary, which the practitioners devalue, and wish to move away from. This reactionary support is mainly about being able and available to answer questions from practitioners from across the organization:

I usually say that I feel like a support quite often. And several colleagues feel the same, like [name of practitioner] who works with graphic communication, [practitioner name] who works with visual communication, that you are always receiving

a lot, a lot, a lot of questions. And like, how are we supposed to handle this? And this was one way.

Interestingly she expresses that she often feels like a support in a rather negative manner, which other practitioners have expressed as one of their main purposes as city office practitioners. She continues by explaining how they are dealing with the abundance of questions by a recent idea to try to direct questions to a digital teams-chat. This is something the practitioners have discussed and strategized together, based on the issue of questions:

So now we are trying to steer it so that they will ask their questions in these channels. Because when we are answering in these channels there are probably others pondering the same question who can see the answer, and we don't have to answer the same question seven times. So I would say that there's actually more dialogue there than in the experience-group.

Through in-group discussions, they have identified a shared issue tied to the expectation of their roles. When identified, they discussed ways to reduce their time spent answering questions and concluded that they can utilize team-channels. This can reduce the amount of questions and answers, since now the answer provided to a question is visible to many of the administrators' practitioners. It also makes it possible for other practitioners to answer the incoming questions, further reducing the need and time spent answering questions for the city practitioners. Despite this recent implementation, one practitioner explains that one way to give herself time to plan and work proactively, is to make herself appear busy in the online schedule:

Because that type of task can easily take over, it could fill up all my work time with that. So no, it is about blocking your calendar in order to be able to work with it. I actually block four hours a week so that I can work with planning, otherwise that time would be eaten up.

By direction questions and discussion to digital team groups, they effectively reduce the issue of having to spend a lot of time on answering questions. This is fairly straightforward, however I argue that there is an ingrained communicative

perspective and value-creation behind their solution. In this way the practitioners firstly stimulate interactions and co-creation between the administrations by enabling a platform for shared sensemaking and co-creation. They are increasing their own resources spent on planning and strategy creation, while encouraging different organizational members and communicators to interact and learn from each other. Secondly, by enforcing open communication and imprinting the idea that each and every one can contribute communicatively, they inoculate coworkers to be more communicative, creating a communicative organizational culture. If successful, the end product is increased openness, co-creation, knowledge-sharing and time for planning. All stemming from discussion with the in-group and an ingrained communicative perspective.

6. Conclusions

This chapter concludes the findings and conclusions of the research conducted. Included is discussion on contributions to research, the field of strategic communication, and suggestions for future research.

The purpose of this thesis is to increase knowledge of how communication practitioners are actually ‘doing’ strategy in practice, and how strategizing is defined through narratives. This has been explored through the lens of social constructionism, guided by sensemaking, CCO, dual narratives of emergence in strategic communication and theories of strategizing. From these theoretical perspectives, strategy has been regarded as something that not only takes form in formal strategy meetings, but also emerges throughout organizations (Guldbrandsen & Just, 2020), which shape strategy and strategizing. Theoretical considerations also include assumptions that strategy is something that takes form in practice, guided by interactions and communication at a fundamental level (Marchiori & Bulgacov, 2012).

The analysis of interviews and observations yielded a framework of strategizing, where two major processes of strategizing emerged: *stimulating interactions and co-creation*, and *inoculating a communicative perspective*. These processes are identified as overarching forms of emergent strategies that were formed through interlocution, discussion, interaction and meetings at the city office. These two processes are highly tied to the practitioner's sense of identity, which forms their construction of their organizational context and strategy. The subprocesses of interactions and communication that form these shared emergent strategies are: *Manipulating organizational structure, partaking in boundary spanning activities, pointing in the right direction*, and: *indoctrinating a communication perspective & reformulating needs*. All of these subprocesses are created and materialized through in-group discussion, strategic listening, and ongoing identity negotiation, through which the practitioners reach a shared understanding of communication needs and communication development. It is also through these negotiations that the discourse of communication and discourse of strategy are continuously re-negotiated and

formulated, often as a means to increase organizational power.

The two overarching emerging strategies yielded a framework of strategizing (figure 2), where a connection could be made to subprocesses and outcomes of their strategizing. This framework showcases how communicational practice and interactions are made shared, as a praxis, to form emerging strategies stemming from interactions.

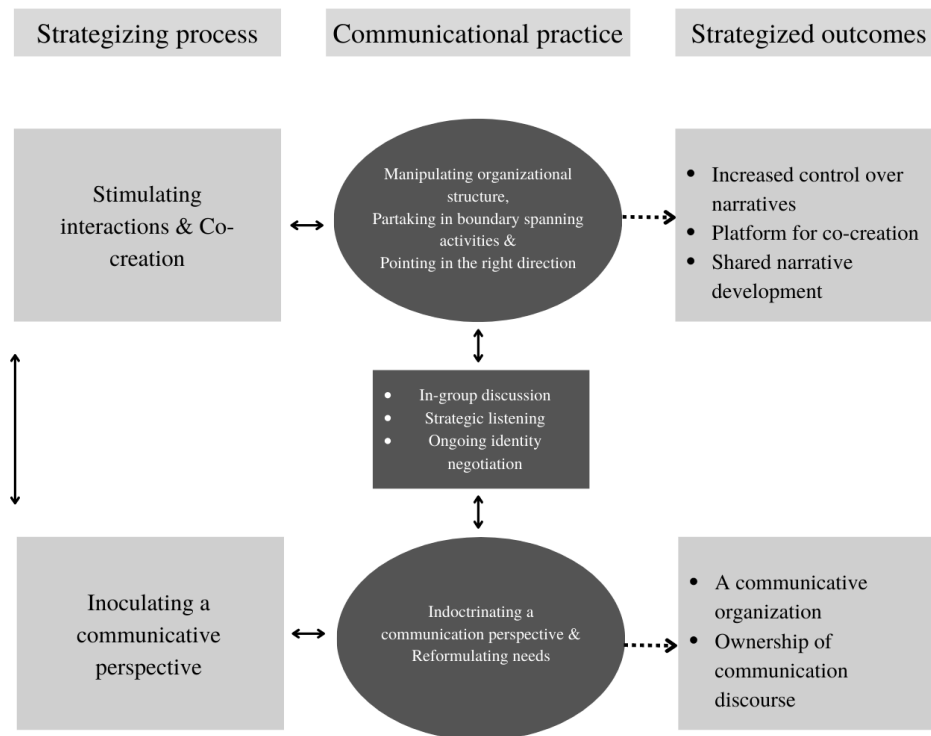


Figure 2. Strategizing framework: process-practice-outcome.

The results show that strategies, either successful or not, are highly tied to practitioners' ability to strategically listen and adapt in fast paced organizations, where reaction and on-the-spot strategizing is necessary for the survival of organizations. This was further contextualized through the identified tension of employing a supportive role. The tension of employing a supportive role adheres to the incongruence between practitioners' expectations of their roles, and other organizational members' expectations of their roles. The tension is visible in the practitioner's own accounts and in observations, where they strategized actions and processes to work through the tension. This tension can be understood through the framework of strategizing provided from the analysis, showing how emergent strategies are used

to work through tensions. The tension of expectations was identified individually at first, where practitioners would come up with their own solutions, after which the issue was explained through discussion, where a shared sense of issue materialized. The tension is dealt with and worked through by utilizing emergent strategies and narratives, by strategizing a solution that fits into the established narrative.

6.1 Contributions to research and practice

This thesis has made several contributions to research and practice in regards to strategic communication and organizational research. Firstly, this thesis has taken an important step in strategic communication research by researching communication practitioners and strategy on a micro-level. By studying strategies as something emerging in organizations, with an emphasis on communication and interactions, this research has deepened knowledge of communication practitioners' strategic practice of strategizing. Through this perspective, the analysis showed that communication practitioners provide intense value to organizations by employing and disseminating a communicative perspective in their interactions. This communicative perspective, and control over boundary spanning interactions, implies that communication practitioners have immense power to increase co-creation and alignment throughout organizations, which furthers the conceptualization of strategy as something that emerges within organizations (Winkler & Etter, 2018) The findings suggest that strategic communication practitioners enforce the emergence of joint accounts and co-creation of strategy by enabling interactions and communication throughout structural boundaries.

Secondly, this thesis has shown that strategy is not something inherently reserved for top management and formal strategy meetings. It strengthens the case of strategy as something taking form and developing through practice (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). The analysis provides accounts of “what strategy practitioners do” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2010, p. 127), in relation to their context and organizational structure. The findings show that the practitioners create patterns and underlying structures in everyday practices that are not explicitly outspoken strategic actions, but highly strategic and important for the organization. This contributes to SAP research within the practice view, where the researcher actively interprets and

defines what being strategic is (Jarzabowski et al., 2021), to find out what strategy actors are actually doing.

Thirdly, this thesis makes contributions to the field of strategic communication and rising interest in research with a focus on actors and interactions by highlighting the practices and praxis of strategic communication practitioners in relation to strategy. Intersubjectivity in regards to role-function, organizational identity and strategy practice was identified in the practitioner's language and actions. Hence, developing our understanding that micro-actions are at the core of strategizing, which inherently is built on collectively constructed meanings (Marchiori & Bulgacov, 2012). The findings furthers the ongoing discussion about how strategy-discourse empowers practitioners and gives them more intra-organizational power (Andersson, 2020). Although the analytical perspective differed from previous attempts (e.g. Andersson, 2020), the results indicate that being strategic educators or facilitators is tied to organizational power and a discourse of strategy that exerts power by creating communicative coworkers.

Furthermore, I argue that this thesis furthers the ongoing discussion of the tension of managerialism and professionalism logics in strategic communication research. Practitioners' way of strategizing, and accounts of solving tensions, indicate that even in an organization where communicators are plenty, and communication runs deep, there are still tensions in their praxis and intra-organizational power. On the one hand, practitioners can largely focus on the communicative agenda and are describing their way of working and reasoning as closely adhering to a professionalism logic. On the other hand, there are still situations in the organization where communication experts are left out of the discussion, and conducts of making administrations choose between a communicative perspective (being part of the in-group) or being excluded from it.

6.2 Suggestions for future research

This thesis shows a further need to research micro-processes and everyday practices of communication practitioners to reach a deeper understanding about the essence of strategic communication in practice. Therefore, it is important that the practice, praxis, and practitioners are of focus in future endeavors, since it is in these dimensions that strategy takes form. Strategic communication research should continue

to dwell in the fundamentals of strategy and communication to broaden the scope and reveal the boundaries of strategic communication practice. The use of observations is highly recommended to further our understanding of the practices of strategic communicators and the complex spirals of communicative action that takes place in organizations. Particularly, participatory observations are of interest to get unique insights and personal subjective accounts of the ongoing processes, where the researcher takes part in and influences the processes of interactions. Furthermore, future research should approach strategizing and strategy as emerging from both critical and exploratory stances to develop strategizing and emerging strategies in relation to the existing research agendas. I argue that is especially important to combat strategic communication research being fragmented into several smaller communities of beliefs and definitions, without alignment of concepts, tensions, and future of the field.

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Appendix 1

Intervjuguide

Introduktion/Bakgrund

Vad är din position i organisationen?

Hur länge har du arbetat i organisation och i din nuvarande roll?

Hur många är ni i din närmsta avdelning?

Om ledande roll, hur många anställda har du ansvar över?

Tema 1: Dagligt rutin

- Hur ser en arbetsvecka ut?
- Skulle du kunna gå igenom gårdagens arbetsdag?
- Hur mycket av ditt arbete berör Intra- kontra interorganisatorisk kommunikation?
- Hur mycket arbetar du och dina kollegor på plats? Hur stor andel är digitalt?

Tema 2: Strategi

- Finns det någon övergripande strategi?
- Finns det någon övergripande kommunikationsstrategi?
 - Om ja, är de relaterade till varandra?
- Är du med och planerar/bestämmer strategi? (När bestäms/planeras/revideras strategi?)
- Hur definierar du strategi?
- Finns strategi med i ditt vardagliga arbete?
 - Berätta gärna om en situation då du använde strategin i en arbetsuppgift.
- Vilka är strategierna till för? Vilka påverkar strategierna?

Tema 3: interaktioner

- När träffas din närmaste enhet?
- Pratar du och dina kollegor om strategi? (I vilka sammanhang)
- Finns det någon situation då du behövt försvara eller förklara vad ditt arbete bidrar med?
- I vilken mån träffar du utomstående (externa) i ditt uppdrag?

Tema 4: Arbete

- Kan du berätta om ett projekt eller process som blev bättre än förväntat?

- Varför blev det projektet/processen bättre än förväntat?
- Kan du berätta om en svår eller krävande situation när arbetet inte gick enligt satt plan?
- När arbetar du som bäst?
- Vad är det viktigaste du gör för/i organisationen?

Appendix 2

Timeline of observations and interviews

Week 12	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat/Sun
Interview 1			Strategist 08:00:00			
Observation 1			Monthly meeting 10:00-12:00			
Interview 2				Internal coms 08:30-09:30		
Interview 3				Leadercom 10:00-11:00		
Transcription					Interview 1	Interview 2

Week 13	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat/Sun
Observation 2	Weekly meeting (digital) 09:00-09:30					
Observation 3	13-14 Ext meeting - project start					
Observation 4	15-15:30 (Digital) Internal - project					
Observation 5				10-11 Ext meeting - project alignment		
Observation 6				14-14:15 Int meeting - Project		
Trancription					Interview 3	

Week 14	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat/Sun
Interview 4				Strategist 2 13:30-14:30		
Observation						
Field notes						
Transcription					Interview 4	

Week 15	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat/Sun
Interview 5	SoMe Coms - 10-11					
Field notes						
Transcription		Interview 5				

Appendix 3

Interviews & Interviewees

Interview	Position/title	Length	Date	Gender
1	Strategist	87 minutes	23/03	W
2	Internal communicator - internal webb	44 minutes	24/03	W
3	Leadership communication	59 minutes	24/03	W
4	Social media communication	53 minutes	13/4	W
5	Strategist 2	46 minutes	7/4	M

Appendix 4

Informed consent

Strategic communication as an emergent process: Strategizing communication

Hej! Mitt namn är David Gullbing, jag studerar just nu sista terminen av mastern i Strategisk kommunikation vid Lunds universitet, Campus Helsingborg. Jag arbetar nu med min masteruppsats om strategi i praktiken. Detta är en inbjudan och informationsblad om att delta i studien. Handledare för uppsatsen är Mats Heide, Professor vid Institutionen för strategisk kommunikation, Campus Helsingborg.

Syfte

Syftet med studien är att bidra till kunskap om kommunikatörers värdeskapande för organisationer genom att fördjupa förståelse för kommunikatörers handlingar och egna uppfattningar av strategiskt arbete. Förhoppningsvis kan detta bidra till att hitta argument och fördjupa förståelse för kommunikations strategiska värde i organisationer.

Metod

Genom en kombination av observationer, skuggning och intervjuer, kommer jag undersöka hur strategisk kommunikation tar sig form i praktiken genom interaktion, reflektion och kontext. Det jag vill ta reda på är hur kommunikatörer skapar värde och arbetar strategiskt i vardagliga uppgifter och möten, när det inte nödvändigtvis är uttalat strategiskt arbete som utförs.

Syfte med deltagande

Syftet med ditt deltagande i denna studien är att ge en inblick i kommunikatörers uppfattning av strategiskt arbete. Du har blivit tillfrågad att delta eftersom du är anställd med

kommunikativt ansvar i utvald offentlig organisation, och kan därmed bidra med kunskap för att uppnå studiens syfte.

Frivilligt deltagande - intervju

Om du accepterar att delta i studien kommer du att få läsa och skriva under deltagande (detta informationsblad), samt informeras muntligt om studiens syfte och forskningsetiska aspekter. Deltagandet innebär att du kommer intervjuas (ca 45-90 minuter). Intervjun kommer att spelas in för att kunna transkriberas. Inspelningen kommer enbart finnas tillgänglig för David Gullbing. Fältanteckningar kommer raderas efter studiens publicering.

Deltagandet är frivilligt och accepteras genom att skriva under detta missivbrev. Du har möjlighet att tacka nej, dra dig ur under intervju, eller att i efterhand dra dig ur studien fram till dess publikation.

Exempel på frågor som kan ställas är: Hur ser ditt dagliga arbete ut? Vad är dina viktigaste arbetsuppgifter? Kan du berätta om en svår eller krävande situation när arbetet inte gick enligt satt plan?

Konfidentialitet

Personlig information (ex. namn) kommer inte att inkluderas i studien.

Namn på deltagare kommer inte utges i uppsatsen, och inspelningar kommer enbart användas för att uppnå studiens syfte och förvaras på kodlåst enhet. Ert deltagande är med andra ord konfidentiellt. Efter uppsatsens godkännande kommer insamlad data raderas. Studien och dess resultat kommer att publiceras i Lunds Universitets databas för studentuppsatser.

Potentiella risker

Inga potentiella externa risker har identifierats. Genom att delta finns det en risk att andra organisationsmedlemmar vet att du deltagit i denna studie och är intresserade av att försöka läsa ut vilken medlem som sagt vad. Detta finns i åtanke vid presentation av resultat (inga namn och ingen personlig information inkluderas).

Underskrift nedan konfirmerar att du tagit del av och förstått ovanstående information och accepterar att delta i studien.

Signatur deltagare: _____ Datum: _____

Namnförtydligande: _____

Signatur datainsamlare: _____ Datum: _____

(David Gullbing)

Vid frågor

Ni är välkomna att ringa eller mejla mig vid frågor om studien och dess syfte på:

xxxxxxxxxx eller xxxxx@gmail.com