Resource mobilization in capabilities for strategic change

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Abstract

Resource mobilization is at the core of strategy and strategic change. Nevertheless, the process of how resources are mobilized in strategy remains undertheorized. The current thesis explains how the entrepreneurial efforts of top and middle managers in strategic initiatives are guided by resource needs and centered on mobilizing the needed resources. Initiatives vary by their resource needs, which brings variance to the unfolding process patterns.

Essay 1 argues that strategy process is an interplay of internal and external resource mobilization, where both top and middle managers are active champions of strategic initiatives. Thus far the strategy process literature has considered internal and external resource mobilization always separately and has failed to recognize how the two are intertwined. Resource needs are shaped by an organization's social position and orientation to the industry logic, which decisively influences which resources and resource-holders it prioritizes in its internal and external mobilization efforts. The process varies between narrow vs. broad mobilization, and tendency to either follow or influence the prevailing industry logic.

Essay 2 argues that the top managers choose to pursue different types of change initiatives in their efforts to improve performance and gain legitimacy, often either initiatives clearly focused on implementing a new organizational architecture, or initiatives focused on modularly improving performance while maintaining the current organizational architecture. This, in turn, influences the conduct of the initiative in major ways as manifested in the change management practices deployed during the initiative. In architectural change initiatives, a vision of the new organizational architecture is a key vehicle for mobilization, while in modular change initiatives, measurable clear targets are foregrounded instead.

Essay 3 shows how resource mobilization is manifested in the capabilities for change implementation. These dynamic capabilities are both an outcome of prior resource mobilization but also a key vehicle to achieve further resource mobilization to support the change. Essay 3 argues further that such capabilities in change management are often rarely used and thus at risk of dissipating in between the initiatives. Therefore some organizations undertake special measures such as team and practice fungibility and rapid capability reassembly to actively maintain these valuable dynamic capabilities.

Keywords resource mobilization, strategy process, strategic change, dynamic capabilities


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Tiivistelmä


Essee 1 esittää strategiaprosessin olevan sisäisen ja ulkoisen resurssien mobilisoinnin vuorottelu, jossa niin ylin johto kuin keskijohdotkin aktiivisesti edistä strategisia hankkeitaan. Tähän mennessä strategiaprojektisuus on aina käsitellyt sisäistä ja ulkoista resurssien mobilisointia erillään toisistaan, ja siten epäonnistunut tunnistamaan niiden keskinäisen riippuvuuden. Sekä sosiaalinen asema että suhtautuminen toimialalogiikkaan muokkaavat resurssitarpeita, mikä puolestaan määrittää resurssit ja niiden haltijat, joita yritys priorisoi sisäisissä ja ulkoisissa resurssimobilisointiponnistuksissaan. Prosessi vaihtelee kapean ja laajan mobilisoinnin välillä sekä tapimuksessa joko seurata vallitsevaa toimialalogiikkaa, tai vaikuttaa siihen.


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I write these words with more than little trepidation. It is not about this book as such. I am glad that it has reached your hands, and it will bring me heaps of joy, should you choose to read several parts of it, or even the entire tome. But then there is the process. Those who have seen the work process from up close may now browse this book with some curiosity: was it worth it, spending such a long time writing it? I dare not inquire their judgment.

I am very thankful to my contacts in the case companies, welcoming me to their change initiatives, and granting their precious time to me, not to mention helping me in obtaining their colleagues’ time. I learned much from these interviews, gaining insights on how the individuals and organizational processes interact and change in twists and turns. I also gained new understanding on how several individuals at different organizational levels occasionally have an outsize influence in both highly visible ways but often more importantly, also subtle ways in how they engage with other key individuals around them.

Over the course of my doctoral studies I have had three supervising processors, and all of them have inspired me greatly and helped me in many ways. Tomi Laamanen introduced me to the world of strategy research and engaged me in fascinating discussions, oh so long time ago. I have a feeling that it did not hurt to have Tomi in the SAP division management when I presented the early sole-authored version of Essay 1 in AOM. Cheers Tomi! Thomas Keil took me to the Corporate Initiative Programs research initiative, shared my interest in strategic initiatives, and has been my compass through the process. He was instrumental in obtaining access to three of my case companies, listened to all my ideas with an open mind and assembled the super team we had in authoring Essay 1. In my darkest hours he provided a wonderful way to get back to writing via the short piece on Resource Mobilization we authored to the Sage Encyclopedia. Despite moving to Zürich he has been there for me when I have needed help. Simply tremendous. Big big thanks Thomas! Markku Maula has now been a perfect support in providing feedback to my manuscript numerous times, engaging with the pre-examiners and the doctoral committee, and motivating me so well in this final leg of journey with my exhausted spirits. Thank you!
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Helsinki, 17 August 2022
Riku Österman
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List of Essays and Author’s Contribution

List of essays

This doctoral thesis consists of a summary and the following three essays:

**Essay 1.** Österman, Riku; Keil, Thomas & Seidl, David. *Strategy process as the interplay of internal and external resource mobilization*. Unpublished manuscript.

**Essay 2.** Österman, Riku. *Distinguishing between architectural and modular strategic change*. Unpublished manuscript.

**Essay 3.** Österman, Riku. *Dealing with the instability of rarely used dynamic capabilities*. Unpublished manuscript.

Author’s Contribution

**Essay 1** is an evolved version of a sole authored accepted conference paper:


The conference paper already contained some of the foundational ideas of the current essay, including the archetypes and their key process differences.

**Essays 2 and 3** are sole authored research papers. Essay 3 has been presented as an earlier version in a conference:

INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS
1. Introduction

... I was having an interview on the future of capitalism. And I was asked, what do you think of shareholder value as a strategy? I said it’s the dumbest idea possible. It isn’t a strategy; it’s an outcome. A strategy is something like, an innovative new product; globalization, taking your products around the world; be the low-cost producer. A strategy is something you can touch; you can motivate people with; be number one and number two in every business. You can energize people around the message. – Jack Welch

The Jack Welch quote above sets the tone for this thesis. It illustrates how strategy is not an outcome such as shareholder value or profits, but rather the means of achieving such an outcome. Regarding these means, the quote emphasizes that effortful actions are needed: the managers working with strategy need to motivate people to commit toward innovative aspirations. In other words, strategic directions, decisions, or choices are not enough without energized people. Schendel and Hofer have coined the concept of *strategic management* to describe this line of managerial work: “Strategic management is a process that deals with the entrepreneurial work of the organization, with organizational renewal and growth, and more particularly, with developing and utilizing the strategy which is to guide the organization’s operations” (Schendel & Hofer, 1979: 11).

The strategy process research aspires to explain the process through which strategies are formed and implemented, and also importantly, how the process influences the strategy content (Chakravarthy & White, 2002). Thus, at its best, strategy process theories can explain not just how but also why management proceeded with certain priorities and decisions in favor of some others. Furthermore, the theories may explain not just how implementation followed decisions, but also how implementation may be inseparable from the decisions in some cases (Burgelman et al., 2018).
The current thesis builds on the notion that resource commitments are the most consequential management decisions, and therefore of particular interest. Resource commitments set a direction for an organization that is not easily altered (Ghemawat, 1991). The direction is necessary for building distinctive competence; it steers the iterative process of further resource commitments over a period of time (Kraatz & Zajac, 2001; Noda & Bower, 1996; Selznick, 1957). Following this line of thinking, many scholars see commitments as foundational to their theories of strategy making (Ghemawat, 1991; Narayanan & Fahey, 1982; Noda & Bower, 1996). Resource commitments also explain the need for entrepreneurial efforts in strategy making. The strategy work becomes entrepreneurial for those managers who desire a change in the current resource commitments in the organization, and therefore need to convince others to alter their commitments. I study this entrepreneurial work via the lens of resource mobilization, that is, a process where advocates of an initiative actively engage with resource-holders to build support for their initiative (Battilana, Leca, & Boxenbaum, 2009; Narayanan & Fahey, 1982).

My resource mobilization–focused perspective is closely related to the resources allocation process literature (Bower, 1970; Burgelman, 1983a, 1991; Burgelman et al., 2018; Lechner & Floyd, 2012; Lovas & Ghoshal, 2000) theorizing how strategies emerge from a stream of resource allocations. My thesis builds particularly on two premises of the literature. First, the outcome of the strategy process is not predetermined, but rather, an evolutionary outcome of cumulative resource commitments (Burgelman, 1991; Noda & Bower, 1996). Second, organizational managers have two main roles in the process: the middle managers’ entrepreneurial role of championing initiatives and the top managers’ administrative role of allocating resources selectively (Bower & Gilbert, 2005a).

While the early strategy process researchers kept external influences away from their theories, now customers, investors, allies, partners, governments, and many other external actors are increasingly becoming a part of new strategy process theories and frameworks (Burgelman et al., 2018). The concept of open strategy emphasizes how not just top and middle managers, but also frontline employees and experts from other organizations often contribute to organization’s strategy with their ideas and knowledge (Hautz, Seidl, & Whittington, 2017; Whittington, Cailluet, & Yakis-Douglas, 2011). In this spirit, also this thesis extends its resource mobilization process focus to include external actors.

I have written this thesis in three essays. In the conceptual Essay 1 (found in Appendix 1) I theorize how the external resource mobilization by companies is an integral and decisive part of their strategy process, even while the extant resource allocation process models focus only on internal resource mobilization.
In the empirical Essay 2 (found in Appendix 2) I argue for the distinction between architectural change and modular change in the context of managing large scale initiatives of strategic change. In the empirical Essay 3 (found in Appendix 3) I study mobilization in the capabilities for implementing strategic change and the instability of these rarely used dynamic capabilities.

Essay 1 contributes to the resource allocation process literature by reconceptualizing the resource allocation process as resource mobilization process where key resource holders are both internal and external to the firm. Essay 2 contributes to the change management literature by introducing a novel typology of planned organizational change and an accompanying contingent process model with process dynamics that are determined by the type of change. Essay 3 contributes to the dynamic capability literature by articulating the role of capability assembly in the life cycle of dynamic capabilities, spelling out the dual role of mobilization in dynamic capability microfoundations as a source of both asset realignment and capability growth, and shedding light on two mechanisms used to maintain rarely used dynamic capabilities.

Even while not always in the central stage, the theme of resource mobilization runs through the essays. Essay 1 argues for theory of strategy process that considers resource mobilization as the most consequential entrepreneurial activity of strategy making. Essay 2 discusses how top managers need to mobilize change recipients to consider the objectives of a strategic change initiative as legitimate, and how that pattern of mobilization is different contingent on whether the change is architectural or modular. Essay 3 argues, building on the empirical data, for mobilization to be a key element in dynamic capability microfoundations.

Contributing to the growing strategy literature on how microprocesses shape organizational outcomes (Kouame & Langley, 2018), my thesis demonstrates in Essays 2 and 3 how the patterns of resource mobilization are shaped by the strategic management practices that managers choose to use. The choices have consequences, a manager can shape the strategy process for better outcomes by informed use of strategic management practices that suit the resource mobilization needs at hand. Perhaps this thesis in its small part helps practicing managers to make well informed choices of which management practices to use and which not.

I present the research questions guiding my work in the next section. This is followed by an account of the pertinent theoretical literatures, description of the collected data and the analytical methods used and articulation of the findings. I conclude this introduction to my thesis with a discussion of the contributions to theories, limitations, and implications for future research.
2. Research questions

The strategy process literature has acknowledged the significance of resource commitments in the strategy process (Narayanan & Fahey, 1982; Noda & Bower, 1996). Unlike many other activities in strategy making, resource commitments are rarely reversed, and they enable but also constrain subsequent activities, which eventually leads to permanent changes in the organization (Ghemawat, 1991). Studying resource mobilization opens up the black box of how resource commitments are made (Kannan-Narasimhan & Lawrence, 2018). The empirical evidence mounts that there are insights to be gained by, instead of just studying the ecology of all strategic initiatives, studying the variance in how different strategic initiatives each manage resource mobilization (Burgelman, 1983b; Kannan-Narasimhan & Lawrence, 2018). This is particularly so in the case of external resource mobilization. Companies that aspire to build an ecosystem need to mobilize allies to support for their plans – an ecosystem can succeed only if it gets contributing members (Ansari, Garud, & Kumaraswamy, 2016). The success or failure of the ecosystem is better explained by the resource mobilization activities of the focal firm rather than the resource allocation of the participating firms. Change management forms another area of research that relates to resource mobilization. It looks to mobilization and commitment from the viewpoint of how managers engage change recipients (Graebner, 2004; Heyden, Fourne, Koene, Werkman, & Ansari, 2017). For a third research area, dynamic capability microfoundations studies indicate that resource mobilization is often a vital element in the bundle of activities underlying dynamic capabilities (Helfat & Peteraf, 2015; Teece, 2007, 2012). These streams of literature depict processes that have all unique characteristics, while they also share the elements common to all resource mobilization (Cf. Hutzschenreuter & Kleindienst, 2006). These bodies of research clearly indicate that resource mobilization is an important part of both strategy processes and organizations’ capabilities for strategic change. When the mobilization succeeds, the process validates the initiative as a part of the organization’s strategy. When the mobilization fails, the initiative is deselected. The mobilization may also lead to altering the objectives of the initiative, when resource-holders influence the initiative champions. These dynamics play a role in both strategy implementation and
strategy content determination (Bower & Gilbert, 2005a; Burgelman, 1983a). Therefore, resource mobilization is a singularly consequential part of the strategy process. The resource allocation process literature (Bower, 1970; Bower & Gilbert, 2005b; Burgelman, 1983a; Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014) has made important advances in explaining how resource mobilization efforts impact top management allocation of intraorganizational resources. Alas, we are lacking similar insights regarding the conduct and outcomes of the resource mobilization reaching beyond the top management of the focal company. To address this gap, the overall research question of this thesis is:

**Main research question**

*Why do the patterns of resource mobilization vary in strategy processes engaging multiple resource-holders?*

Of the three identified research areas, the research into the processes of strategy making is closest to the research question. Particularly the model of strategy as a resource allocation process (Bower, 1970; Bower & Gilbert, 2005a; Burgelman, 1983a) recognizes resource mobilization as vital to strategy making, but has treated the resources mostly as pool-like internal stocks that can be variably allocated to initiatives. The model explains the patterns of internal resource mobilization, how strategic initiatives are defined by managers in the various levels of an organization, and then selected when managers allocate resources to some initiatives when the initiatives are championed to them (Bower, 1970; Bower & Gilbert, 2005a; Burgelman, 1983a). However, even while the resource allocation process literature acknowledges the influence of external stakeholders such as customers (Christensen & Bower, 1996) or investors (Noda & Bower, 1996), it does not depict them as vital resource holders. Thereby it does not explain the process of how the necessary external resources are mobilized to the organization.

The strategic significance of external resources is not a new insight. Resource dependence theory articulates well how organizations are deeply dependent on the continued support and provision of resources that their stakeholders provide (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). For any initiative wishing to build an ecosystem or a platform (Ansari et al., 2016), external resource mobilization is at the core of its success. However, for several decades the strategy research has focused much more on the role of internal resources than external resources (Feldman, 2004). Now, following the lead from institutional researchers (Battilana et al., 2009; Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002) and entrepreneurship scholars (Ansari et al., 2016; Snihur, Thomas, & Burgelman, 2018), the strategy researchers have also started to attend more to the patterns of how external resources
are mobilized to complement or even substitute internal resources (Cabral, Deng, & Kumar, 2020; Deken, Berends, Gemser, & Lauche, 2018).

New insights have been gained not only regarding the provenance of resources, but also their innate nature. The resourcing literature has complemented the resource allocation process literature by illuminating, how there are vital resources to strategy that cannot be adequately considered as pools. Such resources, often regarded as technological or organizational capabilities, have meanings and intended uses. These resources can be reconceptualized, gaining new meanings and uses, and in the process essentially becoming new resources. These reconceptualizing efforts constitute a certain type of resource mobilization where support and other resources are obtained to complement the reconceptualized resources (Deken et al., 2018; Feldman, 2004; Howard-Grenville, 2007; Kannan-Narasimhan & Lawrence, 2018).

Despite the new advances, there are still gaps in our understanding of resource mobilization in the strategy process. The research has not considered seriously thus far, how the successful implementation of many strategic initiatives requires both internal and external resource mobilization, and further, how this leads to process patterns that are shaped not just by the internal strategic context but also external factors. Therefore, the Essay 1 answers the following research question:

**Sub research question 1**

*How do internal and external factors interact to cause variance to the patterns of resource mobilization and allocation?*

The current thesis looks not just at initiative selection in the combined patterns of internal and external resource mobilization, but also at initiative implementation in the microprocesses underlying the mobilization of managers to become supporters and agents of the strategic initiatives. For most companies, their major change initiatives are the biggest and most challenging initiatives they undertake in their strategy work. Therefore they provide a fertile ground for studying patterns of how strategy processes are organized to mobilize the required change agents. In the context of organizational change, both executive commitment (Lok, Hung, Walsh, Wang, & Crawford, 2005) and change follower commitment (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993) are seen as consequential to initiative success. Resource mobilization is often portrayed as an outcome of transformational or charismatic leadership (Shamir et al., 1993). The research on strategic change emphasizes the role of the key executives and their skills (Battilana, Gilmartin, Sengul, Pache, & Alexander, 2010; Nadler & Tushman, 1990), particu-
larly in situations when old understandings need to be replaced by new understandings (Gioia, Thomas, Clark, & Chittipeddi, 1994). The extant research has made significant advances in understanding the cognitive and communicative work of key change agents, conceptualized in the notion of sensegiving leading to sensemaking by others (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Battilana et al., 2009; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). However, while these transformational leadership activities are well addressed, the current research has paid less attention on how change is organized, on how multiple managers engage in mobilization-oriented change routines to gain the necessary commitment from others. Often the change requires determined actions in several parts and levels of the organization. If an organization is large, it is not sufficient that the top management team members, say the top ten people in the organization, are all fully committed as change agents. It is necessary to recruit a large number of key middle managers to fully invest themselves to the change (Heyden et al., 2017; Kotter, 2007). There are several change management practices being widely used in organizing the change initiatives. The purposes of these practices are manifold, including communication, training, control, and coordination. (Stouten, Rousseau, & De Cremer, 2018) It is not clear, however, what influences managers choose to use some change management practices but not others as they mobilize change participants and pursue the goals of the change initiatives. To contribute to this line of research, the Essay 2 addresses the following research question:

**Sub research question 2**

How are change management practices used to organize strategic change initiatives and mobilize change agents?

Keeping our focus on the microprocesses underlying change agent mobilization, the current thesis also sets out to study how the resource mobilization in change initiatives contributes to dynamic capabilities. Many scholars agree that important dynamic capabilities reside in organizational teams (Bingham, Heimeriks, Schijven, & Gates, 2015; Helfat & Peteraf, 2003). However, while the literature on dynamic capabilities in permanent teams grows (See e.g. Schilke, Hu, & Helfat, 2018), the dynamic capability literature has not studied the nature of dynamic capabilities in temporary teams that can be typically found in strategic change initiatives (Teece, 2012). Many dynamic capability scholars have preferred to focus on permanent teams, where it is clear that the ‘ability to perform’ inheres in the organization, and it is a fruit of its experience – aspects that many consider essential for any capabilities, including dynamic capabilities (Helfat & Winter, 2011). However, as dynamic capability is defined as the capacity of the organization to purposefully create, extend, or modify its
resource base (Helfat et al., 2007: 4), it would be puzzling to exclude strategic initiatives, typically conducted in temporary teams, from the scope of dynamic capability studies. The strategy process literature clearly shows that many if not most large scale changes in the organization are an outcome of strategic initiatives (Burgelman, 2002). In a nod toward strategic initiatives, the dynamic capabilities in episodic teams have been studied (Martin, 2011).

The program management offices (Pellegrinelli & Garagna, 2009) and task forces of the change initiatives are temporary teams that may also be episodic. Their work is in many ways similar to post-merger integration teams, guided by certain routines and templates (Bingham et al., 2015). Thus, they can be hardly dismissed as mere ad-hoc problem solving. They are in a significant role in accomplishing the objectives of the change, maintaining many change routines. These change routines are geared to mobilize targeted individuals to actively contribute to the change initiative, clearly manifesting asset orchestration at the level of individuals (Cf. Helfat et al., 2007). This raises the question of how and when the dynamic capabilities apparent in these change initiatives emerge in the cases where these temporary teams are built from scratch. An interesting follow-up question emerges as well: where does the dynamic capabilities used in the change reside, if anywhere, after the change activities are completed, and the key actors of the initiative don’t work as one team anymore, while moving on to other initiatives or day-to-day tasks? To study these aspects, the Essay 3 addresses the following research question:

**Sub research question 3**

*How do firms deal with the instability of the rarely used dynamic capabilities needed in effective change agent mobilization?*

Answering these three subquestions in the three respective essays makes an important contribution toward answering the main research question and thus extends the strategy process literature with a richer view to the patterns of resource mobilization and allocation.
The three essays in this thesis all fall into the domain of strategy process literature (Hutzschenreuter & Kleindienst, 2006), broadly speaking. However, they take part in different conversations in the literature. Essay 1, being conceptual, addresses directly the initial theoretical inspiration, the resource allocation process literature also known as Bower-Burgelman literature, addressed in the chapter 3.1, while also drawing from the institutional theory to some extent, addressed in the chapter 3.2. Essays 2 and 3 build on a shared case evidence using different theoretical lenses. Essay 2 studies the case initiatives from the change management literature’s point of view, focusing on the process patterns related to the organizing of the change, while Essay 3 applies dynamic capabilities view to study the skilfulness and (in)stability of change agent work processes in the case initiatives. These literatures are introduced in the chapters 3.3 and 3.4 respectively. Due to the resulting breadth of theories, only cursory treatment is given to these theories in this chapter. A more encompassing review to these literatures is given in the three essays.

3.1 The resource allocation process model of strategy making

The resource mobilization perspective introduced in this thesis builds on the venerable resource allocation process model of strategy making (Bower, 1970; Bower & Gilbert, 2005b; Burgelman, 1983a; Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014). The model describes how strategy emerges from a process where multiple initiatives are first defined in multiple levels of organizations, and subsequently selected when resources are differentially allocated to those initiatives. The strategy that emerges is a pattern in the stream of organizational actions (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985; Noda & Bower, 1996). The process is directed by the top managers communicating a strategic logic, i.e. a core concept of strategy, to induce initiatives (Burgelman, 1983a, 1991). Managers in all levels of organization define initiatives, partly affected by the top management’s inducement, but partly also autonomously to address opportunities and threats that they perceive (Ibidem). The managers then engage in efforts to win resources and support for their initiatives, portraying their initiatives as vital and worth a strategic effort (Noda &
Bower, 1996). The model emphasizes that initiatives are often defined and championed by frontline- and middle managers (Bower, 1970), thus challenging the traditional view of top managers as the sole designers of strategy that relegates middle and frontline managers to mere implementing roles (Nutt, 1987; Schendel & Hofer, 1979).

The initiative champions seek resources in their efforts to build first an initial team with a capability to take the first steps, and gradually a more full-fledged organization to realize the underlying intent (Burgelman, 1983b). At any given time, there are a number of initiatives that compete for resources, and some initiatives win the resources they need, while others fail to do so (Burgelman, 1991). The resource allocation process model depicts top managers in the role of shaping the structure of resource allocation mechanisms, and articulating the strategic context used as a yardstick to measure the consistency of the initiatives to strategy (Bower, 1970; Burgelman, 1983a, 1983b). Sometimes also middle and frontline managers affect the resource allocation with their discretion over the resources they control, particularly their own attention and support (Lovas & Ghoshal, 2000).

Both internal and external contextual factors influence the process. Regarding the internal factors, the strategic context captured in the strategic logic encourages managers to define initiatives that conform to the expectations of that logic. The resource-holding managers’ cognitive framing of the initiatives and their fit to the strategic context also impacts the likelihood of resources being granted to the initiative. Further, the top managers determine a structural context determining how, when, and to which managers the initiative is presented, thus having an equally major impact on whether sufficient resources will eventually be allocated to the initiative for it to gain momentum. (Bower & Gilbert, 2005a) As pertaining to external contextual factors, customers and investors have been found to have an influence on some organizations so that initiatives that are consistent with their expectations are more likely to be adequately resourced (Christensen & Bower, 1996; Noda & Bower, 1996). Nevertheless, in spite of these mechanisms favouring strategy conformant initiatives championed by well positioned managers, occasionally autonomous, non-conformant initiatives manage to win the resources they need, often thus redirecting the firm to a new direction (Bower & Gilbert, 2005a; Burgelman, 1991). The championing managers use entrepreneurial framing to legitimate the autonomous initiatives. Their framing efforts often redefine the meaning of the strategic logic and reconceptualize the key organizational resources underlying the initiative (Kannan-Narasimhan & Lawrence, 2018), leading to top managers’ retroactively rationalize the decisions to resource the autonomous initiatives as consistent with the redefined strategic logic (Burgelman, 1983b).
3.2 Institutional logics influence strategy work

The entrepreneurial framing research has made advances in understanding the actual microprocesses underlying the legitimation of unconventional initiatives (See Snihur, Thomas, Garud, & Phillips, 2021 for an overview). The entrepreneurial framing literature builds on the institutional entrepreneurship literature. Institutional entrepreneurship is typically portrayed to emerge when organizations face conflicting institutional logics, and conformance to all logics is simply not an option (Pache & Santos, 2010). Entrepreneurial framing scholars have found similar patterns in the context of framing contests (Hiatt & Carlos, 2019). Also the resource allocation process literature acknowledges the influence of institutional logics. The strategic logic, i.e. prevailing core concept of strategy within an organization is an institutional logic shared among the dominant coalition of the organization. This logic actively influences managers in their initiative definition and selection activities. (Burgelman, 1983a, 1991) Further, also other institutional logics from outside the organization, especially the industry logic of the organization’s focal industry (Durand & Jourdan, 2012) impacts the definition and selection of initiatives. These logics determine criteria for legitimacy of the initiatives. Resource-holders are more likely to grant resources to initiatives that appear legitimate, that is valid, desirable and appropriate in the eyes of the relevant community that the resource-holders associate with (Suchman, 1995). Therefore the initiative champions have an incentive to portray their initiatives as legitimate, by e.g. constructing legitimating accounts demonstrating conformance to institutional logics (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005) and seeking lead supporters to their initiative (Steier & Greenwood, 2000). The current thesis approaches the initiative legitimation in a novel way as it juxtaposes legitimation against the internal strategic logic vis-à-vis the legitimation against the external institutional logics in the industry.

3.3 Managing strategic change

Change management literature provides the deepest insights into how “downward” resource mobilization takes place in organization, that is, how top managers (and other change agents) mobilize middle and frontline managers to support their initiatives. As the empirics of the current thesis pertain to downward mobilization, it is natural to embrace the change management literature to discuss empirical findings in that context. I define strategic change as a planned organizational change that creates a substantial shift in overall activities, structures, or priorities of the organization (Cf. Gioia et al., 1994: 364; Mantere, Schildt, & Sillince, 2012: 173). I understand planned organizational change as a
deliberate set of activities that moves an organization from its present state to a desired future state (Stouten, Rousseau, & De Cremer, 2018: 752). Change management literature has accumulated a large body of models and theory as evidenced by the number of the literature reviews written on the topic (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Bartunek, Balogun, & Do, 2011; Oreg & Berson, 2019; Rajagopalan & Spreitzer, 1997; Stouten et al., 2018; Weick & Quinn, 1999). A big part of this literature focuses on leaders, their attributes, the choices they make, and their behaviors. Separately, there are also vibrant streams of literature into change contexts, change recipients and the processes of change (Oreg & Berson, 2019). It is to some extent the leader behavior literature pertaining to transformational leadership (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Shamir et al., 1993), but more particularly the change process literature on the manner in which change is managed (Stouten et al., 2018) that are relevant to the current work, as these are the areas that discuss resource mobilization.

The change starts when the top managers perceive an opportunity or need for the organization to change in order to better align itself with the environment (Keck & Tushman, 1993). The top managers formulate a change vision to articulate, what the transformed organization would look like (Baum, Locke, & Kirkpatrick, 1998). The concept of sensegiving theorizes how managers communicate the change vision in order to influence the change recipients to change their cognitions and understandings of the organization and its environment (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia et al., 1994). When communication is successful, the vision interprets past and present in ways that uses clear labels and slogans and gives energizing meaning to the change (Shamir et al., 1993). Often, though, cognitive barriers present themselves (Labianca, Gray, & Brass, 2000), and top managers may face challenges in portraying their change initiatives as legitimate (Huy, Corley, & Kraatz, 2014). It might be difficult to explain well the reasons for a complex organizational change (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999). Change is particularly challenging to communicate when the proposed new change vision is radical, deviating from established norms (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996, 2006). When leaders are trusted, i.e. legitimate, their communication is better accepted. The trust in leaders might be based on considerations on their appropriateness to the role, the morality of their behavior, and their competence to the task (Huy et al., 2014). There is a large prescriptive literature on what managers can do to navigate successfully the challenges of change (Stouten et al., 2018). In addition to considering the scope of change, whether to pursue a convergent or radical change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996), and whether to change all of strategy, structure, processes, systems and culture or only some of them (Balogun & Hailey, 2008), they also may consider the conduct and pace of change, whether to pursue an intense but temporary episode
of a large scale change, or whether to undergo the change more incrementally, in smaller steps (Balogun & Hailey, 2008; Weick & Quinn, 1999). There is a variety of change management practices, known among both academics and practitioners, that help to adjust the attitudes to change, and also solve problems related to the change (Neuman, Edwards, & Raju, 1989; Stouten et al., 2018). Research has particularly paid attention to the skills and activities of the top management (Battilana et al., 2010), but there is also an emerging consensus on the vital role of the middle management in change (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Heyden et al., 2017; Huy, 2002). The middle managers are linking pins, being both recipients and agents of change, relaying and contextualizing the meaning of change to their organization (Balogun & Johnson, 2004). While the middle management perspective has already strongly emerged, there is still absence of studies on how top management and middle management collaborate with each other in change, or more precisely, how the change initiatives are organized so that they support the mobilization of middle and frontline managers to accept the change and become change agents themselves.

3.4 Dynamic capabilities

The empirical focus of resource mobilization in change initiatives links also to the dynamic capability literature. This link is based on the notion of change initiatives being a vehicle of major resource changes, and thus any skillful micro-processes in the change initiatives to contribute potentially to adaptive dynamic capabilities (Dixon, Meyer, & Day, 2014). Further, mobilization in change initiatives may link to how adaptive dynamic capabilities are built and strengthened (Narayanan, Colwell, & Douglas, 2009).

During the last 25 years the dynamic capabilities view has emerged as a prominent theory on how some companies not just adapt but thrive in a dynamic environment (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Helfat et al., 2007; Schilke et al., 2018; Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). In order to respond to changes in the environment, firms modify their resource base with varying levels of success (Teece et al., 1997). Successful resource modifications confer some advantages, but only on temporary basis, as resources and capabilities need to be continually renewed (Helfat et al., 2007). Having dynamic capabilities does not lead automatically to superior performance; the notion of capability implies merely potential for adequate performance (Helfat et al., 2007: 5). Based on evolutionary economics, the dynamic capabilities are seen as higher order routines that modify operational routines (Zollo & Winter, 2002). In response to the notion of dynamic capabilities being “higher-order routines”, many scholars emphasize
that dynamic capabilities are actually much less routine than operational capabilities, as the activities are much more entrepreneurial and mindful, and the activity patterns vary due to this mindfulness (Schreyoegg & Kliesch-Eberl, 2007; Teece, 2012).

Steering clear from the controversy around the “routineness” of higher order routines, Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) argue that dynamic capabilities are found wherever resources are renewed, in everyday business processes such as product development in application of widely available best practices. While Teece and colleagues (1997) have emphasized that dynamic capabilities are complex, tacit and therefore difficult to imitate, Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) maintain that dynamic capabilities are actually fairly homogeneous and substitutable. This tension has led to efforts synthesize the two seemingly different viewpoints by explaining the source of heterogeneity with individual mastery of practitioners (Peteraf, Di Stefano, & Verona, 2013) and noncognitive elements of the dynamic capabilities (Nayak, Chia, & Canales, 2020).

Capabilities, both ordinary and dynamic capabilities, are considered to emerge in the process of experiential organizational learning (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Zollo & Winter, 2002). To be a source of firm heterogeneity, they need to be “home grown” instead of acquired (Helfat & Winter, 2011). However, in closer investigations of capability building, imitation (Zahra, Sapienza, & Davidsson, 2006) and grafting of process models of external origin (Narayanan et al., 2009) have been found to play an important role. Importantly, dynamic capabilities go beyond learning by doing. Zollo and Winter (2002) see many organizations investing in knowledge codification to better improve operating routines. Dynamic capabilities are also theorized to deliver asset orchestration, i.e. keeping resources in co-alignment, building new resources and releasing obsolete ones (Helfat et al., 2007; Teece, 2007). Further, dynamic capabilities operate intentionally, accidentally emerging improvement of operational capabilities is not a result of dynamic capabilities (Helfat et al., 2007).

After the initial conceptual work (Particularly: Adner & Helfat, 2003; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Helfat et al., 2007; Teece, 2007; Teece et al., 1997; Zollo & Winter, 2002), the empirical work in the study of dynamic capabilities has emerged strongly in the last 10-15 years. The operationalization of the dynamic capability concept has mostly settled on the microfoundations of the dynamic capability, i.e. the key teams and individuals, their cognitions and work processes (Bingham et al., 2015; Danneels, 2010; Galunic & Eisenhardt, 2001; Heimeriks, Schijven, & Gates, 2012; Kale, 2010). The microfoundational approach has also provided one approach to solve the “dynamic capabilities being routine vs. non-routine” controversy. Salvato and Vassolo (2018) argue for
viewing dynamic capabilities simultaneously at both “micro” and “macro” levels, the level of individual managers behaving non-routinely and innovatively, and the level of organizational routines providing reliability and systematic approaches. To complete the picture, they argue for seeing social mechanisms as a necessary way how the occasionally non-routine activities of the individuals influence the dynamic capability routines. Teece (2007) has theorized the dynamic capability microfoundations to span sensing, seizing and reconfiguring activities. Helfat and Peteraf (2015), investigating their cognitive underpinnings, have mapped these three categories to perceiving, problem-solving, and overcoming resistance to change, respectively. This work by Helfat and Peteraf provides a solid approach to map mobilization as a dynamic capability microfoundation: dynamic capabilities are also about resource mobilization when initially resistant organizational members are mobilized to join the resource modification work advocated by the management. A complementary link arises from the work of Narayanan and colleagues (2009) who see capability building as a process of activation, articulation, mobilization and implementation, and thereby mobilization as a stage in the process.
4. Data and methods

4.1 A conceptual and empirical thesis

I apply conceptual analysis to Essay 1, constructing a theoretical argument based on the prior literature. In Essays 2 and 3 I conduct a qualitative inductive process study in a multiple case setting (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Langley, 1999).

Essay 1 centers on constructing a new model of strategy process, drawing on the resource allocation process literature (Bower & Gilbert, 2005b; Burgelman, 1991; Lechner & Floyd, 2012; Lovas & Ghoshal, 2000), particularly the resource allocation process model on the one hand and the institutional literature’s findings on resource mobilization (Battilana et al., 2009; Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca, 2009) on the other hand. I chose the conceptual approach for two reasons. First, all the key concepts of my argument are directly derived from theoretical literature, thus there is no need to ground the concepts on empirical data. Second, I found the introduction of the concepts from institutional theory to resource allocation process literature to bring substantial novelty to the representation of both the scope and shape of the strategy process, which renders my argument theoretically significant.

Essays 2 and 3 form an empirical continuum. The intent to study the resource mobilization patterns towards multiple resource-holders led into two distinct but strongly connected studies. I recognized organizing of large-scale strategic initiatives to be an area which is still poorly understood. Therefore I undertook a qualitative inductive process study of strategy processes in large organizations (Langley, 1999). Seeking to build generalizable theory, I adopted the multiple case study format (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Seeking the concurrent construction of the theory with the data collection, and building a strong linkage between informant-centric terms and theory-centric terms, I used the brand of grounded theory method labelled as “Gioia Methodology” to guide data collection, coding, and concept construction (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). In the within-case analysis and cross-case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989) I used the process study approach (Langley, 1999) to put ex-
plicit attention to the process of organizing in general and the process of resource mobilization in particular. In the following sections I explain the conduct of this research more closely.

4.2 Data

My empirical study focuses on strategic change initiatives in large European firms. Guided by my research question of why do the patterns of resource mobilization vary in strategy processes engaging multiple resource-holders, I sought strategy making situations with demanding needs to mobilize resources, typically found in large strategic initiatives. I approached the CEOs or chief strategy officers of large European companies that had undertaken such initiatives. I got six companies onboard with such initiatives. All the initiatives were corporation-wide, them bringing significant changes to all major parts of the organization. They were also led from corporate office with the CEO often in a central role. The large scope of the desired change required a complex project organization with multiple key individuals acting as change agents. All the projects involved actions aimed at cost reductions, including personnel lay-offs or major outsourcing activities. Many of the initiatives brought also major changes to the organizational structure. The companies are from different industries, ranging from information and telecom technology to engineering and chemistry. Three of the companies are domiciled in Finland, two in Switzerland, and one in Spain. The case companies are presented in Table 1. I have pseudonymized the company names with names of bright stars, and the initiatives with the first letters of the alphabet, a word play referring to the components of binary or trinary star systems.

The data collection on two of the case studies, Arcturus and Rigel, started before the others in the spring of 2012. The initial interviews in these were exploratory and led to modifications of the questionnaire. In the beginning I was keen on learning of key strategy making events, including decisions, analyses and project organizing choices. But the first interviews led me to put more focus on understanding the change management practices that were used in these large initiatives. The focus on practices emerged as the informants mentioned them unprompted as important vehicles for achieving the changes. As another new element, we found that during the preceding three years, roughly mid 2009 - mid 2012, there had been not just one, but two or three major change initiatives that were interconnected in many ways. For these reasons we started inquiring both into the practices used in the initiatives, and the existence of significant prior or parallel initiatives.
Table 1. Summary of cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The case firm</th>
<th>Type of organization</th>
<th>The change initiatives</th>
<th>Research access</th>
<th>No. of employees</th>
<th>No. of interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Altair        | A chemicals company (sector a) | **Altair A** – a creation of centralized internal services organization.  
**Altair B** – a major integration of two divisions into a completely new structure  
*(Altair C – an operational efficiency initiative)* | Retrospective  
Interviews conducted within one week during Altair C. | 25 000 – 50 000 | 7 |
| Arcturus      | A consumer electronics company | **Arcturus A** – a major transformation initiative containing multiple substantial subinitiatives  
**Arcturus B** – a major downsizing initiative | Longitudinal  
Interviews started one year after Arcturus A start. | > 50 000 | 10 |
| Canopus       | An infrastructure services provider | **Canopus A** – a major vision-driven organizational restructuring with globalization of some key previously multi-local functions | Longitudinal  
Interviews started one year before Canopus A start. | > 50 000 | 11 |
| Capella       | A logistics services provider | **Capella A** – a major downsizing initiative  
**Capella B** – a corporate-wide small architectural initiative of creating an integrative new business development unit  
**Capella C** – a major downsizing initiative | Retrospective (longitudinal)  
Interviews started toward Capella C end. | 25 000 – 50 000 | 7 |
| Rigel         | A chemicals company (sector b) | **Rigel A** – a major organizational restructuring, creating both new customer-facing business units and global functions.  
**Rigel B** – a corporate-wide efficiency initiative.  
**Rigel C** – a multi-initiative organizational change in structures and management systems | Retrospective & longitudinal  
Interviews started at the beginning of Rigel C | ~ 5 000 | 11 |
| Sirius        | A multi-industry industrial solutions company | **Sirius A** – a major corporate-wide downsizing initiative implemented with a novel massively parallel approach  
**Sirius B** – a downsizing initiative resembling Sirius α.  
**Sirius C** – a corporate-wide continuous improvement initiative | Retrospective  
Interviews started two years after Sirius C had started. | > 50 000 | 10 |

1 Purposefully vague to protect the case company identity. Altair and Rigel are not competitors in the same space.

2 Altair C was not in research scope, but its existence affects my analysis.
After the initial findings from the first interviews into the first case studies, the bulk of the interviews were conducted between the fall of 2012 and the fall of 2014. The interviews were done piecemeal to bring longitudinality to research, to conduct data analysis and theory building concurrently to data collection, and to watch how the change unfolded in the case companies. I lost access to most case companies in early 2015. I have used secondary data since that (major business news and M&A tracking) to ensure that there are no future events materially impacting case interpretation.

I made 56 semi-structured interviews in the case companies, sometimes accompanied with another member of the research team. Additionally, I made 11 expert interviews with knowledgeable strategists in other companies to further discuss the initial findings. The interviewees were CEOs, EVPs, (S)VPs and managers in key initiative roles in the case companies. The interviews typically lasted 60 minutes each and covered the personal experiences of the interviewee in participating in the initiatives. The interview questions were designed to discuss a particular initiative, and the conduct of it. The informant was requested to explain the activities that were central to achieving the change that the initiative sought. Then, the informant was asked to explain, what tools, techniques or practices shaped those activities, and what guided the choice of those tools. Occasionally, in this discussion another key initiative was uncovered that had deployed the same or similar practice – a basis for follow-up interviews.

The shortest interview was 32 minutes, and the longest one was 97 minutes. Two thirds of the interviews were conducted face-to-face and one third of them were conducted over the telephone. All but three of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. I personally transcribed 15 interviews, and the rest were transcribed by professional transcription service providers. Roughly 40 per cent of the interviews were conducted in Finnish and the rest were conducted in English. Finnish was used when the interview was in Finland and all the interview participants spoke Finnish fluently. The transcriptions of these interviews are in Finnish, I have translated the quotes I use from these interviews myself as accurately as reasonable to maintain the impression of real spoken language.

The interview data was complemented with archival data. For each case company, the annual reports, investor presentations, and news in major newspapers such as Financial Times and Wall Street Journal for the relevant time period were analysed. For most case companies, also internal project documentation could be obtained.
4.3 Analysis methods

The initial data analysis followed the principles of grounded theory method (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and also particularly the Gioia Methodology (Gioia et al., 2013). I pursued the data gathering, data analysis and theory construction partly in parallel for 2.5 years. I started coding and memo writing right after the first interviews, focusing initially on open coding using informant centric codes. In the spirit of a process study, the open coding was focused on the salient events and activities in the change initiatives as seen from the informants’ perspective (Gioia et al., 2013; Langley, 1999). Meetings, workshops and distinct change management practices that guided interactions between process participants featured prominently in the open codes. Because of the prominence of change management practice use, I soon proceeded to use two main types of open codes, the “ordinary” ones describing the accounts regarding consequentiality of events and activities, and “focused” ones of change management practices that had guided the set up of salient change activities. All the coding work was done with the Atlas.ti software. Atlas.ti aided the work greatly by organizing the codes and the reflections on their theoretical significance.

After the initial open coding-focused phase I proceeded to write case vignettes, one per each case company (documented in Appendix 4). I arranged events, activities and open codes by temporal bracketing (Langley, 1999), using key initiative events to demarcate the brackets of time. To improve accuracy, I triangulated interview evidence across the interviews and using the archival data (Jick, 1979).

The case vignettes led me to pay attention to the way that uses of change management practices and actions of key individuals were interlinked. I noticed patterns that led me to two different paths of cross-case analysis, one that was focused on the variation in the use of change management practices, eventually leading towards Essay 2, and the other that was focused on the origins of skillful use of change management practices, leading towards Essay 3. I wrote a conference paper that I presented in EGOS (http://www.egosnet.org/2014_rotterdam/general_theme) in July 2014 to test some of the ideas while ~15 interviews still remained to be conducted. That paper contained some initial ideas for Essay 3, framed in terms of practice adoption literature. For the time being I am not pursuing that angle.

The final interviews were informed by these initial hypotheses. In addition to the basic questions (see chapter 4.2), I asked extra questions to ascertain that
all significant change management practices had been mentioned, and to un-
derstand further the provenance of those change management activities that
were deemed as significant in accomplishing the desired change.

I started with the cross-case analysis and theory development after finish-
ing all the six case vignettes. I used abductive reasoning to derive the theoretical
themes that organized the cross-case analysis; I matched data to literature and
literature to data to derive concepts that were relevant to theory and practition-
ers alike (Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013). The categorization of change management
practices, explained in Appendix 2A, links partly but not fully to existing theory,
as the work of Huy (2001) guided four of the nine categories in my data. In an-
alysing the skillful use of change management practices, the work of Helfat and
Peteraf (2015) provided a good match to the three different types of effective
change management work my cases displayed, i.e. perceiving, problem solving
and mobilizing. In both cross-case analyses events and codes were organized
temporally (Langley, 1999), but using a different logic. While the Essay 2 follows
the phases in the life-cycle of initiatives, how each phase enables and conditions
the next one, the Essay 3 allocates to timeline the mechanisms that initiate and
shape the essential change routines. The mechanisms often occur within a single
change initiative but may also link past initiative to current ones. The actual
cross-case analysis work was done with tables and temporal charts, documented
in the Essays 2 and 3.

I used standard word processing software in all the analysis work that went
beyond coding, including the memo writing, case vignette writing, and table and
figure construction. Throughout the process I wrote numerous memos in an at-
tempt to recognize patterns in the data and outline the theoretical ideas that
emerged to me (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Gioia et al., 2013).

4.4 Theory construction

I developed the theoretical arguments by bringing the cross-case analyses and
the literatures into a conversation with one another. For Essay 2 it was signifi-
cant to note that prior studies consider there to be a constant and clear need for
a change vision in all strategic change, not contingent on the type of the change
(Cf. Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992; Stouten et al., 2018). This was clearly at variance
with my cross-case analysis results. Studying the change management literature
further, the same invariance to the type of change seemed to apply to theories
regarding most other change management practices as well. This led me to pur-
sue a novel typology of strategic change, and an accompanying contingent pro-
cess model. The extant typologies in change literature, convergent vs. radical
(Greenwood & Hinings, 1996), or incremental vs. strategic (Nadler & Tushman,
1989) were not a good match to the data, as explained in Essay 2. Regarding the
definition of the process stages for my process model (see Figure 4), I stayed
true to the four steps of Initiation, Set-up, Execution and Follow-up that
emerged inductively from the data in the cross-case analysis.

For Essay 3 the cross-case analysis showed that the dynamic capabilities in
the program management offices (PMOs) and task forces have a major impact,
while being often quite unstable. The instability was evident when change rou-
tines were set up and modified during the initiative in ways that intentionally
differed from prior experience. The stability of dynamic capabilities has not
been considered an empirical question in the literature, rather, it is definitional
that any dynamic capability should be reliable in its capacity to effect resource
modifications (Helfat et al., 2007). Even with the endemic instability, my anal-
ysis showed that many of these newly constructed change routines effected ma-
jor resource modifications very consequentially. Notably, these resource modi-
fications where not just instantaneous events, but also serial activities over time.
I considered this as theoretically interesting, supported by Teece’s (2012) obser-
vation that dynamic capabilities in change initiatives likely differ from the dy-
namic capabilities of more stable processes. The most intensive activity patterns
were located in the weekly routines between the initiative leaders and the man-
gers in central change teams, i.e. PMOs, task forces etc. This resembles the
settings found in the studies of Heimeriks and colleagues (2012) and Bingham
and colleagues (2015). All these settings display centralized teams steering
change in multiple parts of a large organization. My analysis revealed some
novel aspects that prior studies have not highlighted, and I put my theory develop-
ment focus on those. First, the way that change routines were constructed
using change management practices led me to theorize about capability assem-
bly as a novel way to develop dynamic capabilities (see chapter 5.3.1). Second,
my data supported the argument that mobilization has a dual role in change
initiatives, both overcoming resistance and growing the size of the team of
change agents (see chapter 5.3.2). Finally third, the longitudinal analysis across
initiatives revealed that there are mechanisms for safeguarding dynamic capa-
bilities. I found two such mechanisms, namely rapid practice reassembly and
team & practice fungibility, to extend the lifecycle of dynamic capabilities lo-
cated in these temporary organizations (see chapter 5.3.3).
5. Findings

5.1 Social position and autonomy of strategic logic shape the pattern of the strategy process

Essay 1 addresses the question “How do internal and external factors interact to cause variance to the patterns of resource mobilization and allocation?” The essay builds on the resource allocation process literature, depicting the strategy process as an evolutionary system of definition and selection of initiatives (Burgelman, 1991). Departing from the literature, the essay sees that these initiatives are rarely contained within the boundaries of one organization. Some of the initiatives are championed to internal resource-holders, some to external resource-holders, and many initiatives are championed to both internal and external resource-holders. In a further departure, the essay portrays these initiatives as influenced by two logics, the strategic logic of the organization, and the industry logic prevailing in the industry. The resource allocation process model depicts only the influence of the strategic logic that it calls the core concept of strategy (Burgelman, 1983a).

**Figure 1.** A process model of strategy as resource mobilization
As there are both internal and external resource holders, it is considered, whether the initiatives are always championed to internal resource holders first before the external resource holders. It is theorized that while internal resource holders often are mobilized first before the external ones, occasionally external resource holders are mobilized in parallel, and may occasionally commit their support even before the internal resources are committed to the initiative. (See Figure 1 for the redefined model of the strategy process) Further, it is contemplated, which kind of resource-holders are approached as lead supporters that can help to get other resource-holders onboard. As in the resource allocation process model, initiatives are considered either autonomous or embedded, but should the two logics, i.e. strategic logic and industry logic, diverge from one another, any given initiative may be autonomous from one logic while consistent to the other logic. The autonomy toward either of the logics may impact, who the championing manager attempts to mobilize as the lead supporters to the initiative.

The essay considers the attempts to mobilize social resources as important as the attempts to mobilize financial and material resources. Endorsements and other social resources are stepping stones to facilitate mobilization of financial and material resources. Social approval is a cumulative resource, an approval of an initiative translates over time into approval of the actor behind the initiatives. The ones granting their approval to the actor become the organization’s allies and targets for mobilization for the future initiatives.

To address its research question, the essay finds that social position, i.e. network centrality (Battilana, 2006), plays a large role in the process. Centrally positioned organizations can leverage their broad social approval into a broad external mobilization, targeted to many external resource-holders, while peripherally positioned organizations champion to a small number of key resource-holders. The centrally positioned organizations engage external resource holders not just after internal commitment, but also in the early phases of the initiative. The championing managers may approach externals in hopes of gaining them as lead supporters. The essay finds further that those organizations whose strategic logic is autonomous, thus not seeking to conform to industry logic (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006), champion their initiatives toward resource-holders who are neutral to the industry logic, whereas industry-conformant organizations seek the support of industry-embedded resource holders. The organizations that seek alignment with the industry logic seek to strengthen the industry logic with their actions, while the autonomous organizations seek to disrupt the industry logic more to their liking with their initiatives. As a joint
Findings

result of the two dimensions, four distinct patterns of strategy process emerge, depicted in Figure 2.

![Figure 2. The four archetypes of organizations with distinct strategy processes](image)

Each of the four types of organizations have unique characteristics with their strategy processes. As discussed more closely in Essay 1, *entrenched* organizations have protected strong positions, and they are considered exemplary by many powerful industry insiders (Rindova & Fombrun, 1999), be they customers, industry associations, suppliers etc.. They may suffer from inertia (Burgelman, 2002), as there are strong forces both within and outside the organization encouraging them to stay their course. Thereby they reinforce the current industry logic instead of steering it to a new direction. *Constrained* organizations are subject to external pressures due to their weak position. If they get out of sync from the industry logic in changing times, they are encouraged to change their strategy for better alignment (Useem, 1996). Their management is likely to yield to such pressures, and they may launch radical change initiatives (Gioia et al., 1994) to change their strategic logic for better alignment with the industry logic. They don’t have any influence on the industry logic, on the contrary, the industry logic influences them. *Enterprising* organizations are motivated by seeking novel ways to act in the industry. Lacking a strong network of supporters, they need to succeed in the difficult effort of gaining support for initiatives that deviate from the industry logic (Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002).
They are therefore unstable, and likely to become a different type of organization over time, or be closed or merged to a larger company. If they succeed well in their initiatives, they can be a changing force in the industry and improve their social position as a result. Celebrated organizations have a strong strategic logic which tends to deviate from the established industry logic. They advocate many autonomous initiatives seeking a change in the established ways of the industry, and they also eventually tend to succeed in this feat. They are skillful in their impression management efforts and well regarded by both the media and the general audience (Rindova, Pollock, & Hayward, 2006).

5.2 The architectural strategic change disentangled from the modular strategic change

Essay 2 addresses the question “How are change management practices used to organize strategic change initiatives and mobilize change agents?” It is found that change management practices are essential in organizing the change initiatives. In order to analyze the patterns of change management practice use, the practices are categorized as shown in Figure 3. This categorization is mapped to the change management literature in Appendix 2A. As explained more closely in Essay 2, analysis reveals two distinct patterns of strategic change: while some strategic changes have the focus on visioning, CEO-led designing and CEO-led committees, other strategic changes are geared towards target setting, program, and evaluation practices. The first pattern is associated with changes that aim for changing the core architecture of the firm, while the second pattern is found in changes modifying the resource base, while keeping the core architecture intact. Only occasionally both kinds of changes are attempted in parallel. I label the core architecture altering change initiatives as architectural and the core architecture maintaining change initiatives as modular.
I define the concept of **architectural change** as an introduction of a novel organizational architecture with a blueprint that is nevertheless expressed in terms of existing organizational resources. Further, I define **modular change** as overturning change to organizational resources, while keeping the organizational architecture intact as far as possible.

The concept of **architecture** suits well to articulate the key issues displayed in the architectural change initiatives. Architecture is not just structure in a narrow sense, it also refers to the functional relationships and interfaces between the main parts of the organization, the practices of governance and cross-unit organizational processes (Joseph & Ocasio, 2012; Nadler, 1995). The organizational architecture often has a planned, intentional aspect to it, often referred to
as blueprint (Cf. Hannan & Freeman, 1977: 935), and also an informal, emergent aspect, the silent knowledge of how many everyday tasks are handled. (Cf. Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Henderson & Clark, 1990)

5.2.1 Ambiguity resolution in architectural change vs. work decomposition in modular change

In response to the research question, a process model is introduced (see Figure 4) that spells out the two patterns of wide scale resource mobilization contingent on the type of change. The process in architectural change initiatives is characterized by ambiguity resolution, top managers working hard to mobilize key middle and frontline managers so that they adopt new roles and responsibilities and tap into mechanisms of problem solving and conflict resolution provided to get the organizational workflows restarted in the new architecture. In contrast, the process in modular change initiatives is characterized by work decomposition into tens if not hundreds of independent initiatives, where the mobilization of key middle and frontline managers to run them revolve around target setting, schedule expectations, HR support and reporting mechanisms.

5.2.2 Architectural initiatives are not well served by programs of parallel initiatives

Two of the case companies, Altair and Canopus, used program practices, program management offices (PMOs) in particular, in architectural change initiatives as linking mechanisms between the top management and the initiative leaders. Both struggled in their efforts to resolve ambiguities. The initiatives reporting to PMOs did not have a clear channel of escalating problems and potential conflicts to top management, the authors of the blueprint for the new architecture. While the PMOs and also members of top management were aware of the ambiguities and occasional conflicts, the PMO process dictated a way of thinking where it is up to initiative leaders to show that their initiative is making progress and being thus incentivized to find just any resolution to ambiguities or even ignore them. This finding provides one insight on why it is reasonable that architectural change initiatives often use different change management practices from modular change initiatives.
**A process characterized by ambiguity resolution**

**Architectural change**
- A new design is adopted that is bound to impact the work of many employees
- Often authored and led by the CEO
- Old processes are often disrupted, and new processes need to be constructed

**New architecture, towards vision**
- An opportunity or need for new architecture is perceived
- CEO often (but not always) orders a diagnosis of situation
- A vision of the desired future organization is defined, led by the CEO

**Blueprint for new architecture**
- CEO (and others assisting) prepare the blueprint
- Sometimes TMT is closely involved, giving feedback
- The CEO may set steering committees or task forces to support & follow-up the implementation

**Acceptance of vision → new org. construction**
- Managers in multiple levels need to accept new roles and new processes. They accept if they find the vision & the key leaders legitimate
- The blueprint does not have all the answers, emerging issues are solved by middle managers

**Tackling emerging issues**
- Hard to solve - issues in implementing the org. model can stall the change unless resolved
- There are occasional conflicts
- Issues can be resolved by dedicated task forces, but often escalate to the CEO
- New architectures work rarely fully as intended

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**A process characterized by work decomposition**

**Modular change**
- Top management issues savings targets or other KPI improvement targets
- Targets are allocated to existing organizational units
- Responsibility for improvement is assigned to tens (or hundreds) of initiative leaders

**Better performance, how much to save/improve?**
- An opportunity or need for better performance is perceived
- CEO and other top managers discuss the scope and magnitude of improvement needed
- The improvement is often pursued as savings

**Target allocation, PMO, support**
- Business leaders or controllers break down targets to units
- PMO is set up to interact with initiative leaders
- HR may provide training & coaching
- Also other support may be provided

**Acceptance of targets → resource changes**
- Initiative leaders need to accept savings / improvement targets as legitimate
- Unit redesign, lay-off decisions, sourcing decisions in units under given guidelines
- Unit specific HR, Comms. & BD people support

**Status & progress reporting**
- Initiative leaders report status and progress on weekly or monthly basis
- PMO consolidates the status report to top management

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Figure 4. Process model of the nature of resource mobilization in architectural change initiatives and modular change initiatives
5.3 Dealing with the instability of rarely used dynamic capabilities

Essay 3 addresses the research question: “How do firms deal with the instability of the rarely used dynamic capabilities needed in effective change agent mobilization?” To study dynamic capabilities in action, I synthesized the open coding to data-driven concepts about the key activities and routines in the case initiatives. The data-driven concepts could be linked to the theoretical categories of dynamic capability microfoundations as spelled out by Helfat and Peteraf (2015). The resulting conceptual map (Figure 5) provides the basis for the cross-case analysis as documented in Essay 3.

Figure 5. The conceptual map of Essay 3
The cross-case analysis gives the basis for synthesizing a model for how dynamic capabilities grow through three phases in large-scale change initiatives, as displayed in Figure 6. In the early phase, in the absence of any teams focused on the change, the dynamic capability is entirely based in the activities of the top executives. When key program leaders start their work in the design and launch phase, the volume and nature of the activities grow and the dynamic capability grows to be embedded in both the top executives and program leaders. Finally in the execution phase, numerous change activities are ongoing, and the most consequential change routines are displayed in the work of not just top executives and change leaders, but also all program participants, including the tens or even hundreds of initiative leaders.

![Figure 6](image)

**Figure 6.** The growth of dynamic capabilities (DCs) in large-scale change initiatives

### 5.3.1 Constructing dynamic capabilities by assembling teams and practices into change routines

Considering the differences between early phase, design & launch phase, and execution phase, it can be concluded that strong dynamic capabilities in change initiatives are based on both individuals and teams, not either or. This finding demonstrates how dynamic capabilities exist in combination of individual “micro” and organizational “macro” levels (Salvato & Vassolo, 2018). Even though dynamic capabilities are widely considered to emerge from experiential learning (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000), my cases showed that, actually, dynamic capabilities in change initiatives are often rather quickly assembled, in a fast-paced capability building process (Narayanan et al., 2009). The change routines are started quickly with the help of practice templates that have been developed in prior initiatives. The practice templates may originate in the same company, or a different company. Consultants, found in many of my cases, often contributed
these practice templates, but many of my cases witnessed also experienced in-house change professionals using their own experience in the assembly of change routines. I choose to call these templates practice templates instead of routine templates, as they travel from one company to another much the same way as practices diffuse in the industry. They are, in essence, best practices à la Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) as they determine the structure of the resulting routines. The attribute “best”, however, is not fully appropriate here as the data does not really suggest that these practice templates are either widely known or always well suited for the purpose (see chapter 5.3.3 below). The dynamic capabilities demonstrated in my cases operated above the threshold of minimum satisfactory performance, but they were hardly a source of superior performance either. Certainly the dynamic capabilities at Capella and Sirius were strategically valuable. Their degree of “home-grown”ness varied. All dynamic capabilities had grafted elements of external origin, but all dynamic capabilities accumulated experience as well and had several knowledgeable in-house practitioners. This assessment suggests that in the beginning of the initiatives they were “dynamic capabilities in the making” but evolved fairly soon to “real” dynamic capabilities due to the intensive activities in the change initiatives (Helfat & Winter, 2011).

5.3.2 Change agents are mobilized to design and jointly solve problems

Overcoming the resistance to change is an important and necessary element in dynamic capability microfoundations (Helfat & Peteraf, 2015; Teece, 2007: 1334). Asset orchestration in large scale changes requires that the top executives manage to persuade others in the organization to undertake new initiatives. Essay 3 spells out how in most of the case firms top management made an effort to bring middle managers onboard. The middle managers were invited to task forces or committees that held meetings regularly, addressing the ongoing issues of change. There were different types of remits for these task forces, ranging from designing the new organization to coordination and problem solving during the ongoing change implementation. Further, the mobilized middle managers were expected to come up with novel organizational designs or solutions to problems in their own areas of responsibility. The mobilized middle managers had also a role to play in mobilizing their own organizations to the change, as many change programs were designed to deliver cascading communications where local managers engage their own teams by communicating the need for change and chosen strategy with a localized message.
Based on this data we can articulate a dual role for mobilization in a dynamic capability: It gains the acceptance to change among the change recipients, and it also grows the dynamic capability by recruiting new change agents to the team delivering the change.

5.3.3 Two approaches to deal with the instability of rarely used dynamic capabilities

Dynamic capabilities are prone to erode when used rarely (Danneels, 2008; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). Accordingly, my research witnessed in many case firms how consequent initiatives did not make use of dynamic capabilities from past initiatives. Often it was about key actors moving to new jobs between initiatives, and less experienced persons stepping into roles preparing for the next initiative. Several case companies, however, provided encouraging examples of how to maintain dynamic capabilities in order avoid the erosion.

Sirius provides a prime example of fungible teams & practices, that is, teams and practices that can be adapted to new uses. It adopted during Sirius A initiative a particular approach to initiative portfolio management that it redeployed during Sirius B to its original purpose of initiative target setting and planning. This redeployment was successful despite taking place several years after the first use. It helped that the methodology was clearly articulated and supported by an online tool. In Sirius C the use of the methodology was successfully expanded beyond cost savings to quality opportunity recognition. The “OpEx” team running the process correctly perceived the fungibility of the methodology.

Capella used an alternative powerful approach to dynamic capability maintenance, that of rapid reassembly. For the Capella C initiative it managed to rapidly put back together a dynamic capability it had already in the Capella A initiative. Beyond faithfully using the practice template from Capella A, it quickly found individuals with requisite skills and experience to staff the PMO team, familiar with the best practices used. The practice know-how had been securely stored even when living practice had been absent between the initiatives.

Team & practice fungibility and capability reassembly are not always superior approaches. It may well be that many firms are better off hiring experienced consultancies instead of applying own dynamic capabilities and practice templates with only superficial similarity to the situation at hand. Altair struggled somewhat when it applied its dynamic capabilities in post-merger integration to its Altair B initiative. As discussed more in detail in Essay 2, the data indicates that the stage-gate process model that was used overlooked the needs for continuous problem solving and conflict escalation that emerged in the initiative.
It is clear, however, that Sirius built a valuable dynamic capability in Sirius B, leveraging assets from Sirius A. It is also clear that the dynamic capability proved fungible to new uses in Sirius C, supporting continued business success when the global financial crisis led to a lowered demand.
6. Discussion and conclusions

6.1 Contributions to the resource allocation process literature

The new perspective to resource mobilization developed in Essay 1 reconceptualizes external actors as participants in the process instead of being just contextual influences (Bower & Gilbert, 2005a). These external actors, including but not limited to, investors, customers, suppliers, government agencies, financial analysts, media, and industry associations, may select and occasionally even directly define strategic initiatives. The model in Essay 1 also sees top management in a broader role than merely defining strategic context and selecting initiatives. Rather, top managers are seen to engage external resource holders in attempts to win their support for the focal organization’s strategy and initiatives. They are thus seen to behave somewhat similarly to middle manager champions that the resource allocation process model describes (Burgelman, 1983b).

The new perspective in Essay 1 calls for a broader view of resources that an organization needs to mobilize. While the resource allocation process model focuses on financial and material resources (Burgelman, 1991; Noda & Bower, 1996), Essay 1 brings forth the importance of social resources in strategy work. Mobilizing social support is often a necessary precursor for the subsequent mobilization of financial or material resources. Social resources follow a different dynamic from other resources as they are cumulative; they don’t need to be separately mobilized for each initiative. Rather, they accumulate, elevating the organization’s or manager’s social position (Battilana, 2006).

A richer classification of initiatives beyond the induced vs. autonomous (Burgelman, 1983a) follows, as the initiatives may be autonomous or consistent with both the firm’s strategic logic (Bettis & Prahalad, 1995; Kim & Mauborgne, 1997) on the one hand, and with the industry logic (Durand & Jourdan, 2012) on the other hand. Naturally, when strategic logic and industry logic are aligned, Burgelman’s original classification is valid.

A strategy process theory has value if it explains well the pattern of strategy making activities, and if it helps to understand how the process and its context influences the decisions and commitments made in the process (Chakravarthy
& White, 2002). The resource allocation process model is a valid and powerful process model, but as it fails to explain external resource mobilization, it does not properly present the full range of key management activities in the process. Particularly, the model explains only the top managers’ activities as administrators of the strategic and structural context, not their entrepreneurial activities in resource mobilization. Further, the resource allocation process model, as it does not discuss mobilization of social resources, stops short on explaining the mechanisms leading to managers altering their strategic and structural contexts to better align to external expectations in some cases, but not others. In these respects, the model provided by Essay 1 advances the theory of strategy process.

6.2 Contributions to the strategic change literature

While strategic change research has been largely preoccupied with radical change, Essay 2 highlights the nature of strategic change that is not radical. The current study shows significant variety in both the objectives and the conduct of the change, depending on whether the change is of modular or architectural type. This variety has gone unnoticed in the literature thus far. There are several dichotomies of change in the literature also beyond the convergent vs. radical: evolutionary vs. revolutionary (Gersick, 1991), incremental vs. strategic (Nadler & Tushman, 1989), and realigning vs. transformational (Balogun & Hailey, 2008). While each comes with distinct meanings, these approaches essentially distinguish between less impactful and more impactful changes, ignoring that modular and architectural changes are both fairly large changes, distinguished not by impact but by modular vs. architectural objectives and modular vs. architectural conduct that is aligned with objectives. While architectural changes are to some extent transformations, the architectural changes I studied are not fully transformational in the sense of changing from one organizational paradigm to another - the case companies typically changed their structure and processes, but most aspects of strategy, business model, systems and culture remained as they were (Cf. Balogun & Hailey, 2008).

The findings suggest that scholars could benefit studying the changes to organizational architecture, both in conjunction with and independently of the radicality of the change in terms of convergence vs. divergence to existing norms and logics (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). While it is well known that radical change is difficult, it is worthwhile to note that architectural change has been found difficult as well, somewhat differently from radical change. Studies show how architectural changes often have unintended consequences due to the incompleteness of the blueprint guiding the change (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Ethiraj & Levinthal, 2004).
In an interesting analogy, Henderson and Clark (1990) have studied challenges in how organizations adapt to innovations, and noted that incumbents struggle when the innovations are architectural, i.e. they change relationships between system components. On the other hand, sometimes radically new technologies such as digital mobile phones replacing analog ones are not disruptive when the changes are contained within a system component, making these innovations modular. To adapt to architectural innovations, organizations need to change the ways that different departments collaborate with each other, because their architectural knowledge is widely dispersed in the organization. In contrast, adapting to modular innovations leaves the collaboration patterns intact. (Ibidem)

The current findings show how managers deploy change management practices to deal with the challenges of architectural change, defining and communicating a vision to legitimize the new blueprint, intensively communicating to mobilize all the recipients of change to accept the new organization, and setting up committees and task forces as mechanisms to resolving the ambiguities inherent in architectural change. The current research shows as well how modular strategic changes go through similar phases of change, but often witnessing the deployment of quite different strategic management practices, characterized by the decomposition of the change to tens if not hundreds of independent tasks. Different types of change initiatives have different challenges to deal with, and thereby they are also organized differently, as certain categories of change management practices are more effective than others in dealing with the challenges. Uncovering this contingency provides a contribution to the change management literature. While all the types of change management practices found in Essay 2 have been discussed in the change management literature (Huy, 2001; Keller & Price, 2011; Stouten et al., 2018), prior works have not explained the tendency of the top management to choose either predominantly architectural or predominantly modular approach to change in terms of both objectives and conduct.

Essay 2, with its interest into mobilization of managers to join the change initiative, contributes into understanding the role of organizing in the change (Whittington & Melin, 2003). It is not only the organizational structure of the focal company that is being changed to a larger or smaller degree, but also the change initiative is being constantly organized throughout its duration with the assembly of various PMOs and teams, and the deployment and adjustment of change management practices. These activities form microprocesses that have organization-level outcomes (Kouame & Langley, 2018).
6.3 Contributions to the dynamic capability literature

The current study extends the dynamic capability theory by showing dynamic capability assembly to be a vital mechanism for dynamic capability growth. Some research into dynamic capability building has noted imitation (Zahra et al., 2006) and grafting of external templates (Narayanan et al., 2009) to play a role, thus suggesting dynamic capability growth to depend sometimes on major external inputs. Essay 3 illuminates how companies set up effective teams in compressed time, and thus translate dynamic capabilities residing in individuals into team-level routines with varying success. It thereby contributes towards an enriched model of dynamic capability life cycle. Dynamic capabilities can be assembled in a limited time frame, there is no need to wait for them to emerge spontaneously from the process of experiential learning, even as the experiential learning is vital as the accumulated experience makes the dynamic capabilities stronger and thus a potential source of performance improvements. Thus, there is an opportunity to build more generic theories of dynamic capability life cycles, better attending to such phenomena as replication (Winter & Szulanski, 2001; Winter, Szulanski, Ringov, & Jensen, 2012) and knowledge grafting (Nag, Corley, & Gioia, 2007; Narayanan et al., 2009).

The empirical findings show that mobilizing complements perceiving, designing and problem solving (Cf. Helfat & Peteraf, 2015) in a particular manner by both yielding acceptance to change and growing the dynamic capability by gaining contributors to the dynamic capability routines. This complements the notion of dynamic capabilities as combinations of “micro” and “macro” (Salvato & Vassolo, 2018) with a view where the dynamic capabilities reside both in individuals and teams as a function of time and stage in the change process. The residence flows from individuals to teams as the dynamic capability expands, only to ebb back to individuals at the closure of the change initiative when the teams are disassembled.

The current research extends also the dynamic capability theory by highlighting two maintenance mechanisms for unstable dynamic capabilities. First, rapid reassembly, i.e. codification, archival and talent management procedures to enable rapid dynamic capability reassembly using proven practice templates and practitioners, can retain dynamic capability efficiently in the absence of a living practice. This casts knowledge codification into a broader role in dynamic capabilities, as a device for both capability building and organizational memory (Cf. Zollo & Winter, 2002). Second, team & practice fungibility, i.e. redirecting teams or practices to appropriate related purposes thus maintaining a living practice with experienced practices, safeguards existing teams and their living practices that are at risk of being disbanded. My cases show that
these dynamic capability maintenance approaches come with their own challenges: while Sirius and Capella achieved good results applying these approaches, Altair’s track record was more mixed. It may be hard to correctly assess the applicability of the pre-existing dynamic capability to new uses, decisions on deployment are often made based on incomplete information.

Essay 3 argues that there is value for both scholars and practitioners to consider also rarely used dynamic capabilities instead of overlooking them. Despite being rarely used, they can be highly consequential, and therefore of strategic importance. The microfoundations of rarely used dynamic capabilities may contain elements of both internal and external origin (Teece, 2012). Scholars, instead of glossing over this aspect, need to come to better terms with analytically drawing the line between the capabilities located in the organization and capabilities provided by a partner in situations where important routines for the dynamic capability reside in the collaboration between them. Strategically significant interorganizational capability dynamics may be found not just in long-lasting partnerships but occasionally also in shorter engagements (Dyer, Singh, & Hesterly, 2018).

6.4 Strategy process design as choices of practices

The two empirical essays focus on the use of change management practices in the process of managing large scale change initiatives. These practices are tools for organizing as they shape the routines of change. The essays demonstrate that uses of strategic management practices differ across companies, leading to different processes and different resource mobilization outcomes. They further indicate that some practices are considered a source of skillful performance in strategy work. The uses of strategic management practices seem to be purposeful and reflective, but also constrained by the repertoire of practices available to the organization. For these reasons I suggest that strategy process scholars should, akin to Mantere (2005), consider strategic management practices as important objects of inquiry that bundle into company-specific toolkits that both enable a number of different process designs, available for managers to choose from, but also constrain the range of choices available to them.

6.5 The resource mobilization perspective

My thesis shows that the perspective of resource mobilization supports analyzing a variety of strategy making contexts, discussing both top-down and bottom-up directions of strategy making (Eisenmann & Bower, 2000; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997), and reactive and proactive responses to the environmental
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pressures (Burgelman, 1991; Meyer, Brooks, & Goes, 1990). The perspective on resource mobilization thereby allows contributions to multiple literatures spanning strategy process literature (Bower & Gilbert, 2005b; Hutzschenreuter & Kleindienst, 2006; Szulanski, Porac, & Doz, 2005), strategic change literature (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Huy et al., 2014; Pettigrew, 2012; Stouten et al., 2018) and dynamic capability literature (Helfat et al., 2007; Schilke et al., 2018) while it also supports the adoption of seminal insights from the institutional literature (Greenwood, Oliver, Suddaby, & Sahlin, 2008). For these reasons I consider resource mobilization to be a useful theoretical lens and a potential step towards a more unified theory of strategy process (Cf. Szulanski et al., 2005). The focus on resource mobilization connects many central elements of strategy process theories. To begin with, it puts the spotlight on the entrepreneurial elements of the top managers’ work (Cf. Schendel & Hofer, 1979). It also opens the black box of how resource commitments are made (Ghemawat, 1991; Kannan-Narasimhan & Lawrence, 2018). It connects with the Strategy-as-practice literature by a clear focus on what managers do (Whittington, 2006). It further provides a mechanism for studying the emergence of strategic ecosystems (Cf. Ansari et al., 2016), thus extending the research focus beyond the single focal company.

6.6 Limitations of the study

As any empirical study, the empirical essays of this thesis are subject to limitations. The primary data of the thesis is a corpus of interviews that does not lend itself to the kind of immersion to the social setting that an ethnography would allow. This necessarily translates into a high confidence on the ability of informants to reproduce meaningful accounts of past and ongoing events (Gioia et al., 2013). Then, in a research setting consisting of high-stakes strategic change initiatives it is not uncommon to rely on interview data as the primary evidence due to difficulties of getting access to meetings which are considered sensitive. Interview data is subject to retrospective bias. My research has attempted to mitigate this bias with two means: the longitudinal approach to data collection, and triangulation both across interviews and archival data.

Altair data collection was done in one go which poses some limitations to interpretations, even while we gained detailed accounts of the richness of the two focal initiatives from various change participants. In the case of Arcturus, the data collection succeeded well in longitudinal terms, the interviews spanning through the whole 2,5 years of data collection and allowed observations of how the use of change management practices changed through that time. In Canopus the data succeeded well, extending to 1,5 years, and we could follow the
focal initiative almost throughout its life cycle. In the case of Capella, data collection was mostly retrospective, unfortunately, but interviewee selection succeeded well to triangulate several complementary accounts, leading to a coherent narrative of the focal initiatives. The Rigel access provided good data, consisting of some ongoing and some retrospective observations through a period of two years. In the case of Sirius, the access lasted for more than a year, but unfortunately nearly all interviews dealt with past initiatives, posing some potential problems to data interpretations.

In a multiple case study setting the number of interviews per case company is limited compared to a single case study. This poses a risk of not interviewing potential informants with valuable views, thus missing valuable data that would help to analyze the case better. In all cases our first informants influenced centrally the selection of other interviewees. To mitigate the risk of biased selection of interviewees, our research group did engage in snowballing also in further interviews, so asking many people’s opinions on suitable other interviewees, purposefully reaching to multiple departments of the organization in both staff functions and business line.

The empirical essays contain some assessments on the extent to which the initiatives were successful in meeting their objectives. I did not attempt to study the relationship of case initiatives and firm performance formally as my empirical setting is not conducive to any statistical analyses. It was further clear that there were multiple internal and external factors affecting the firm performance during the case initiatives that would have been difficult to disentangle. I used participant observations and information on measurable achievements like cost savings to derive assessments such as “mostly successful”, “only partly successful”, “exceeded their targets”, but I did not attempt to establish any quantitative metric.

6.7 Opportunities for further research

My thesis opens up possibilities for further research. The framework in Essay 1 can be empirically validated. Transitions between the four archetypes, entrenched, constrained, enterprising and celebrated, offer a fruitful topic for further studies. My empirical work suggests that change initiatives are common in large organizations and offer a seminal research lens to resource mobilization. Essay 2 shows that many organizations tend to alternate between modular and architectural initiatives. Studying how the outcomes of one initiative may lead to another initiative of a different type could provide an alternative perspective on the process of strategic renewal (Cf. Barnett & Burgelman, 1996). Scholars don’t need to theorize initiatives to be defined independently of each
other, rather, initiatives can be considered often to be triggered by conditions created by the prior initiatives.

Further, the Essay 2 provides evidence of program practices being better suited to modular change than architectural change. It is reasonable to assume that also other change management practices are well suited to either modular or architectural change, not both. More could be learned by change initiative comparisons in new settings.

Essay 3 challenges dynamic capability scholars to build more generic theories of dynamic capability life cycles that would better correspond to the ways that dynamic capabilities are manifested in various initiatives that firms undertake in their efforts to succeed in their changing environments.

Further, the team & practice fungibility found in Essay 3 could be a fruitful target for further empirical dynamic capability studies also beyond change initiatives. It is reasonable to assume that managers contemplate redeploying teams and practices in multiple ways in their strategy work. Therefore this phenomenon could be found to shape the strategy process in multiple ways.


References


Resource mobilization is at the core of strategy and strategic change. Nevertheless, the process of how resources are mobilized in strategy remains undertheorized. The current thesis explains how the entrepreneurial efforts of top and middle managers in strategic initiatives are guided by resource needs and centered on mobilizing the needed resources. Initiatives vary by their resource needs, which brings variance to the unfolding process patterns.