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STRUGGLE OVER "WHO WE ARE" - A DISCURSIVE PERSPECTIVE ON ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on organizational identity change in the acquisition context from a discursive perspective. Organizational identity answers the question of “who we are” as an organization. Traditionally, organizational identity has been approached as a set of features that organizational members consider central, distinctive, and enduring about their organization. Recent research, however, has challenged the centralness and enduringness of organizational identity, and there has been a call for more dynamic and fragmented views of organizational identity. Despite this call, most of the existing studies give an overly simplistic view of organizational identity and its change viewing stability as a desired state of organizations and ignoring the issues of power involved in identity construction processes.

The objective of this study is to understand organizational identity change as a discursive phenomenon and to provide a description of it. In this study, language is seen as the very arena where identity construction occurs. Organizational identity is constructed in the interaction between multiple actors, and this process is inherently linked to issues of power, since different articulations of “who we are” serve different interests and are related to certain ideological underpinnings. The study explores the construction of organizational identity in a local Finnish telecommunications company during its takeover by a national telecommunications group. The empirical data consist of one-on-one and group interviews, intranet discussions, company’s internal communication material, and media articles produced before, during, and after the acquisition over a 5-year time-span.

The study suggests that social actors construct, destruct, transform, and sustain different identity articulations in their use of various discursive strategies. Furthermore, social actors are capable of using different discourse types to produce desired identity articulations in suitable contexts. Three different discourse types used by social actors in their argumentation were identified in data. These discourse types were economic-rationalistic discourse, power discourse, and cultural discourse. In addition to identifying different discourse types and discursive strategies, the study also examined their use in the acquisition context, thus examining the situational variation of argumentation. As a result of this analysis, the study suggests that the identity of the social actor, the historical time, and the social arena for language use are related to the choice of discourse types and to which discursive strategies are used in the argumentation. Depending on which discourse types and discursive strategies are employed and to what purpose, organizational identity is constructed in different ways in language use.

A discursive view described in this study increases understanding of organizational identity change as a much more dynamic, fragmented, political, and complex phenomenon than earlier research has suggested. It highlights the role of time and place in organizational identity construction, thus describing identities as situated constructs, which vary depending on where, when, and by whom they are articulated. By describing identity construction as a phenomenon that happens in the interaction between multiple social actors, the study also suggests that identity change processes are more difficult to manage from the “top” of the organization than earlier research has suggested.

Keywords: Organizational identity, organizational discourse, change, critical discourse analysis

TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

Tutkimus käsittelee organisaatioidentiteetin muutosta yritystokontekstissa diskursiivisesta näkökulmasta. Organisaatioidentiteetti vastaa kysymykseen ”keitä me olemme” organisaationa. Perinteisesti organisaatioidentiteettiä on lähestytty joukkona organisaatioon liitettäviä ominaisuuksia, joita organisaation jäsenet pitävät keskeisinä, muista erottuvina ja pysyvinä. Uusin tutkimus on kuitenkin haastanut tämän näkemyksen ja peräänkuuluttanut dynaamisempaa ja hajanaisempaa näkemystä organisaatioidentiteetistä. Tästä huolimatta suurin osa olemassa olevasta tutkimuksesta antaa liian yksinkertaistetun kuvan organisaatioidentiteetistä ja sen muutoksesta pitäen pysyvyyttä organisaation tavoiteltavana olotilana ja kiinnittäen varsin vähän huomiota siihen, miten valta liittyy organisaatioidentiteetin rakentumiseen.

Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on ymmärtää ja kuvata organisaatioidentiteetin muutos diskursiivisena ilmiönä. Tässä tutkimuksessa kieli nähdään areenana, jossa identiteetin rakentaminen tapahtuu. Organisaatioidentiteetti rakentuu vuorovaikutuksessa useiden eri toimijoiden kesken. Valta liittyy keskeisellä tavalla tähän prosessiin, sillä erilaiset ilmaukset siitä ”keitä me olemme” palvelevat erilaisia intressejä ja ovat sidoksissa tiettyihin ideologisiin oletuksiin. Tutkimus tarkastelee organisaatioidentiteetin rakentumista suomalaisessa paikallisessa tietoliikennealan yrityksessä aikana, jolloin valtakunnallinen tietoliikennealan yritys osti sen. Tutkimuksen aineisto koostuu yksilö- ja ryhmähaastatteluista, intranet-keskusteluista, yrityksen sisäisestä viestintämateriaalista sekä media-artikkeleista. Aineisto on tuotettu viiden vuoden aikana ennen ja jälkeen yritystoston.

Tutkimuksen tuloksena voidaan todeta, että sosiaaliset toimijat rakentavat, hajottavat, muuttavat ja ylläpitävät ilmauksia identiteetistä käyttämällä erilaisia diskursiivisia strategioita puheessaan. Lisäksi toimijat käyttävät erilaisia diskurssityyppejä resursseinaan, jotka mahdollistavat haluttujen identiteetti-ilmausten tuottamisen eri konteksteihin sopiviksi. Aineistolähtöisessä analyysissä tunnistettiin kolme erilaista diskurssityyppiä: taloudellis-rationaalinen diskurssi, valtakunnallinen diskurssi ja kulttuuridiskurssi. Diskursiivisten strategioiden ja diskurssityypin tunnistamisen lisäksi tutkimuksessa tarkasteltiin niiden käyttöä yritystokontekstissa, mikä mahdollisti puheen tilannesidonnaisen vaihtelun tarkastelun. Analyysin tuloksena voidaan todeta, että sosiaalisen toimijan identiteetti sekä puheen tuottamisen ajankohta ja sosiaalinen areena ovat sidoksissa siihen, millaisia diskurssityyppejä ja diskursiivisia strategioita käytetään argumentoinnissa. Riippuen siitä, millaisia diskurssityyppejä ja diskursiivisia strategioita käytetään ja mihin tarkoitukseen, organisaatioidentiteetti saa erilaisia ilmiösujuja kielen käytössä.

Tutkimuksessa kuvattu diskursiivinen näkökulma lisää ymmärrystä organisaatioidentiteetin muutoksesta huomattavasti dynaamisempaan, hajanaisempaan, poliittisempaan ja monimutkaisempaan ilmiönä kuin aikaisempi tutkimus on osoittanut. Tutkimus painottaa puheen tuottamisen ajan ja paikan roolia identiteetin rakennustyössä ja kuvaa identiteetit tilannesidonnaisina konstruktioina, jotka vaihtelevat riippuen siitä, missä, milloin ja kuka ne kulloinkin tuottaa. Kuvaamalla identiteetin rakentumisen ilmiönä, joka tapahtuu vuorovaikutuksessa useiden eri toimijoiden kesken, tutkimus myös osoittaa, että identiteetin muutosprosesseja on huomattavasti vaikeampi johtaa ”ylhäältä” käsin organisaatiossa kuin aikaisempi tutkimus on ehdottanut.

Avainsanat: Organisaatioidentiteetti, organisaatiodiskurssi, muutos, kriittinen diskurssianaalisyys

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Helsinki, September 2007

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1 INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, I had an opportunity to work as an external researcher in two organizations going through significant changes. One of them was a local Finnish telecommunications company, which had been swallowed by a national telecommunications group at the time of the research project, and the other, a public organization, had prepared for a merger that did not happen. I noticed that people in these two organizations tried continuously to make sense of their organization's existence in those turbulent times and reflected the question of "who we are" as an organization in relation to their merger partner or parent organization, and their own past. Whether they envisioned what the future with their new partner would look like or made sense of what was happening in their organizations at the time, their arguments were often rooted in notions of the very essence of their organization. Some time later, when I started work on my dissertation, I found a counterpart for this phenomenon in the literature; what the organizational members tried to make sense of and what they simultaneously constructed in their talk was conceptualized in the literature as *organizational identity*.

The notion of identity has become more and more salient for organizations during the past few decades. Because of increased complexity in organizations and their environment, expansion of the mass media, and cultural and economic changes in society (Alvesson 1990), non-substantive aspects have become as, if not more, important cornerstones for the success of organizations than substantive aspects like products and equipment. An understanding of "who we are" and "where we are going" as an organization is crucial for the ontological security of organizational members, but it is also needed in dealing with the competition (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999). It is important for organizations to be distinctive enough from their competitors, attractive in the eyes of current and potential employees, and legitimate actors in society. Hence, the quest for identity is today not only a matter for individuals, but also for organizations.

Organizational identity has typically been defined as a set of features that an organization's members consider to be relatively *enduring* about their organization (Albert & Whetten 1985). However, recent research has challenged the notion of enduringness in identity. The key question has been whether identity can be enduring if strategic

changes are to occur (Gioia & Thomas 1996), and if organizations need to interact with multiple audiences and multiple expectations in order to survive (Gioia et al. 2000a). Many organizational transformations today touch the very fundamental values and characteristics of the organization. For example, public sector organizations are modernized or privatized into business-like organizations, and regional or national companies are merged into multinational corporations. Also, organizations are forced to renew themselves more rapidly than before in order to succeed in an environment, where competition is based increasingly on their image and reputation.

What has been noted in various studies examining identity changes is that *language* plays a central role in these transformations (see e.g. Fiol 2002). In most of these studies, language has been seen as a tool for managers to change identity in an intended direction, for example, through creating a gap between the current and ideal identity (Reger et al. 1994). This view approaches identity as an entity that can be easily manipulated and, furthermore, regards consensus and stability in identity as desired outcomes of managerial change efforts. However, it has been noted that organizational identity work is neither a managerial endeavour alone (Brown & Humphreys 2006), nor an organization's internal process (Gioia et al. 2000a; Coupland & Brown 2004). Furthermore, those change models, which strive for stability in identity, have been criticized for being too static to increase our understanding of the dynamic nature of identity change processes (see e.g. Ashforth 1998).

In this study, I approach language not as a managerial tool for changing identity, but as the very arena, where identity construction occurs. Organizational identity is constructed in the interaction between multiple actors, both 'insiders' and 'outsiders' of the organization. This process is inherently linked to issues of power, since different articulations of "who we are" as an organization serve different interests and are related to certain ideological underpinnings. Moreover, the change in identity, as well as its enduringness, is regarded in this study as a social construction constituted in language use, and not as something external to our linguistic understanding. The generic motivation that has guided this research process can be summed up in the following question: *how can we approach and understand organizational identity and its change as social constructions, constituted in the processes of interaction?* With re-

gard to this motivation, the objective of this study is to understand organizational identity change as a *discursive phenomenon* and to provide a description of it.

The study explores the construction of organizational identity in a local Finnish telecommunications company during its takeover by a national telecommunications group. In prior research, mergers and acquisitions have been seen as particularly fruitful contexts for examining organization identity change processes (see e.g. Hogg & Terry 2000). An organization's identity is most likely to be regarded as salient and explicitly discussed during major transformations, for example, in a situation, when an organization's status is changing (Ashforth & Mael 1996). The data have been produced before, during, and after the acquisition over a 5-year time-span. The empirical data consist of one-on-one and group interviews, intranet discussions, company's internal communication material, and media articles.

The research question for the study is the following: *how is organizational identity constructed in the discursive processes of social actors?* The research question will be further elaborated in chapter two as an outcome of the literature review.

The thesis is organized as follows after this introductory chapter. In **chapter two**, I will discuss the theoretical framework of the study. Firstly, the concept of organizational identity and its related concepts are defined. Secondly, I will continue with an overview on the existing literature of organizational identity change and identity multiplicity in organizations. Thirdly, I will examine how identity is related to power, control, and ideology in organizations. Fourthly, I will suggest a discursive perspective to study organizational identity in general and organizational identity change in particular and present a framework for empirical analysis based on the literature review. In the end of the chapter, the theoretical framework of the study is concluded.

In **chapter three**, I will describe the research process including the research methodology, data production, and data analysis. In **chapter four**, the empirical results of the study are discussed. Firstly, I will introduce the case company, which provides the scene for the analysis. Secondly, I will present the discourse types identified in the data that are used as linguistic resources in the identity construction. Thirdly, discursive strategies used in constructing organizational identities are presented. Fourthly, the use of discourse types and discursive strategies is examined in the acquisition con-

text. Different contextual elements that are related to language use by social actors are outlined.

In **chapter five**, the empirical findings of the study are firstly summarized. Secondly, the theoretical contributions and practical implications of the study are outlined. Thirdly, the study is evaluated on the basis of criteria suitable for discourse analytical research. Suggestions for further research conclude the chapter.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I will examine the literature on organizational identity in general and organizational identity multiplicity and change in particular and suggest a discursive approach to explore organizational identity and its change.

2.1 IDENTITY IN AND OF ORGANIZATIONS

Identity became an important concept in organizational practice and theory in the early 1980s along the cultural and social changes in modern society (Alvesson 1990). Because of the increased complexity and turbulence, the growing importance of the service sector in the economy, and the rapid expansion of the mass media (ibid.), symbolic capital has become all the more valuable for organizations in dealing with the competition (Fiol 2001) and in sustaining legitimacy in the eyes of their various stakeholders. The emphasis in management and the functioning of organizations has shifted from substantive issues to dealing with various forms of images (Alvesson 1990), the management of which is a crucial skill for organizations, not only from the point of view of external relations, but also with regard to personnel.

During the past twenty years, researchers have explored various aspects of identity in and of organizations. By drawing on the categorization of Gioia, Schultz, and Corley (2000b), these studies can be broadly divided into three different approaches. Firstly, those studies that are concerned with *people's identification with organizations* look at the processes through which people gain a sense of belonging to the organization. These studies have explored, for example, the importance of organizational image in identification (Dutton et al. 1994), the role of language in managing an individual's identification with the transforming organizational identity (Fiol 2002), and identification with the organization in demographically diverse work settings (Brickson 2000). These studies regard individual and organizational identity as reciprocal and inter-linked, which has various benefits for the organization. For example, when an individual's self-esteem is coupled with the identity of his or her organization, he or she is more willing to act in favour of the organization (Pratt 1998), especially in a situation, which threatens organization's identity (Elsbach & Kramer 1996).

Secondly, the studies that are concerned with the *identity of people within organizations*, or social identity (Ashforth & Mael 1989), examine the beliefs about "who we

are” as defined by our membership in the organization. These studies look at the identity of different groups within an organization that are based on differences in demographic categories such as gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, or level of tenure within the organization, professional backgrounds such as formalized training or expertise, or shared interests such as mutual goals, concerns, or agendas (Pratt & Foreman 2000). Researchers have explored, for example, the construction of newspaper workers’ social identity (Kärreman & Alvesson 2001), and the construction of positive identity in those occupations that are seen as degrading, disgusting, or otherwise ‘dirty work’ in a society (Ashforth & Kreiner 1999).

Thirdly, those researchers, who examine the *identity of organizations*, or organizational identity, are interested in the conceptualizations that organizational members have about “who we are” as an organization. The focus is, then, on those characteristics that refer to the organization as a whole. Researchers have explored, for example, the relationship between organizational identity and image (Gioia et al. 2000a), the dynamics between organizational identity and organizational culture (Hatch & Schultz 2002), and the role of organizational identity in strategic change (Gioia & Thomas 1996), or in a lack of change (Reger et al. 1994). *I position this study within this third perspective to identity-related organization studies, since my focus is on organizational identities and their construction.*

It is important to note that although these different aspects of organization-related identity are presented here separately for analytical purposes, they are partly overlapping, and a single study may take several of these views. Indeed, some researchers regard organizational identity as inherently interlinked with individual and social identity in organizations (e.g. Dutton & Dukerich 1991; Scott & Lane 2000a; Humphreys & Brown 2002) and argue that such categorizations are too simplistic or even trivial. However, I think the division between them helps us to understand the multiplicity of approaches and heterogeneity in the field and thus serves as an overview for eclectic discussions around the concept of identity in and of organizations in its multiple guises.

A summary of the approaches with exemplary pieces from the literature is presented in Table 1. It is important to note that my categorization of the selected studies may

give an overly simplistic view of many of those studies. The division is based on my own interpretation of the main contribution of these studies.

Table 1 Different approaches to studying organization-related identities

Approach to studying identity	Level of analysis	Piece of literature
Concern with identity of organizations	Organization	Albert & Whetten (1985); Gioia et al. (2000a); Gioia & Thomas (1996); Reger et al. (1994); Gustafson and Reger (1995); Pratt & Foreman (2000); Golden-Biddle & Rao (1997); Corley (2004); Corley & Gioia (2004)
Concern with identity of people within organizations (or social identity)	Group	Ashforth & Mael (1989); Alvesson & Willmott (2002); Hogg & Terry (2000); Ashforth & Kreiner (1999); Kärreman & Alvesson (2001); Pratt & Rafaeli 1997
Concern with individual's identification with organizations	Individual	Dutton et al. (1994); Brickson (2000); Fiol (2002); Pratt (1998); Elsbach & Kramer (1996)

What is common between these different approaches presented above is that they all deal with identities in and of *organizations*. In this study, I regard organizations as *inter-subjective structures of meaning that are produced, reproduced, and transformed through the ongoing communicative activities of its members* (see Mumby 2001, 585). In this study, I thus regard organizations as phenomena that are constructed in language use, not something that exist a priori our linguistic understanding.

Next, I will move on to discuss in more detail the concept of organizational identity, which is the focus of interest in this study.

2.1.1 WHAT IS ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY?

Organizational identity relates to the questions of “who are we?” and “who do we want to be?” as an organization, and “what kind of business are we in?” (Albert & Whetten 1985, 265). Since 1985, when Albert and Whetten defined organizational identity for the first time, most researchers have approached it in terms of 1) what is

taken by organization members to be *central* to the organization, 2) what makes the organization *distinctive* from other organizations, and 3) what is perceived by members to be an *enduring* or continuing feature linking the present organization with the past (see Albert & Whetten 1985, 265 for the definition).

What is characteristic for Albert's and Whetten's (1985) definition and for most of the studies conducted thereafter in the sphere of their influence is that organizational identity is seen more in terms of individual identity than as a distinctive phenomenon on its own (Gioia 1998). This means that organizational identity has been treated as a more or less *psychological* concept – since identity has traditionally been conceptualized from the point of view of an individual person – whereas a view of identity based more on organization theory could be a more relevant basis for conceptualizing collective, organization-level identities (Gioia et al. 2000b).

What then are the similarities and differences between individual and organizational identity? Concerning the similarities, identity answers the question of “who am I?” as an entity, on the level of both an individual and an organization. Secondly, the idea that identity is relational and comparative works both at the individual and the organizational levels. This means that individuals and organizations maintain their identity through interaction with other individuals or organizations by a process of interpersonal or inter-organizational comparison over time. Thirdly, organizations as well as individuals engage in the practice of appearing similar to a chosen group, while attempting to distinguish themselves from the other members of that group. Fourthly, like individuals, organizations can be viewed as subsuming a multiplicity of identities, each of which is appropriate for a given audience or context. (Gioia 1998.)

Concerning the differences, it is the multiplicity of identities, which both connects and separates individual and organizational identities from one another. Organizations can plausibly present a complicated and multifaceted identity without appearing too fragmented or schizophrenic, as an individual might (Gioia 1998). Recent research suggests that the centrality of identity is continuously negotiated in organization (Golden-Biddle & Rao 1997), and organization members switch between different identities depending on the context (Scott & Lane 2000a). Even though Albert and Whetten (1985) themselves recognized that there may be dual and multiple identities in organi-

zations, they did not discuss whether they could be in conflict with each other, or peripheral in character.

The second conceptual difference between individual and organizational identities concerns the stability and endurance of identity. It is argued that although both individuals and organizations display features of identity that are both stable and unstable, organizations can change at a much more rapid pace than individuals can reinvent themselves (Gioia 1998). Albert and Whetten (1985) discussed the possibility for organizational identity to change, but they related such change to particular events over the organizational life-cycle. It has subsequently been argued that organizational identity is more fluid than that, for example, because of its ongoing interrelationships with organizational image¹ (see e.g. Gioia et al. 2000a).

Because of these two fundamental differences between individual and organizational identity, researchers have recently contested Albert's and Whetten's (1985) criteria of the centrality and temporal continuity of organizational identity and called for the theoretical development of organizational identity as a distinct phenomenon from individual identity (Gioia et al. 2000b). *In this study, my aim is to answer this call, as I intend to increase our understanding of how organizational identities are constructed in the linguistic processes of social actors.* I argue that the view of organizational identity as a socially constructed concept increases our understanding of its multiplicity and fluidity.

Before discussing the multiplicity and fluidity of organizational identity in more detail, it is useful to distinguish the concept of organizational identity from the related concepts and discuss the links between them. Hence, the relations between organizational identity, organizational culture, and organizational image are discussed next.

2.1.2 RELATIONS BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY, CULTURE AND IMAGE

Like identity, *organizational culture* has also been a popular topic in organizational analysis since the early 1980s (see e.g. Eisenberg & Riley 2001; Schultz & Hatch

¹ See p. 10 - 11 for definition.

1996; Hatch 1993; Martin 1992; Smircich & Calás 1987; Ouchi & Wilkins 1985; Schein 1985 and Smircich 1983). The concept of organizational culture is defined in various ways in the existing literature. For example, Schein (1985) defines organizational culture as assumptions, values, and artifacts shared by organizational members. This rather unitary view of organizational culture has been challenged by more fragmented views (e.g. Martin 1992) and more dynamic models that have emerged from a symbolic-interpretive perspective (e.g. Hatch 1993). Those taking a symbolic-interpretive view often follow Geertz's (1973, 5) definition of culture, which is based on a notion of man being "an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun". Geertz (1973) takes culture to be those webs of significance, and the analysis of culture to be interpretive science in search of meaning.

Organizational culture has been suggested to be a context "for taking action, making meaning, constructing images, and forming identities" (Hatch 1993, 686-687). Within this view, organizational identity is thus embedded in organizational culture, or, organizational culture provides a context for organizational identity (Hatch & Schultz 1997; 2002). The difference between identity and culture lies in the notion that "culture provides the system of rules that defines a social system", whereas "identity provides the contextual understanding of those rules that govern people's understanding of themselves in relation to the larger social system" (Fiol et al. 1998, 57). Hence, culture provides a larger context of meaning within which the identity work is done. Moreover, whereas culture is seen as relatively stable and hard to change, identity is regarded as more flexible and prone to change (Fiol et al. 1998).

Organizational image can be conceptualized in multiple ways, depending on the discipline where it is studied. In some disciplines, for example, in public relations and marketing, the concepts of corporate identity, corporate image, and image management have been used to refer to the organization's relationship with its constituents (see e.g. Abratt 1989). Those scholars study how the strategically planned and operationally applied central idea of an organization is presented to its various constituents in order to achieve the organization's strategic goals. These studies are mostly concerned with visual representations of an organization manifested through the design and management of organizational symbols and logos.

Within the organization theoretical literature, image is studied under labels such as construed external image (Dutton & Dukerich 1991; Dutton et al. 1994), projected image (Alvesson 1990), desired future image (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia & Thomas 1996), and reputation (Fombrun 1996). Although approached slightly differently, all these labels refer to an understanding of an organization's relationship with its constituents and connote perceptions that are both internal and external as well as projected and received (Gioia et al. 2000a).

The different forms of image as construed within the organization theoretical literature are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Forms of image (adapted from Gioia et al. 2000a)

Label	Definition in literature	Examples in literature
Construed external image	Organizational members' perceptions of how outsiders perceive the organization	Dutton & Dukerich (1991) Dutton et al. (1994)
Projected image	Image created by an organization to be communicated to constituents; might or might not represent ostensible reality; singular image of the organization	Alvesson (1990)
Desired future image	Visionary perception the organization would like external others and internal members to have of the organization sometime in the future	Gioia & Chittipeddi (1991) Gioia & Thomas (1996)
Reputation	Relatively stable, long-term, collective judgments by outsiders of an organization's actions and achievements	Fombrun (1996) Fombrun & Shanley (1990)

The breakdown of the boundaries between the internal and external aspects of the organization has brought the concepts of identity, image, and culture closer together both in theory and in practice (Cheney & Christensen 2001). As organizations are exposed to their environment through increased publicity, networks, alliances, and other types of co-operation with various constituents, the boundaries between the internal and external aspects of organization are becoming fuzzier (ibid.). The actions and statements of top managers simultaneously affect both the internal and external audi-

ences of the organization (Hatch & Schultz 2002; 1997). Also, individuals may occupy several roles in work organizations being simultaneously employees, customers, interest groups, and media watchers (Hatch & Schultz 1997), which makes the traditional separation between the ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ of an organization more complicated than before.

For Hatch & Schultz (1997, 357), “culture, identity and image form three related parts of a system of meaning and sense-making that defines an organization to its various constituencies” (see Figure 1). In their model, organizational identity, which is embedded in organizational culture, provides material for the construction and communication of organizational image. Organizational images are both projected outwards and fed back inwards the organization, thus constituting the (re-)construction of organizational identity. The processes of organizational identity and organizational image construction are therefore reciprocal. Moreover, there are both internal and external influences of and on organizational identity. Internal influences consist both of top management vision and leadership, for example, in the form of corporate value statements, and organizational members’ work experiences, as they interpret and enact what the organization is. Again, organizational identity is communicated to external constituents through organizational spokespersons and direct contacts with customers and other stakeholders. The experiences of external groups about the organization have an influence on organizational identity formation, since organizational members are also outsiders of the organization, for example, as customers and through the media, and because insiders’ perceptions of themselves are affected by how they believe outsiders perceive them. The efforts of top managers to manage organizational identity are also influenced by external feedback.

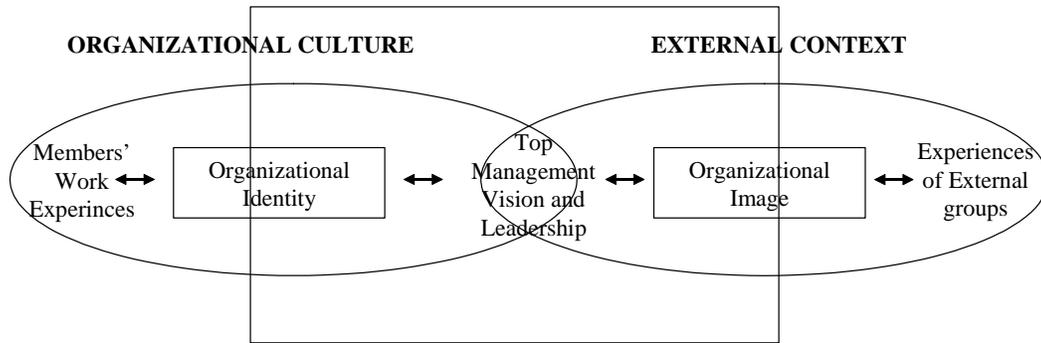


Figure 1 A model of the relationships between organizational culture, identity and image (Hatch & Schultz 1997)

This study follows the view of Hatch & Schultz (1997) and views *organizational identity as embedded in the cultural context of an organization and in reciprocal relationship with organizational image.*

2.2 MULTIPLICITY AND DYNAMICS OF ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY

In the previous chapter, the call for more dynamic and fragmented view of organizational identity was stated. In this chapter, I will discuss in more detail how identity change and multiplicity have been approached in the previous literature, and what kind of challenges these conceptualizations still pose with respect to our understanding of organizational identities and their change.

2.2.1 IDENTITY MULTIPLICITY

Albert's and Whetten's (1985) criterion of the centrality of organizational identity has been challenged in the recent research, which has focused on *multiple organizational identities* (see e.g. Golden-Biddle & Rao 1997; Glynn 2000; Gioia et al. 2000a; Pratt & Rafaeli 1997; Pratt & Foreman 2000; Labianca et al. 2001). Despite the centrality criterion, even Albert and Whetten (1985) themselves recognized the possibility of multiple views of organization being held by organizational members that may either be shared by all individuals, or that may differ from one organizational part or group to another.

In a situation, when there are many conceptualizations of "who we are" as an organization, and when those views are held by all members of the organization, the organization can be said to have a *holographic* identity or identities (Albert & Whetten 1985). In the existing research, 'all members of the organization' have typically referred to the members of the management team, and researchers have explored, for example, the management of multiple organizational identities (Pratt & Foreman 2000) and the management of the association between multiple organizational identities and strategic action (Sillince & Jarzabkowski 2004).

Organization members may also hold different views of the organization based on the differences, for example, in demographic, hierarchical, or professional categories they occupy, or between organizational units (Pratt & Foreman 2000). In these cases, the organization can be said to have *ideographic* multiplicity (Albert & Whetten 1985). For example, operative employees may perceive their organization and its identity differently from top and middle managers (Corley 2004). The notion of ideographic multiplicity has also made relevant the issue of power in organizations, as different

identity articulations may be in conflict with each other. For example, members of top management team may have conflicting views of what is central for their organization (see e.g. Golden-Biddle & Rao 1997; Glynn 2000).

Researchers have also extended the notion of multiplicity from an internal focus more towards the outside of the organization and argued that organizations may present themselves differently to different audiences and in different organizational contexts (see e.g. Scott & Lane 2000a; Brickson 2005). These studies have explored the organization's relationship with its various stakeholders and proposed that organizational identity projections or identity orientation depend on with whom organizational members are interacting and on what kind of effects are sought.

To summarize, recent studies have challenged the notion of organizational identity as unitary and central for all organizational members and suggested that a multiplicity of organizational identities exist within organizations. What, however, can be argued as problematic with these studies is that most of them assume that organizations are super-persons that *have* multiple identities (Coupland & Brown 2004; Czarniawska-Joerges 2004). This is a problem if we want to take seriously the recent call to approach organizational identity on its own terms rather than as an extension of individual identity (Gioia et al. 2000b). Furthermore, there are only a few studies, which take the notion of power seriously as their focus of study. The need to integrate power explicitly into research on organizational identity was recently called for in the literature (see discussions in Whetten & Godfrey 1998). *In this study, I assume that organizational identities are not something that organizations have, but social constructs constituted in the linguistic processes that are mediated by power.*

Table 3 sums up the contribution and critique of studies on multiple organizational identities from the viewpoint of this study.

Table 3 Contribution and critique of studies on multiple organizational identities

Pieces of literature	Contribution to this study	Gap from the viewpoint of this study
Studies that focus on multiple organizational identities, e.g. Pratt & Rafaeli 1997; Pratt & Foreman 2000; Labianca et al. 2001	Organizational identity is not unitary and central for all organizational members	Organizations are viewed as super-persons having multiple identities The lack of the focus on issues of power

2.2.2 IDENTITY DYNAMICS

In order to challenge the traditional view of organizational identity as enduring (Albert & Whetten 1985), there are a number of studies that have increased our understanding of the fluid nature of organizational identity (e.g. Gioia et al. 2000a; Hatch & Schultz 2002; Corley & Gioia 2004; Corley 2004; Dutton & Dukerich 1991; Glynn 2000; Gioia & Thomas 1996; Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991; Elsbach & Kramer 1996; Dutton et al. 1994; Scott & Lane 2000b; Reger et al. 1994; Whetten & Godfrey 1998). It is suggested that organizational identity is relatively prone to changes, firstly, because of its close relationship with various forms of organizational image (Gioia et al. 2000a; Dutton & Dukerich 1991; Dutton et al. 1994) and secondly, due to discrepancies between different *temporal* identities and images (Corley 2004; Corley & Gioia 2004; Gioia et al. 2000a; Gioia et al. 2002; Reger et al. 1994; Gioia & Thomas 1996).

It has been noted in earlier research that construed external image – the way organizational members believe that outsiders’ see them – provides a reference point for organizational members to reflect their sense of self and to react to possible inconsistencies between identity and image (Gioia et al. 2000a). It is suggested that in the case of a perceived discrepancy, organization members can either try to alter the way they see themselves or attempt to change the way others perceive them (ibid.). In addition, identity may change proactively, without external triggers, when organizational members perceive an inconsistency between different temporal identities or images (Corley 2004). It is proposed that a discrepancy between the existing character of the organization (current identity) and future-oriented beliefs of the desirable character of the organization (ideal identity) causes an identity gap, which can provide motivation to change organizational identity (Reger et al. 1994). Furthermore, the projection of a desired future image, the way organizational members wish to be seen in the eyes of

its constituents, is a means of changing the currently held identity (Gioia & Thomas 1996).

Prior studies suggest many organizational-level benefits of the dynamic nature of identity. Initially, the fluidity of identity is seen as important in organizational adaptation to the environment (Dutton & Dukerich 1991; Gioia et al. 2000a). Because of the ongoing comparison between the construed external image and the sense of self, an organization is adaptive to the demands of its environment, which is continuously changing (Gioia et al. 2000a). For example, in their case study of a regional transportation agency (Port Authority of New York and New Jersey), Dutton & Dukerich (1991) found that organizational members used the construed external image as a mirror, when they interpreted, reacted, and committed to organizational actions in dealing with an emotion evoking issue – homelessness in their facilities. By interpreting the signals in their environment, organizational members became aware of the scope of the issue and the threat it posed to the key elements of identity, both individual and organizational. This recognition of a deteriorating image triggered organizational members to act on the issue through taking initiative in solving the problem both locally and regionally. (ibid.)

Furthermore, fluid identity plays an important role in triggering and facilitating organizational or strategic change (Reger et al. 1994; Gioia & Thomas 1996). This recognition reflects the more general discussion of the role of managers in change initiatives as a sense maker and sense giver for the organization's reality (see e.g. Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991). Top managers can trigger change in identity by creating a gap between the current and desired identity (Reger et al. 1994) and image (Gioia & Thomas 1996) and thus increase the acceptance of change within the organization. For example, in a study of issue interpretation by top management team members in higher education institutions in the United States, Gioia & Thomas (1996) found that a plausible and attractive future image that people could associate with and commit to helped to launch and implement a strategic change in academia.

The context of organizational change may influence the processes and outcomes of identity change (see e.g. Corley and Gioia 2004; Barney 1998). For example, the context of mergers, acquisitions, and diversifications may differ from that of spin-offs, equity carve-outs, and de-mergers with regard to identity change. As an example of a

study conducted in the spin-off context, Corley and Gioia (2004) examined the spin-off of a Fortune 100 company's organizational unit into an independent global technology service provider and found that the process in which insiders became outsiders of the company caused ambiguity about identity as well as change overload and identity tensions for organizational members. Identity ambiguity occurred, when those labels that were used to define the organization before were not applicable to the company anymore or changed their meaning for employees. For instance, there was inconsistency in the official labels used to describe the company, which caused ambiguity among employees. Moreover, as the company was dealing with both business-related changes linked to its turbulent competitive environment and cultural and structural changes related to its breaking away from the parent organization, there was an increasing feeling of change overload among employees. In addition, identity tensions emerged, when there were multiple views about who the company was becoming. Tensions were related to the views about the customer groups and technology paradigms for the new organization, when some employees favored those related to the parent company's core competencies, and others focused on more future-oriented possibilities.

Prior research also suggests that the perceptions of organizational identity change differ along hierarchical boundaries in organizations (Corley 2004). In his study of a global technology service provider after its spin-off from the parent company, Corley found that the employees in the lower level of the hierarchy tended to think about organizational identity in terms of organizational culture and were sensitive to temporal identity inconsistencies, whereas those at the top of the hierarchy saw identity as related to organizational strategy and were more sensitive to the discrepancies between identity and construed external image. Also, when identity change occurred, lower-level employees perceived the change through shifting identity meanings and changing behaviors, whereas for top managers, identity change implementation meant more formal changes through new identity-related labels and images (*ibid.*).

Although previous studies have increased our understanding of organizational identity as a dynamic phenomenon in many ways, they pose a challenge with respect to organizational identity change. What is common for most literature on organizational identity dynamics (e.g. Fiol 2002; Corley & Gioia 2004; Gioia & Thomas 1996; Reger et

al. 1994) is that they deal with *inertia, triggering of change, and replacement*, which are three processes of episodic change emphasizing stability as a natural state of organization and instability as a condition of un-normality (Weick & Quinn 1999). The ontological understanding of the change is, then, based predominantly on stability and order rather than on change itself (Tsoukas & Chia 2002; Van de Ven & Poole 2005; Durand & Calori 2006).

Furthermore, previous literature has mostly adopted a psychological perspective to organizational identity change and tried to increase our understanding of identity transformation in general and the sources of commitment and resistance to change in particular, for example, with the help of self-concept theories (Reger et al. 1994), social cognitive theory (Gustafson & Reger 1995), script development (Johnson et al. 2000), and self-categorization theory (Hogg & Terry 2000). The difficulty of such perspectives with respect to organizational identity change is that identity is, then, defined more or less in terms of individual identity, which changes through crisis periods along individual life courses (see Erickson 1964), and therefore organizational identity is approached as a relatively sticky phenomenon by nature because of its connectedness to individual affections (Scott & Lane 2000b).

Also, there is a lack of attention given to issues of power in the existent dynamic organizational identity models. Identity has been approached as a variable to be manipulated in order to better manage an organization (Gioia 1998), for example, through integration, aggregation, compartmentalization, or deletion (Pratt & Foreman 2000). Identity change has been seen as a process managed by a top management team, but attention has not been paid to the power effects that this process involves. As the management of organizational identity is crucially related to power in an organization, it is all the more important to study these processes from a more critical point of view (e.g. Alvesson & Deetz 1996). This involves the examination of managerial control in identity formation (e.g. Humphreys & Brown 2002) and in regulation of employees' subjectivities (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott 2002; Oakes et al. 1998) as well as various strategies that employees may use in *resisting* managerial control (e.g. Fleming & Spicer 2003).

To summarize, linear unfreeze-change-freeze models with static beginning and end states continue to be dominant conceptualizations of identity change in the literature,

and yet, at the same time, the view of identity as a fluid and continuous process is seen to be an important avenue for future research (Ashforth 1998). If we want to address the challenge raised by Ashforth (1998) and many others, we have to consider alternative perspectives to the dominant conceptualizations of organizational identity change.

A novel conceptualization of change proposes that most change models are based on the ‘sameness principle’ and thus ignore the conceptualization of ‘other’ (Durand & Calori 2006). This means that most of the scholars studying organizational change “have assumed that organizations remain partially unchanged even when certain changes have undertaken” (ibid., 93), because they do not take into account the heterogeneity and multiplicity, the views of the others, in organizations. Drawing from contemporary philosophy, Durand and Calori propose that when sameness and otherness are in a dialectical relationship, “change is likely to be fluid and not to require brusque reorientations” (2006, 101). This view of change also recognizes the power asymmetries in the organization and emphasizes the need for ‘practical wisdom’ of the powerful agents in taking into consideration also ‘the others’ in the change initiatives.

Another promising conceptualization from the viewpoint of this study is to see change not as an unnatural state of an organization, but as constitutive of organizational life (Tsoukas & Chia 2002). This view differs ontologically from the dominant change models in that it regards identity as a constantly ‘becoming’ process, not as a being entity. When change is seen as a natural part of organizational life, “organizational phenomena are not treated as entities, as accomplished events, but as enactments – unfolding processes involving actors making choices interactively, in inescapably local conditions, by drawing on broader rules and resources” (Tsoukas & Chia 2002, 577). This view of change recognizes the importance of language and discourse in the processes of change and regards organization as emerging from discursive practices of organizational members in specific contexts (Taylor & Van Every 2000).

This study follows the footsteps of those researchers, who conceptualize change not as episodic, but as an ongoing process (e.g. Tsoukas & Chia 2002). By adopting Mumby’s (2001) definition of organization, I define organizational identity as *an inter-subjective structure of meaning about “who we are” that is produced, repro-*

duced, and transformed through the ongoing communicative activities of organizational members in a process, which is fundamentally mediated by power. The notion of ‘change’ is thus embedded into the definition of organizational identity, and change is seen as constitutive of organizational identity construction.

The definition presented above also recognizes multiple, contradictory, and conflicting representations about “who we are” and views them competing with each other for priority in organization. This view of organizational identity change is close to a dialectical view of change (Van de Ven & Poole 1995; Durand & Calori 2006), which assumes that stability and change are explained by reference to the balance of power between oppositions.

Table 4 sums up the contribution and critique of the dynamic models of organizational identity from the viewpoint of this study.

Table 4 Contribution and critique of dynamic models of organizational identity

Pieces of literature	Contribution to this study	Gap from the viewpoint of this study
Studies that present a dynamic view of organizational identity, e.g. Fiol (2002), Corley & Gioia (2004), Reger et al. (1994)	Organizational identity is changeable over time	The conceptualization of organizational identity change is based on an episodic view of change The lack of attention given to issues of power in organizational identity change

Next, I will discuss in more detail the concepts of power, control, and ideology, which are central for this study.

2.3 POWER, CONTROL AND IDEOLOGY IN IDENTITY FORMATION

In the last chapter, I argued that even though the issues of multiplicity and change of organizational identity have received notable attention recently, the literature on organizational identity has largely neglected the issues of power in organizations. The focus on beliefs and perceptions about “who we are” has left some important questions unanswered. Do certain beliefs of organization have more weight than others? What kind of and whose interests do different articulations of “who we are” serve? Which members in an organization actually have ‘voice’ in defining “who we are” and “who we want to become”? In this chapter, I will discuss in more detail how power has been conceptualized in the field of organization studies, and what it adds to our understanding of organizational identities and their change.

Two early contributors to our understanding of organizational power are the classical writers Marx and Weber, who were both concerned with how power is exercised under conditions of *division of labor* in an organization (Mumby 2001). Later, contemporary theorists have conceptualized power in terms of organizational *decision-making*, when power is defined as an ability to get others to do something that they would not otherwise do, or in situations of *non-decision-making*, when power is viewed as an ability to secure one’s own interests by controlling issues on the political agenda (ibid.). Lukes’s (1974) three-dimensional view of power extended the discussion of power from decision-making and non-decision-making to a third dimension, which suggests that power can also be exercised *without* any observable *conflict* in an organization by influencing, shaping, and determining the actual wants of others. Notable within this view of power is that those, who are rendered powerless, may not even be aware of their ‘real’ interests (ibid.). This conceptualization of power as something that is embedded in the social structures, or institutionalized, has later been put forward by Giddens (1984), who define power as agents’ ability to mobilize specific rules and resources within a framework of specific structures.

Critical and poststructuralist perspectives offer important insights into the connection of power and identity formation in an organization, since power is not simply framed as a struggle over economic, political, or informational resources, but rather as a struggle over *meaning* (Clegg 1989). These insights are based on *symbolic* rather than

coercive views of power and are therefore similar to Lukes's (1974) third dimension presented above. Relevant for this study are especially the works of those critical theorists, who have introduced the concepts of *ideology* and *hegemony* in the discussion of power, and Michel Foucault (1972), who has increased our understanding of organizations as sites of *discursive* power.

Ideologies can be seen as symbolically created systems of meaning, or as worldviews, through which the identities of social actors' are constructed and situated within relations of power (Mumby 2001). The ideologies can be regarded as the most effective means of domination when they become naturalized, fixed, and regarded as 'common sense', since then their power effects are not overtly recognizable and thus hard to resist. Closely related to the concept of ideology is that of hegemony, which can be regarded as an attempt to integrate the worldviews of others with one's own and win their consent (Fairclough 1992; Mumby 2001). Hegemony is about exercising power through constituting alliances and about integrating rather than dominating subordinate groups (Fairclough 1992). Various hegemonic *struggles* – economic, political, and ideological – take place in society between alliances that try to win support for their views (ibid.).

Empirical studies conducted within the critical lens have mostly concentrated on the domination part of power relations by studying managerial regulation of subjectivities and identities in organizations (e.g. Rosen 1985; Humphreys & Brown 2002; Alvesson & Wilmott 2002; Oakes et al. 1998). However, there has recently been increasing interest in organizational *resistance*, which may take various behavioral (e.g. Ezzamel et al. 2001) and rhetorical (e.g. Symon 2005) forms. Scott (1990) distinguishes between 'public transcripts' and 'hidden transcripts', the latter referring to the low-profile forms of resistance, which occur behind public contexts. According to Scott (1990), the creative resistance of subordinate groups takes to a large extent place in discourse and behavior that occur 'offstage', or beyond the direct surveillance of powerful groups in an organization. Earlier research has suggested that employees may resist the managerial interventions targeted at their own or their organizations' identities, for example, through nostalgia (Gabriel 1993; Brown & Humphreys 2006), irony (Fleming & Sewell 2002), cynicism (Fleming & Spicer 2003), scepticism

(Fleming & Sewell 2002), alternative interpretative repertoires (Knights & McCabe 2000), and silence (Scott 1990)².

Foucault (1972) provides a rather different conceptualization of power compared with those presented so far. For him, power is not related to attempts by specific groups to pursue their interests by exercising power. Instead, he sees social actors as disciplined by social practices and discourses, which actually construct identities and subjectivities for them. In their everyday discursive practices, social actors produce and reproduce certain 'truths', which make them know themselves as subjects in particular ways. For example, organizational culture has achieved a status of 'truth' in the context of mergers and acquisitions, since the success of merger integration is often measured in terms of how successfully the cultures of merging organizations are integrated (Riad 2005). An important contribution of Foucault's studies for the conceptualizations of power presented above is that those groups that are traditionally regarded as 'powerful' are also disciplined through the discourses that they themselves produce, and that the acts of resistance of the 'powerless' reinforce and reproduce, not undermine, the truth effects of discourses.

Clegg (1989) presents a framework of 'circuits of power', which integrates the different views discussed so far. Like Giddens (1984), he emphasizes the interplay of both agency and structure in the operation of power in organizations. He also takes into explicit account the formation of identities and subjectivities in these processes. According to Clegg (1989), there are three levels, which are connected to each other in the operation of power: the level of agency, social integration, and system integration. 1) The level of agency refers to episodic power relations of interacting social agents, 2) the level of social integration focuses on rules of practice that fix relations of meaning and membership constraining and enabling the social agents and being reproduced and transformed by them, and 3) the level of system integration understands the struc-

² Silence can also serve as a symbolic form of control and dominance in organizations. For example, Ward & Winstanley (2003) illustrated that homosexual workers were marginalized at the workplace by excluding those topics from the everyday conversations that concerned homosexuality, homosexual workmates' leisure time activities, or family life. Through silence homosexual workers were, thus, constructed with a negative or inferior identity vis-à-vis their heterosexual colleagues.

tures of domination and discipline, which are constituted by the rules of practice and empower and disempower the interaction of social agents (Clegg 1989, 214).

In the scarce literature of organizational identity in which the issue of power has been addressed explicitly, power has usually been conceptualized in a coercive way. Then, power has been seen as possessed by an individual or a group and manifested in a conflict over the views of “who we are” or “who we should be” as an organization. For example, in her study of conflict over organizational identity within a symphony orchestra, Glynn (2000) argued that identity conflicts arise from the differences between professional and occupational groups within an organization that often have contradictory interests and therefore claim differing attributes concerning the enduring, distinctive, and central characteristics of their organization. Another example is a study of conflict over organizational identity in a nonprofit organization (Golden-Biddle & Rao 1997), which illustrates that hybrid organizational identity may give potential for intra-role conflicts within a board of directors that threaten the maintenance of organizational identity.

In this study, I argue toward a more critical and discursive conceptualization of power in organizational identity formation. Then, power is not seen as possessed by certain groups imposing their views of “who we are” on others, but operating in the organizational identity construction process itself (see e.g. Coupland & Brown 2004; Humphreys & Brown 2002). Organizational identities are, then, understood as achievements of interacting agents, or ‘rhetors’, (Coupland & Brown 2004), who are engaged in ongoing identity-centered debates and ‘author’ identities in conversations. This view of power is, then, more pervasive than coercive views of power and recognizes that even the same actors can construct contradictory identities in their talk by drawing on discourses that have differing ideological underpinnings.

To summarize, I define power in the organizational identity construction process as *the production and reproduction of, resistance to, or transformation of relatively fixed structures of meaning of “who we are” that are based on different ideological underpinnings*. This definition is adapted from Mumby’s (2001, 587) definition of power and is well suited to the discursive perspective of organizational identity that is taken in this study.

Table 5 sums up the contribution and critique of selected studies focusing on issues of power and politics in organizational identity construction.

Table 5 Selected studies focusing on issues of power in organizational identity formation

Pieces of literature	Contribution to this study	Gap from the viewpoint of this study
Studies that take into account the issues of power in organizational identity formation, e.g. Glynn (2000); Golden-Biddle & Rao (1997).	Organizational identity formation is seen as a political process	Power is seen in coercive terms

2.4 DISCURSIVE PERSPECTIVE ON ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY CHANGE

In the previous chapters, I argued that present studies of multiple organizational identities view organizations as super-persons having multiple identities, which poses problems if we want to increase our understanding of organizational identity as a phenomenon distinct from individual identity. Also, I argued that the models of organizational identity change are based on a view of stability and order as a ‘natural’ state of organizations, thus giving an overly simplistic view of dynamic organizational processes. In addition, I proposed that a lack of attention is given to issues of power in present organizational identity literature.

How does a discursive view of organizational identity help us to tackle the above-mentioned problems? In order to understand the nature of the problems elaborated in this study and the potentiality of discursive view to fill in those gaps, ontological issues much be raised. Traditionally, most of the researchers have worked within an *objectivist* lens, assuming that organizational identity is an observable and relatively solid social fact (Whetten & Godfrey 1998). The interest has been on static entities – such as the belief structures of organizational members – associated with measurable psychological or organizational outcomes. When viewed from a discursive perspective, “the apparent solidity of social phenomena --- derives from the stabilizing *effects* of generic discursive processes rather than from the presence of independently existing concrete entities” (Chia 2000, 514, emphasis in original). The apparent stability of organizational identity is, then, discursively constructed and not an inherent feature of an objective and real phenomenon. Furthermore, the focus is rather on processes of identity construction than on the achieved constructs *per se*.

The view of organizational identity as a discursive construct thus differs ontologically from traditional, objectivist studies and brings new insights into the discussion of its change, multiplicity, and links to power. Firstly, if organizational identity is a product of language and social interaction, it can be seen as constantly changing depending on the audience, context, and purpose of the interaction (Burr 1995). Then, organizational identity can be approached as an ongoing process (Gergen 1991) rather than as a being construct. Secondly, because identities are constructed in language use, there are potentially many identities at play in the interaction. The special interest from the

viewpoint of this study lies in *how* different constructions of “who we are” are created, how they are used, and for what purposes (Antaki & Whitticombe 1998). Thirdly, the political nature of discursive processes is taken seriously within the discursive view. Identity construction presents a power struggle in organizations (Lukes 1974), because the articulations of “who we are” always involve the displacement and undermining of alternative identity constructions.

In the following sections, I will first discuss in more detail the discursive perspective on organizational phenomena in general and on organizational identity in particular. Then, I will introduce two key concepts important for this study, *discursive strategies* and *discursive resources*, the interplay of which constitutes the process of identity construction. In the end of the section, based on the interplay between discursive strategies and resources, I will present a framework for analyzing organizational identity change.

2.4.1 DISCOURSE, ORGANIZATION AND IDENTITY

The growing awareness of the role of language in shaping social phenomena can be related to ‘the linguistic turn’ in organization studies, which emerged in the late 1980s (Alvesson & Kärreman 2000a). Instead of viewing language as simply mirroring or reflecting social reality, researchers became to acknowledge the constructive aspects of language in the creation of social reality (*ibid.*). This interest is manifested, for example, in the recent appearance of special issues in various organizational and management journals (see, for example, *Human Relations*, 53 (9) 2000, a special issue on organizational discourse, *Academy of Management Review* 29 (4) 2004, a special issue on language and organization, and *Organizational Studies* 25 (1) 2004, a special issue on organizational discourse).

In the traditional, representational view, language is treated as a gateway into inner worlds of individuals such as feelings, thoughts, values, and experiences (Alvesson & Kärreman 2000a), whereas within a discursive perspective language actively constructs those things (Potter & Wetherell 1987). The discursive perspective brings the creative and functional capacities of language to the forefront and focuses on what language use actually accomplishes (Alvesson & Kärreman 2000a). The constructive view of language has its roots in speech act theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1979), which

focuses on language as a form of *action* and thus helps to examine the *function* of different discursive acts in different contexts.

There are various definitions of discourse in the literature. For example, Alvesson and Kärreman (2000a) view discourse as a way of reasoning or constituting the social world. For Foucault (1972), discourse is a set of language and practices that provide knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment. In this study, I follow Watson's (1995, 816-817) view of discourse and define it as:

“a connected set of statements, concepts, terms and expressions which constitutes a way of talking or writing about a particular issue, thus framing the way people understand and respond with respect to that issue”.

Discourse is manifested in different types of *texts* in organizations. Texts refer to formal and informal, spoken and written interaction (Potter & Wetherell 1987) as well as to semiotic symbols such as logos, cartoons, dress codes, and other cultural artifacts in an organization (Grant et al. 1998). What is important to note is that texts are not meaningful individually, but only through their interconnection with other texts and through the different systems of texts (discourses) on which they draw (Phillips & Hardy 2002). Furthermore, the meaning of texts depends on the nature and practice of their production, dissemination, and consumption (ibid.). For example, strategic management books produced by researchers and management practices disseminated by consultants are discursive manifestations that shape our understanding of strategy and strategic management while we read – or consume – them (Knights & Morgan 1991).

For some discourse theorists, the view of discourse as simply *occurring* in organizations is insufficient, since “organizations exist only in so far as their members create them through discourse” (Mumby & Clair 1997, 181). For these theorists, “discourse is the principal means by which organization members create a coherent social reality that frames their sense of who they are” (ibid.) Thus, this view of discourse brings us closer to the issue of organizational identity construction, which is of central interest in this study.

Discursive aspects of organization, for example narrative, conversations, rituals, rhetoric, metaphor, and stories (Grant et al. 1998), have in recent years been the focus of research *per se* in many studies. Researchers have also made use of discursive perspective in exploring various organizational phenomena, such as strategy and strategic

management (Vaara et al. 2004; Hendry 2000; Barry & Elmes 1997; Knights & Morgan 1991), organizational and strategic change (Heracleous & Barrett 2001; Dunford & Jones 2000; Barrett et al. 1995), mergers and acquisitions (Vaara 2002; Riad 2005), organizational decision-making (Mauws 2000), marketing management (Hackley 2003), human resource management (Zanoni & Janssens 2004; Francis & Sinclair 2003), technology evolution (Maguire 2004), New Public Management (Mueller et al. 2004), partnership (Tomlinson 2005), and corporate governance (Ng & De Cock 2002).

Discursive perspective is particularly fruitful for the study of identities and subjectivities in an organization. Unlike the traditional psychological view of identity, which assumes that identity is a set of relatively fixed characteristics, the discursive view suggests that identities are socially constructed in language use (Potter & Wetherell 1987; Shotter & Gergen 1989). When individuals produce discursive statements, they simultaneously produce their own subjectivities or identities (Phillips & Hardy 1997).

For critical discourse theorists (e.g. van Dijk 1997; Fairclough 1992; 1995; 2001; Wodak 2001; 2004), identity construction is seen to be linked to power relations in organizations and thus assumed to be a political process. Within a critical view, discursive acts are always political acts. Discursive activity either contributes to maintaining the existing power relations or intends to challenge them.

The significance of the discursive perspective for the study of identities and subjectivities in organizations has been noticed especially by those researchers, who have empirically explored the construction of *individual* and *social* identities in an organization (see e.g. Kärreman & Alvesson 2001; Alvesson & Willmott 2002; Doolin 2002; Anderson-Cough et al. 2000; Welcomer et al. 2000; Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003; Hardy & Phillips 1999 and Phillips & Hardy 1997). However, empirical studies taking a discursive perspective on studying *organizational* identity are still relatively scarce (see Brown & Humphreys 2006; Chreim 2005; Coupland & Brown 2004; Llewellyn 2004 and Humphreys & Brown 2002 as exceptions). A number of studies have touched on the issue, but not taken up organizational identity explicitly (see e.g. Vaara 2002; Oakes et al. 1998).

Next, I will examine two important concepts, discursive strategies and discursive resources, from the point of view of this study. In order to do that, we need the concepts of agency and structure, which are discussed in more detail below.

2.4.2 INTERPLAY OF AGENCY AND STRUCTURE IN IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

There are different approaches to the study of discourse in organizations; they differ in their views of how much agency individuals have in producing and changing social reality. These differing views also keep the agency-structure debate lively within the domain of organizational discourse theory (see, for example, a debate on discourse in *Organization* 7 (3) 2000).

The Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis, which stresses the constitutive effects of discourse, views subjects as positioned in discourse, thus not having ‘a free will’ to produce discursive statements, or particular identities and subjectivities for themselves (Burr 1995). The opponents of this view argue that since individuals have not been portrayed as having credible *agency* (Heracleous & Hendry 2000), one cannot understand and explain the generative properties that make social practices and forms what they are (see e.g. Reed 1998; 2000). In other words, what is missing in the Foucauldian studies on organizational discourse is the notion of individuals as discourse *users*. According to O’Connor (2000, 175), “a continuing problem in the analysis of organizational discourse is that of the linkage of data (text, story) to action (purpose, outcomes)”. The understanding of the individual as a discourse user brings our attention to the *proximate*, interactional context in which discourse is used – which O’Connor (2000, 175) defines as “the commonsense notion of audience and circumstances”– and helps us to understand the implications of language use.

Opponents to Foucauldian studies in the agency-structure debate are those of theorists, who emphasize the constructive effects of discourse (see e.g. Potter & Wetherell 1987). Within this view, subjectivities and identities are not predetermined as in the Foucauldian view of discourse; individuals are instead seen as active creators and manipulators of social reality and their own subjectivities (Burr 1995). This approach is criticized for being unable to examine the processes of *social* change because of their strong micro-level focus (see e.g. Fairclough 1992). Several scholars have highlighted the importance of the organizational and societal context in studying discourse (see

e.g. Heracleous & Marshak 2004; Hardy 2001), without which discursive studies would lack the relevance for organizational and social theory. Hence, the role of wider social context within which the discursive activity takes place is considered important (Hardy & Phillips 1999).

Recently, there has been a call for studies, which do not privilege *either* structure *or* agency, but instead seek to reconcile both views (Tsoukas 2000), even within the same study (Hardy 2001). One of the means to fill the gap between agency and structure within discourse studies have been attempts to combine discourse analysis more closely with structuration theory (see e.g. Heracleous & Hendry 2000; Heracleous & Barrett 2001; Heracleous & Marshak 2004; McPhee 2004; Heracleous 2006).

An empirical example of linking discourse analysis with structuration theory is the study of Heracleous and Barrett (2001), who explored how arguments constituted social structure in the context of information technology implementation. They conducted a longitudinal case study in the London Insurance Market and distinguished patterns in both communicative actions and deep structures that guided individuals' interpretations and actions. They identified shifts in both these levels over time and related the shifts to contextual factors, like the discourses of other stakeholder groups, and change outcomes such as the ultimate failure of the change program.

Another means for bridging the gap between agency and structure has been a call to link discourse more closely with institutional theory (see Phillips et al. 2004). This view suggests that with the help of discourse we can better understand the processes of institutionalization and increase our understanding of texts as mediators between action and discursive structures.

Studies linking discourse with structuration theory and institutional theory are important from the viewpoint of this study, since – in addition to the accommodation of both structure and agency within the same study – they also stress the importance of researching discourse longitudinally, following discourse backward and forward in time. However, what is problematical from the point of view of this study, firstly, with the latter of these studies is that they regard text and action as separated from each other, that is, texts as mediators between action and discursive structures. What is considered important from the point of view of this study is notion of discursive

activity as action *per se*. Studies taking a structurational view of discourse see text and action as inseparable, but they tend to focus merely on individuals' interpretive schemes as mediators between discursive action and social structure.

A further attempt to link agency and structure in discourse studies is Fairclough's (1992; 1995; 2001) social theory of discourse, which seems to solve the problems raised with regard to the existing structuration and institutional approaches to discourse. It is based on the notion of a dialectical relationship between discursive action and social structure, and therefore it helps "to avoid the pitfalls of overemphasizing on the one hand the social determination of discourse and on the other hand the construction of social in discourse" (Fairclough 1992, 65). It recognizes the generative and transformative properties of text – thus seeing texts as inseparable from action – and sees discursive practices such as production, distribution, and consumption of texts as mediators between action and structure – thus emphasizing the social rather than cognitive side of language use. Fairclough (1992) does not regard language use as a purely individual activity, but rather as a form of social practice. This means that "it is very rare that a text is the work of any one person" (Wodak 2004, 199), but that there are always traces of other texts in individual's language use. Fairclough's social theory of discourse is also critical by nature, since it focuses on the way power relations are sustained, reproduced, and resisted through the discursive activity in the social and political context.

Even though Fairclough's (1992) social theory of discourse is not an organizational theory as such, it has proven to be a suitable framework to study various organizational and management phenomena. For example, Vaara et al. (2004) used Fairclough's framework in analyzing the social construction of strategy in the case of airline alliances. Vaara & Tienari (2002) utilized Fairclough's critical discourse analysis in examining the discursive construction of mergers and acquisitions in the media. Francis & Sinclair (2003) used Faircloughian perspective for a processual analysis of HRM-based change. Munir & Phillips (2005) used Fairclough's critical discourse analysis in studying the role of entrepreneurship in institutional change in the adoption of new technologies, and Rodriguez & Pozzebon (2005) utilized Fairclough's insights in combination with structuration theory to explore the structuration process of family medicine group identity in Montreal.

How do the concepts of discursive strategies and resources in identity construction relate, then, to the discussion of agency and structure in discourse studies? Firstly, discursive strategies can be seen as the agency component in organizational identity construction, since they represent acts of communicating that produce and shape organizational identities, that is, understandings of “who we are”. Secondly, discursive resources can be regarded as the structural component in identity construction process, since discursive structures enable and constrain the discursive activity of social actors by providing rules and resources for shaping and managing organizational identities.

The studies that have examined organizational identity from a discursive perspective have increased our understanding of the discursive strategies through which social actors are capable of shaping understandings of “who we are”. For example, in her study of senior managers’ discourse in the Bank of Montreal, Chreim (2005) noted that identity continuity and identity change were constructed strategically by the means of discursive strategies and rhetorical tactics in senior managers’ talk.

Furthermore, earlier research has shown us that discursive activity is enabled and constrained by social structures, which provide resources for social actors to produce certain understandings of “who we are”. For example, Llewellyn (2004) examined a public-sector reform in a local governmental authority in UK and found that actors negotiate different social categories such as ‘bureaucracy’ and ‘business’ through which the reform ‘happens’ in an organization. Brown and Humphreys (2006) studied the construction of organizational identity in a UK-based College of Further Education after a merger and were concerned about how the notions of workplace were used as discursive resources in identity construction.

Even though these studies have increased our understanding of the process of organizational identity construction, none of these studies, however, have explicitly examined the interplay of discursive strategies *and* resources in the construction of organizational identities within the same study. Furthermore, none of these studies has examined organizational identity change in a longitudinal research setting from the point of view of an acquired company.

In this study, instead of focusing *either* on discursive strategies *or* discursive resources, I emphasize the need to study the interplay between them in the identity construction process. I assume that there is a limited number of discursive resources that social actors are capable of drawing upon, and thus their will is not completely free to produce any articulations of “who we are”, but, at the same time, they are capable of shaping identity structures by using different communicative strategies and tactics. Thus, I place this study in between the agency and structure continuum of discourse and assume that instead of extreme determinism and voluntarism, the identity construction process represent interplay between agency and structure. I also stress the importance of researching the identity construction process longitudinally, following discursive activity backward and forward in time, since articulations of “who we are” may vary depending on the temporal context of language use (Figure 2).

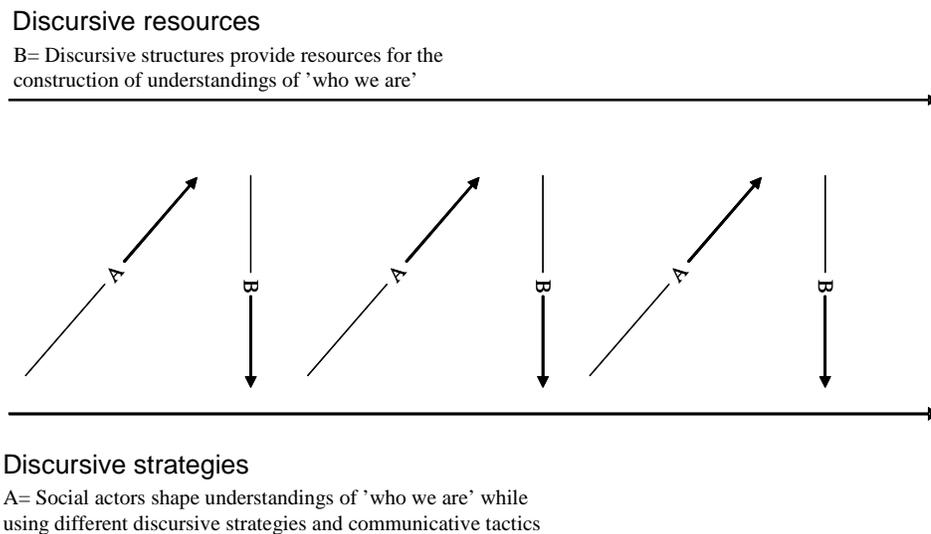


Figure 2 Interplay of discursive strategies and resources in identity construction

Next, based on the ideas of the interplay between agency and structure in the identity construction process, I will elaborate in more detail these two key concepts relevant for this study: *discursive strategies*, representing the ability of social actors to use language strategically, and *discursive resources*, the constraining and enabling effects of structure for social actors' language use. The former of these views is discussed first.

2.4.2.1 Social actors as active and creative discourse users

An important notion regarding this study is that social actors are not merely constrained by different discursive structures, nor implement them mechanically, but are active and creative discourse users. This viewpoint assumes that social actors draw upon different discourses and combine them strategically in order to achieve certain purposes in their talk (Burr 1995). The interest lies, then, in what people do with language, what purposes their language use is about to achieve, and what kind of discursive strategies they employ to achieve different effects in their talk (ibid.). Which discourses are drawn upon and combined depends on the context of the discursive action, for example, the audience to whom the discourse is directed (Carter & Jackson 2004). Hence, social actors can switch between discourses depending on their purposes and use different discursive strategies in order to legitimize and justify their decisions and actions in various contexts.

This view of social actors as strategic discourse users is close to the realm of ‘new rhetoric’ (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1971; Carter & Jackson 2004), which highlights the role of audience in argumentation (see e.g. Carter & Jackson 2004; Sillince 2002; Sillince 2005). For example, one could imagine that managers may use different kind of argumentation depending on whether they address their speech to employees, to the media, or to financiers.

An important element related to the view of the individual as a strategic discourse user is the relevance of the *temporal* context for discourse use. According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998, 967), “agentic processes can only be understood if they are linked intrinsically to the changing temporal orientations of situated actors”. Social actors are oriented toward different temporal structures – the past, the present, and the future – at any given moment and can switch between different temporal orientations in different situations and thus change their relationship to structure (Emirbayer & Mische 1998).

Social actors’ temporal orientation is regarded as a key issue in identity work (e.g. Gioia et al. 2000a). We make sense of ‘self’ in retrospect (Gioia et al. 2000a; 2002; Weick 1995), but also projectively through the creative imagination of future possibilities (Carlsen 2006). Time orientation affects how we construct our life histories;

what appears as success at one moment of time may seem like failure at another. The past, the present, and the future may also be used strategically by social actors (Carroll 2002). Individuals can, for example, use the images of the future in order to reshape images of the past, to reconstruct the past in more appreciative terms, and to reframe the past in inspirational ways (ibid.).

When social actors draw upon different discourses, they simultaneously create anew the social structure in their discursive practice either by contributing to its maintenance or transformation (Fairclough 1992). Actors intervene in the processes of social construction in which *concepts*, *objects*, and *subject positions* are produced (Hardy et al. 2000; Hardy & Phillips 1999; Phillips & Hardy 1997). Concepts include “the categories, relationships and theories through which we understand the world and relate to one another” (Phillips & Hardy (1997, 167). Individuals may want to use discourse either to sustain or transform a particular concept in order to influence people’s understandings of the world and how social relations are accomplished (Hardy & Phillips 1999). Objects, on the other hand, only make sense in terms of the concepts that are applied to them, and therefore the discursive activity of individuals often revolves around using particular concepts to produce different objects, such as articulations of “who we are” (ibid.).

Furthermore, when actors produce discursive statements, they simultaneously contribute to how their own subjectivities or identities are produced in talk (Phillips & Hardy 1997). As there are only a limited number of positions within discourses from which an individual can speak and act (Foucault 1972), and because these different subject positions do not warrant an equal voice (Potter & Wetherell 1987), the individual’s capability to use discourse strategically depends on how he or she is positioned in the particular discourse. For example, the strategic management discourse has reified the role of managers in organizational decision making and thus placed them in a more powerful position vis-à-vis other organizational actors within this particular discourse (Knights & Morgan 1991).

Hardy et al. (2000) offer a useful framework to study how discourse can be mobilized as a strategic resource to bring about desired effects in an organization (see Figure 3). In their model, the *circuit of activity* refers to an individual’s attempts to use discourse strategically by making discursive statements in which he or she employs symbols,

narratives, metaphors, and rhetoric, which associate particular concepts with certain material referents in order to (re)create desired objects. The *circuit of performativity* occurs, when the evoked concepts have meaning for their audience. An individual has to warrant voice in order to be heard, and the symbols, narratives, metaphors, and rhetoric must have receptivity in the audience. When individual's discursive activity and performativity intersect, they form the *circuit of connectivity*. Then, new discursive statements produce desired effects, since concepts are successfully attached to material referents, and they are able to (re)create specific objects. New subject positions and practices emerge, and the accumulation of discursive statements further influence discursive activities when prevailing discourses are reinforced, contested, modified, displaced, or transformed. (ibid.)

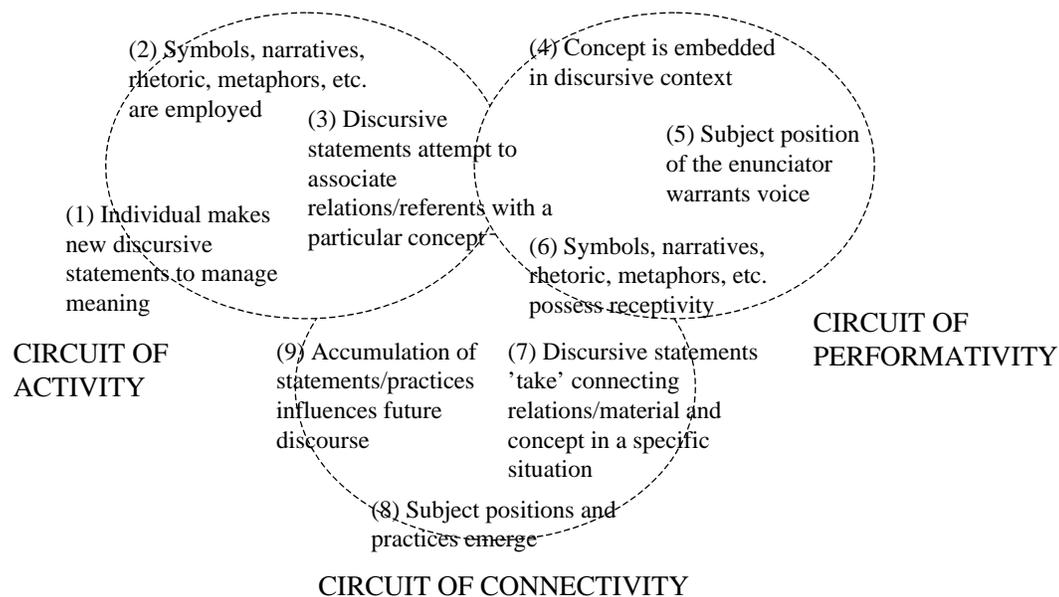


Figure 3 A model of discourse as a strategic resource (Hardy et al. 2000)

When discursive activity is regarded as tied to power relations, organizations can be seen as “sites of struggle where different groups compete to shape the social reality of organizations in ways that serve their own interests” (Mumby & Clair 1997, 182). By engaging in discursive activity, individuals strive to achieve political effects (Hardy et al. 2000). Different discourses may be combined creatively in an individual's language use in order to create more powerful accounts (Fairclough 2001). For example, in Vaara's (2002) study of success and failure accounts of post-merger integration, managers made use of several different discursive frameworks, when they searched

for legitimacy and justification for their own actions and claimed irresponsibility and illegitimacy for others' actions.

What kind of discursive strategies and tactics are there, then, that individuals can use in order to shape social reality and contribute to the (re)production and change of discursive structures? The study of rhetoric provides some answers, since it focuses on the art of argumentation, that is, on the linguistic tools and techniques that people use in persuading others and making convincing accounts. What is, however, problematic from the viewpoint of this study is that the traditional view of rhetoric as persuasion can easily be understood as psychological in the sense that its 'effectiveness' depends on whether the speaker manages to bring about a change in the *mental state* of the audience; whether the speaker manages to persuade the audience.

Within a more discursive approach to rhetoric (e.g. Potter 1996), the 'effectiveness' of rhetoric can be assessed as a feature of the linguistic account as such and not on its mental effect on individuals. Also, this view does not presuppose the intentionality of the speaker in discursive activity. The language use of individuals may not always be deliberate, conscious, and strategic; individuals may also use language unconsciously without imposing their worldviews in a self-serving manner (Burr 1995). Potter's (1996) view of rhetoric is, thus, not related to cognitive psychology; instead, his focus is on the accounts *per se* as a form of action (Austin 1962), on what kind of effects the account itself can be seen to achieve. By using these insights, we can, then, approach different linguistic strategies as "more or less conscious and automatised" (Wodak et al. 1999, 32) and examine 'within the texts' what kind of purposes and interests their use seems to serve.

As an example of different 'functions' of rhetoric, Potter (1996, 107) distinguishes between offensive and defensive rhetoric claiming that offensive rhetoric refers to the techniques that work to *undermine* alternative descriptions, while defensive rhetoric refers to the techniques that work to *resist* or *protect* the undermining. According to Potter, language use involves both procedures through which constructions are made solid and factual in order to protect them and procedures through which descriptions are undermined (ibid.). Defensive rhetoric can also be called reifying discourse, since it functions "to turn something abstract into a material thing" (ibid.). Offensive rhetoric, on the other hand, is a form of ironizing discourse, since it functions to turn reified

descriptions “back into talk which is motivated, distorted or erroneous in some way” (ibid.). An individual account may consist of both types of talk and thus, at the same time, construct one version of reality as a fact and undermine alternative views (ibid.).

As another example of different ‘functions’ of language use, Wodak et al. (1999) identified five different strategies that are used in the discursive construction of national identities: *constructive* strategies, strategies of *perpetuation*, strategies of *justification*, strategies of *transformation*, and *destructive* strategies. Constructive strategies “attempt to construct and to establish a certain national identity by promoting unification, identification and solidarity, as well as differentiation” (Wodak et al. 1999, 33). Strategies of perpetuation “attempt to maintain and to reproduce a threatened national identity” (ibid.). Strategies of justification work “to restore, maintain and defend a common ‘national self-perception’ which has been ‘tainted’ in one way or another” (ibid.). Strategies of transformation “aim to transform a relatively well-established national identity and its components into another identity”, and destructive strategies “aim at dismantling or disparaging parts of an existing national identity construct” (ibid.).

Language can be used purposively to control and oppress and to resist and oppose (Linstead 2001), but power can also be seen as manifested in more subtle and hidden ways in language use, for example, in the form of ideology (ibid.). Then, individuals do not impose and reproduce certain values in a consciously self-serving manner, but instead, ideology, in a form of implicit belief systems and values, is woven in the social and linguistic practice of individuals in an ‘automatised’ way (Hackley 2003).

Hackley’s (2003) study of marketing management texts is an empirical example of ideological control accomplished through language in a hidden way. He found that academics and practitioners make use of strategies of *universalization*, *instrumentalization*, and *normalization* in mobilizing ideological influence in the field of marketing management. By means of universalization, marketing is presented as an activity that is practiced by all (in an organization) even if many people do not recognize their activity as marketing. Also, marketing texts impose an instrumental value system arguing that exchange value takes precedence over all others, and happiness is first and foremost defined in terms of material welfare. In addition, the potential conflicts of interest and power balances between multinational corporations and individual con-

sumers are not acknowledged, but instead, everything that is done in the name of marketing is beyond question and thus ‘normalized’. (ibid.) The ability of marketing management texts to exercise ideological control lies in a notion that the rhetoric of marketing management has become a taken for granted mode of discourse, which usually passes reflexive comments and critique concerning the representation which it constructs about the practice of marketing management (ibid.). The power is, thus, exercised in a way of which the speaker neither the audience is necessarily not aware of.

To summarize, the notion of social actors as strategic discourse users is useful in this study, since it helps to examine different discursive strategies the employment of which contributes to the achievement of different purposes and power effects in language use. Taking into account the objective of this study, the specific interest is on those strategies the employment of which contributes to the construction of organizational identity and its change. I define discursive strategy in this study as *a more or less conscious linguistic technique, which constitutes the achievement of particular objectives in the social construction of organizational identity.*

Earlier I argued that there is a dialectical relationship between agency and structure in organizational identity construction. In this section, I have discussed in detail the agency component of this dualism. In order to better understand the social structure component of identity construction, I will next discuss in more detail the constraining and enabling effects of discursive structure for social actors’ language use.

2.4.2.2 Constraining and enabling effects of social structure

Even though in the previous section, social actors were described as strategic discourse users striving to achieve particular objectives in their talk, they are still restricted in their choice of discursive conventions. The language of social actors is both constrained and enabled by social structure in the form of the economic, political, cultural, and ideological resources available for them in the particular socio-historical context in which discourse is used (Fairclough 1992). The discursive activity of social actors is also constrained and enabled by the specific nature of the social practice of which they are part. The nature of social practice determines what elements of available resources are drawn upon and how they are drawn upon (ibid). For example, the

practice of strategy may differ from the practice of health care, and thus they involve a different kind of ‘language games’ (Mauws & Phillips 1995) that count in the particular situation.

According to Fairclough (1992), the available resources are manifested as internalized social structures, norms, and conventions for the production, distribution, and consumption of texts. For example, *ideologies* can be seen as one type of internalized social structure enabling and constraining individuals’ language use (ibid.). Ideology can be seen manifested in individuals’ use of discursive strategies, even though their use may be taken-for-granted and commonsensical for individuals. Individuals can, then, impose certain values and worldviews without a deliberate intention and by so doing contribute to the reproduction of those belief structures. A set of discourse conventions, for example, the discourse of strategic management, embodies certain ideologies, which have become naturalized, and which consist of particular beliefs and subject roles and relations (ibid.). In other words, we are ‘obliged’ to draw on certain ideologies because the conventions of particular discursive and social practice constrain us to talk and write in particular ways. In the same time, these discourse conventions create our own subjectivities, for example, as a manager, a strategist, a doctor, or a teacher.

Previous research has identified various ideologies that are at play in organizational discursive activity. Linstead (2001), drawing on Salaman (1979), identified five ideologies – *structuralism*, *psychologism*, *consensualism*, *welfareism*, and *legalism* – that are at work in sustaining and legitimating managerial control in organizations. O’Connor (1995) studied the rhetoric of participation in organizational change accounts and demonstrated a constant play between ideologies of *inclusion* and *exclusion* during the change process. Oakes et al. (1998) explored the ideological effects of the language and practice of business planning in the provincial museums and cultural heritage sites in Alberta, Canada. They found that language, as a means of symbolic power, affected how workers learnt to understand themselves and their work in a way that served the protection and accumulation of *economic* instead of *cultural* values. Zbaracki (1998) studied total quality management (TQM) programs in five different private and public, for-profit and non-for-profit organizations and found that managers consume *rhetoric of success* about TQM, which provides an overly optimistic

view of TQM and its benefits for the organizations. In their study of the evolvement of American managerial discourse since the late 1800s, Barley & Kunda (1992) argued that managerial discourse has shifted between *normative* and *rational* rhetoric along with prevalent social, economic, and cultural values in society.

In the context of mergers and acquisitions, Tienari et al. (2003) identified *globalism* and *nationalism* as ‘ideologically-driven’ discursive resources that were drawn upon by social actors in their attempts to legitimize and de-legitimize the cross-border acquisition initiative. Vaara’s (2002) study on the discursive construction of success and failure of post-merger integration revealed four different discursive structures – *rationalistic*, *cultural*, *role-bound*, and *individualistic* – which placed the integration process within different institutional frameworks.

Social categories are another type of internalized structures that constrain and enable individuals’ language use. For example, in his study of a public-sector reform in a local governmental authority in the UK, Llewellyn (2004) found that organizational members negotiated a range of social categories, such as ‘bureaucracy’, ‘business’ or ‘council’, when they attempted to construct a modern identity for their organization. Llewellyn suggested that organizational identity change can be viewed as a process in which organization members seek to distance themselves from a particular social category, such as ‘bureaucracy’, and promote another category, for example, ‘business’ in order to become ‘a new type’.

To summarize, different internalized belief structures can be mobilized in individuals’ language use in a form of various ideologies and social categories that are drawn upon in particular contexts and situations. In this study, I call these internalized belief structures *discourse types*; they can be defined as *specific ways of using language, which embodies certain ideologies and social categories*. Different discourse types can, then, be viewed as resources for individuals in their discursive activity, both enabling and constraining their language use in particular contexts and situations.

2.4.3 IDENTITY CHANGE AS A DISCURSIVE STRUGGLE

Earlier I argued that power can appear ‘within’ discourse, woven within social and discursive structures, and that is why power may be exercised in subtle and uncon-

scious ways by social actors (Fairclough 2001). For example, ideologies are powerful ‘control devices’, when they become commonsensical or ‘naturalized’ in our language use. When power is regarded as appearing ‘within’ discourse, we can approach organizations as sites of *discursive struggle*, where different discourse types compete to shape the social reality of organizations in ways that serve particular ideological interests (Wodak 2004; Fairclough 2001). Given that there is a multitude of discourse types mobilized in organizations in discursive activity of individuals, there is a constant struggle between ideologically diverse discourse types competing for dominance (Fairclough 2001). In other words, there are different ideologies ‘at stake’ in these struggles of which we are more or less conscious. We can find traces of differing discourses and ideologies in different types of texts in organizations within which discourse is manifested (Wodak 2004).

When organizational members with distinctive histories and value preferences construct contrasting versions of their organization’s identity, these differing versions of “who we are” can be seen as moves in the discursive struggle in organizations. A certain manifestation of “who we are” as an organization may become the dominant identity discourse in organization under which other versions of “who we are” are subordinated. The ‘order’ of these discourses may change over time in the discursive activity of organizational members (Fairclough 2001).

Based on these insights, I approach organizational identity change as *an ongoing discursive struggle between ideologically diverse discourse types, which are mobilized and drawn upon by individuals in their use of various discursive strategies in different contexts*. What are at stake in these struggles are the understandings of “who we are” as an organization, which are based on different ideological assumptions. The produced articulations of “who we are”, or identity discourses, are struggling for dominance in various organizational texts, in which traces of this struggle can be found. The further discursive activity of social actors is related to the texts produced earlier and is thus linked to what kind of discourse types are drawn upon, and which discursive strategies are employed in further argumentation. Since organizational identity is approached as a product of language and social interaction, it can be seen as constantly changing depending on the audience, context, and purpose of the interaction (Burr 1995).

The framework for analyzing organizational identity change as a discursive struggle is presented in Figure 4.

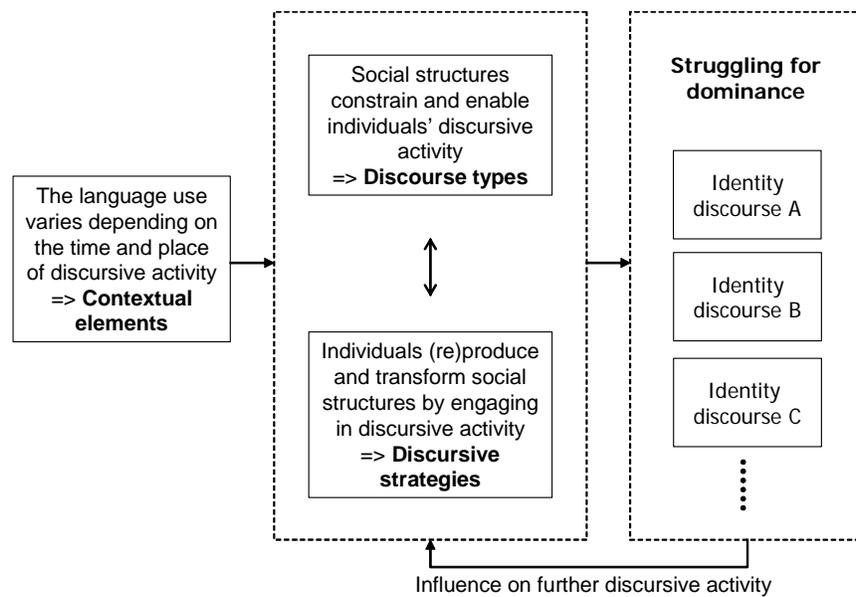


Figure 4 A framework for analyzing organizational identity change as a discursive struggle

The framework presented in Figure 4 lays the foundation for research questions set for this study. On the one hand, discursive structures enable and constrain social actors' discursive activity, and from this perspective we can explore different *discourse types* that are drawn upon as resources in the construction of organizational identities. The mobilization of a certain discourse type has particular effects on how organizational identity is produced. On the other hand, social actors create and shape discursive structures in their language use, and therefore we can study various *discursive strategies* that are used in the construction of organizational identities.

Furthermore, language use does not happen in a vacuum, but in a specific time and place, and therefore context has an impact on how social reality is constructed. This study examines organizational identity construction as a contextual phenomenon through exploring various texts in the time and place of their production. From this perspective, we can examine different *contextual elements* that are related to how and why social actors use certain discursive strategies and resources in organizational identity construction and not others.

Thus, the research question and the related sub-questions for this study are the following:

1. How is organizational identity constructed in the discursive processes of social actors?

1.1 What kind of *discourse types* do social actors draw upon, and what kind of organizational identity constructions does the mobilization of these discourse types come to produce?

1.2. What kind of *discursive strategies* are employed in the construction of organizational identities?

1.3 What kind of *contextual elements* are related to the construction of organizational identities?

2.5 SUMMARY

Based on the review of the existing literature on organizational identity, I argued that studies on multiple organizational identities view organizations as super-persons having multiple identities, which poses problems if we want to increase our understanding of organizational identity as a distinctive phenomenon from individual identity. Also, I argued that the models of organizational identity change are based on a view of stability and order as a ‘natural’ state of organizations thus giving an overly simplistic view of dynamic organizational processes. In addition, I proposed that insufficient attention is given to issues of power in current organizational identity literature.

I suggested a discursive perspective on organizational identity as an alternative approach to conceptualize its change and multiplicity, since the constructive force of language ensures a fragmented, shifting, and temporary identity (Burr 1995). The apparent continuity, coherence, and centrality in identity are then discursive constructions rather than something external of our linguistic understanding. Also, as identities are produced in discourse, there might be several identities at play depending on the context and discourses, which are drawn upon.

For the purposes of this study, I defined organizational identity change as *an ongoing discursive struggle between ideologically diverse discourse types, which are mobilized and drawn upon by individuals in their use of various discursive strategies in different contexts*. The understandings of “who we are” as an organization are at stake in these struggles. In the end of the literature review, I outlined a framework for analyzing organizational identity change as a discursive struggle.

How can one, then, approach organizational identities as discursive constructs? What kind of a methodological framework could grasp the unfolding, fragmented, and complex nature of organizational reality? Next, the methodological choices of this study are discussed in more detail.

3 RESEARCH PROCESS

In this chapter, the methodological choices that have guided the research process are discussed, and the steps of data production and analysis are presented.

3.1 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST STUDY

Social constructionism has provided the ontological and epistemological choices of this study. Unlike the realist research tradition, it takes a critical stance towards taken-for-granted ways of understanding social reality and is against the idea that social phenomena, such as organizational identity, have a straightforward existence independent of our discursively-shaped understandings (Chia 2000; Burr 1995). Social reality cannot, then, be *revealed* by observation, as the realist research tradition has taught us, since people construct versions of social reality in their social interaction, and the ways in which people understand the world are historically and culturally specific (Burr 1995).

Since social reality is a product of interaction, the social constructionism is also critical of the subjectivist view according to which individuals possess a nature that can be discovered ‘through’ their language use (Burr 1995; Potter & Wetherell 1987). We cannot reveal truths about human nature such as individual opinions, attitudes, personalities, and traits, since expressions are time- and culture-bound, not once-and-for-all descriptions of human nature (ibid.).

In order to be able to communicate and interact in daily encounters, social phenomena are *objectified* in discursive processes through, for example, labeling, naming, and classifying (Chia 2000; Berger & Luckmann 1966). This objectification of social reality allows us to have certain, relatively fixed structures of meaning that affect our possibilities for (discursive) action. However, these structures are the product of social construction and do not exist beyond discursively-shaped understanding (Tsoukas 2000; Reed 1998; 2000).

3.1.1 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AS A RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study follows the general guidelines of ‘qualitative’ research (Silverman 1997; Taylor & Trujillo 2001), since the basic interest is in *understanding* the social world. The research methodology and theoretical basis of this study is critical discourse

analysis. Unlike most of the qualitative research methods, discourse analytic methodology provides a means to empirically explore social construction, or the discursive processes that produce organizations (Phillips & Hardy 2002). It differs ontologically and epistemologically from other qualitative methodologies, which are mostly concerned with describing the social reality as it exists (ibid.).

Within the field of discourse analysis, this study is situated on the critical side (see Figure 5), since the interest is in increasing the awareness of the political nature of organizational identity construction and in reflecting critically upon the taken-for-granted realities that are constructed in language use (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000). The guiding principle in a critical language study is an emancipatory interest in knowledge (ibid.), since it helps people “to become conscious of opaque causes and consequences of their own discourse” (Fairclough 2001, 34).

Instead of focusing merely on a particular piece of text at a micro-level of analysis or on the broad social context of discursive activity at a macro-level of analysis (Alvesson & Kärreman 2000b), this study involves the investigation of both macro discourses operating “within” the text and micro-level linguistic techniques that are used in the construction of social reality. This study can therefore be positioned in the middle of the continuum of text and context (see Figure 5), since it is interested both in the proximate and distal context of language use.

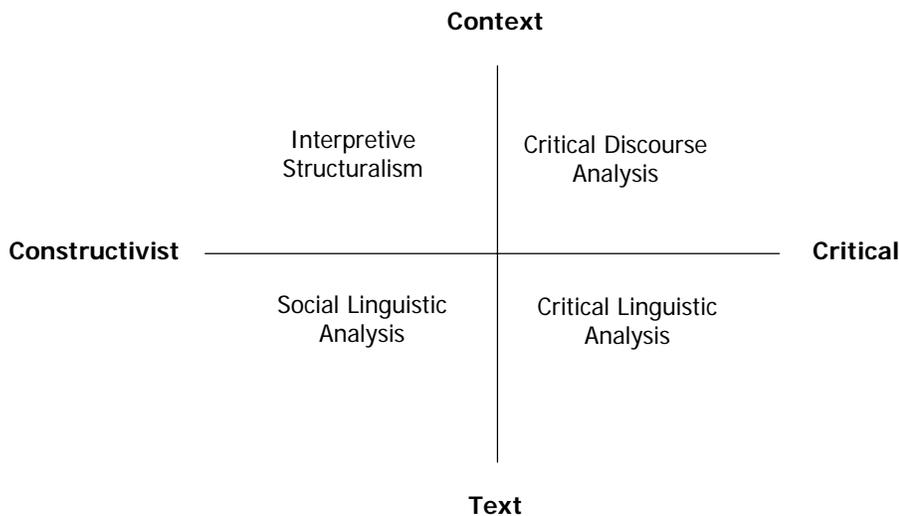


Figure 5 Different approaches to discourse analysis (Hardy & Phillips 2002)

Although it has been argued that combining both the level of text and the context within the same study is problematical because they treat discourse differently (Hardy 2001; Alvesson & Kärreman 2000b), the contextualization of discursive activity by linking text and context has been considered more relevant for advancing theory than privileging one or another (Hardy 2001; O'Connor 2000; Hardy & Phillips 1999). Moreover, in addition to taking into account both the micro and macro levels of analysis, Fairclough (1992) emphasizes also the importance of situational context of discursive activity, that is, where, when, by whom, and to whom the texts are produced, distributed, and consumed. This study follows Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional view of discourse, where any discursive event is simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice (see Figure 6). Consideration of all these three levels – text, discourse, and context – is argued to be relevant for a discourse analytical study (Phillips & Hardy 2002; Fairclough 1992; 1995).

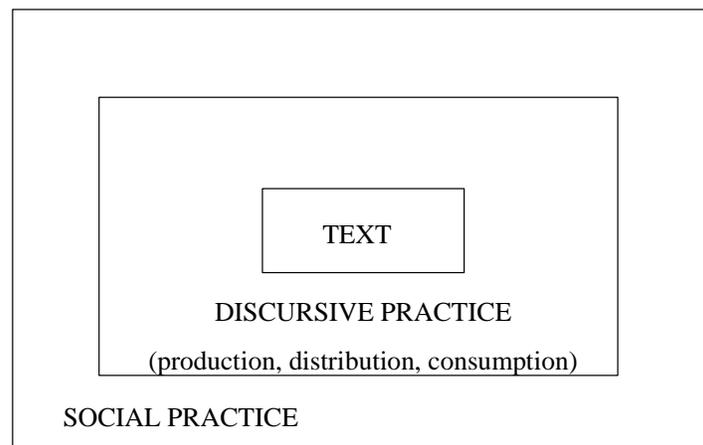


Figure 6 Three-dimensional conception of discourse (Fairclough 1992)

The study follows the ideas taken further by those critical discourse scholars, who assume a dialectical process between social structures and discursive activity (e.g. Wodak 2001; 2004; Fairclough 1992; 1995; 2001, see Figure 7). On the one hand, discursive activity is enabled and constrained by relatively fixed social structures, and on the other hand, discursive activity contributes to the constitution of those dimensions of social structure, which shape and constrain it (Wodak 2001; Fairclough 1992). Unlike the Foucauldian critical discourse analysis, which treats the functioning of discourse as largely autonomous and independent of human agency, this view takes into

account the role and significance of human agency in the construction, reproduction, and transformation of discursive formations (Reed 2000). Social actors have *agency*, since they are able to create and shape social reality, but their discursive activity is socially determined because of the fixity of objectified social structures.

Recently, there has been a call for discursive studies that avoid the traditional dichotomy between agency and structure, and that seek to study their relationship recursively (see e.g. Hardy 2001). This view is similar to those sociological theories that seek to avoid either extreme objectivism or extreme subjectivism and regard agency and structure as mutually interdependent (see e.g. Giddens 1984; Bourdieu 1991; Sztompka 1995). This study aims to answer the call by taking into account both individuals' ability to use discourse strategically and social structures that enable and constrain the discursive activity.

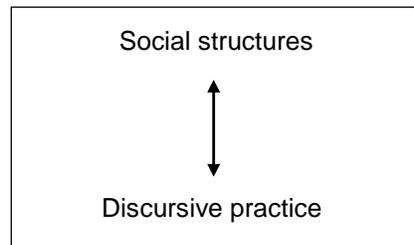


Figure 7 Dialectical relationship between social structure and discursive practice

3.1.2 RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY

Traditionally, researchers have not exercised much reflexivity in reporting their studies (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2000). Especially within an objectivist research tradition, the role of the researcher and researcher's influence on data and results are not discussed, or they are treated in negative terms, as researcher bias. However, data and facts of every study are always results and constructions of *interpretation* (ibid.).

In constructivist epistemology, a researcher's own interpretation is considered the engine of research (Burr 1995; Alvesson & Sköldberg 2000). How the researcher 'reads' the data depends on his or her interpretive resources (Fairclough 2001), which both enable and limit the interpretation. As Fairclough (2001, 22) argues, "what one 'sees' in a text, what one regards as worth describing, and what one chooses to emphasize in a description, are all dependent on how one interprets a text." The research process is

inherently interpretive, political, and rhetorical by nature (Alvesson & Skoldberg 2000). It is therefore important for researchers to think carefully about their own research practices, choices, and role in the research process and express these reflections to the readers who, in the end, assess how credible³ or convincing the reported study is, and why the researcher has arrived at the reported outcomes (Hardy 2001; Phillips & Hardy 2002).

Phillips & Hardy (2002, 83-86) summarize different dimensions of research that deserve *reflection* in a discourse analytical study. First, since language constructs reality rather than reveals it, the researcher should acknowledge that his or her particular study is also a social construction and not an objective description of the investigated research phenomena. I have tried to avoid the objectification of the results of this study, for example, by writing the research report in singular mode in order not to hide my own role and influence in the research process.

Second, the researcher should take into account that texts she or he studies are not produced in a vacuum, but are always related to other texts and broader discourses. I have grounded the research in historical processes and a societal context in order to understand how certain constructions of organizational identity have come to be the way they are, and how history and societal context delimits and enables identity construction.

Third, I have allowed different voices to pervade the text, particularly those of employees, who are traditionally silenced in the study of organizational identity. Also, the research site and context of this study, the company before and after an acquisition, is beset by struggle, and thus it provides an opportunity to uncover not only multiple, but possibly contradictory voices constructing reality.

Fourth, even though the focus should be on a multiplicity of voices, a discourse analytical study cannot include *all* possible voices, and those that are included are not expressed on equal terms. This requires reflection especially on the researcher's own influence on which voices are heard more than others. In my study, I may have privi-

³ Credibility of this study will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5.3.

leged voices other than managerial ones in the change process because of the critical research lens that I have chosen.

Fifth, as discourse analysis engenders multiple meanings rather than fortifies representations, the reported study is also open for readings other than my own. In order to help the reader to make their own readings and interpretations of the texts, I have tried to include as many direct quotations from the empirical data as possible and to make transparent my own line of reasoning in interpreting the texts.

Sixth, the aim of discourse analytical studies is to inform and complement other theories rather than to present a totalizing theory. The aim of this study is, thus, not to 'normalize' the discourse analytical approach to the studying of organizational identity, but to stimulate debate among and between different theoretical communities both in the field of organizational identity and discourse analytical studies.

Seventh, since discourse analysis lacks institutionalized techniques and rituals of conducting research, authors often have to 'customize' their analysis for the purposes of their studies. This requires a careful explanation of the work that has been done during the research process. I have tried to open the research process for the readers of this study by carefully reporting the choices I have made and steps that I have taken in designing the study, building up the theoretical framework, and analyzing the data.

Eight, researchers should be aware of the political nature of the research process and their own writing in reporting studies that passes for knowledge. This last point of reflexivity links together all the above mentioned concerns and brings to the fore the interpretive, political, and rhetorical nature of any study that claims to advance scientific knowledge (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2000). In this study, this last point is taken into account by reflecting the influence and authority that I have as a researcher in using language to construct knowledge in this research process.

In summary, by taking into account the above-mentioned dimensions during the research process, I have sought to increase the reflexivity of this study, that is, to interpret my own interpretations, to look at my own perspectives from other perspectives, and to turn a self-critical eye onto my own authority as interpreter and author (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2000, vii).

3.2 DATA PRODUCTION

Instead of talking about data collection, I use the term data production to emphasize the social constructionist epistemology of this study (see Alvesson 2003; Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000). Unlike treating data as objects waiting to be collected by a researcher, I approach data in this study as outcomes of the processes of social construction, produced in a certain time and space. In the role of a researcher, I have also taken part in the data production, for example, by participating in the knowledge creation processes during the interviews and by making choices about what kind of data to use, and whom and how to interview.

In this study, data are approached as spoken or written *texts* produced, distributed, and consumed both by the ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ of the organization (see Fairclough 2001). When data are regarded as text, the aim is not to discover facts or individual opinions and attitudes, but what kind of social reality the text as such constructs (Thatchenkery 2001). Within the social constructionist approach to texts, the researcher does not try to reveal those meanings that the author intended to embed in his or her text, but the text has ‘a life of its own’, open for multiple interpretations and reinterpretations (*ibid.*).

The texts used in this study were produced during a 5-year time-span before, during, and after the acquisition of AffCo⁴, which is the case company of this study. The AffCo case exhibits an interesting combination of elements from the point of view of organizational identity change: a long organizational history, transformation from a telephone cooperative into a listed telecommunications company, a change in company name and visual identity, incorporation of AffCo’s service and network operator businesses, retirement of a respected leader, and a takeover by an internationally operating telecommunications company, MCorp⁵. The study reported here investigates the period from AffCo’s public listing to the post-acquisition integration period five

⁴ A pseudonym

⁵ A pseudonym

years later⁶ around the year 2000. The data production for this study ended just before the signing of AffCo's merger plan with MCorp. The data are partly real time and partly retrospective (see Figure 8), which is typical for a longitudinal research aiming to understand how organization evolves over time (Langley 1999).

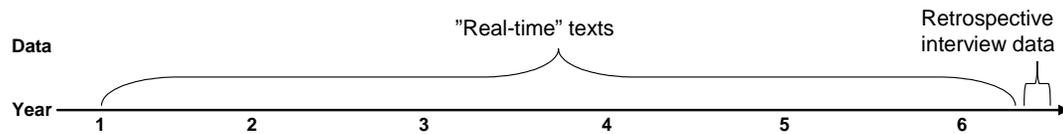


Figure 8 Nature of data

The texts used in this study consist of the following:

- *Media articles*: the data consist of 107 articles published during the period from January year 1 to May year 5 in a daily national business newspaper and 182 articles published in a daily local newspaper targeted at readers living in the region, where AffCo operates.
- *Internal communication material*: internal managerial communication texts, which can be regarded as targeted first and foremost at AffCo's employees, consist of 35 editorials and other managerial articles published in AffCo's employee magazine and 18 intranet newsletters from the period of April year 1 to March year 6.
- *Intranet discussions*: mostly anonymous, written discussions in AffCo's intranet discussion forum are examined during the period from February year 4 to September year 5 consisting of 554 individual addresses.
- *One-on-one interviews*: 25 interviews were conducted with AffCo's managers, middle managers, and operative employees in year 3 by my colleagues in the

⁶ The original dates of data collection and the change process are not presented in order to preserve the anonymity of the companies. The chronological order of events and data collection with actual time lapses is valid, however.

STRADA research program. In March year 6, I conducted one interview with the new managing director of AffCo’s service operator unit.

- *Group interviews*: there were three group interviews conducted with AffCo’s managers, middle managers, and operative employees in April year 6.

In addition to these texts, which are used as primary data in this study, I have also made field notes based on my observation and reflection during meetings, away-days, and informal discussions with organizational members while conducting the development project in the company. This secondary data are produced during a one and a half year time period from year 4 to year 6. I was not directly involved in the change efforts related to the acquisition, but had an opportunity to discuss acquisition-related topics with ‘natives’ during the development project (Geertz 1973). The field notes and my own experiences in the company have provided me with interpretive resources that I have used in analyzing the primary textual data.

Table 6 summarizes the various types of data used in this study. Next, the production of texts used in this study is discussed in more detail.

Table 6 Presentation of the data

Nature of data	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Media articles published in a daily national business newspaper and a daily regional newspaper	x	X	x	x	x	
Internal communication material	x	X	x	x	x	x
Intranet discussions				x	x	
25 one-on-one interviews with managers, middle managers, and operative employees			x			
An interview with the new managing director of AffCo’s service operator unit						x
Three group interviews: management team, middle managers, and operative employees (15 individuals altogether)						x
Researcher’s own field notes				x	x	x

3.2.1 MEDIA TEXTS

It is argued that media texts are an important arena, where organizational changes such as mergers and acquisitions are discussed, (re)constructed, and legitimized (e.g. Kuronen et al. 2005; Vaara et al. 2006). There were several reasons to include media articles in this study. First, they provided an opportunity to examine how AffCo's and MCorp's managers came to construct various identities for AffCo in the public arena when they justified the decisions and actions related to AffCo, for example, its public listing and takeover. Second, journalists can also be regarded as important agents in creating and shaping AffCo identity. When AffCo-related news were reported and discussed in the media, journalists were contributing to the construction of AffCo identity in their own writings and through their editorial decisions. Third, AffCo's employees often referred to media articles when they tried to make sense of the change process and issues related to the acquisition. News and articles concerning their company were important sources of information for AffCo's employees, but they also played a role of a 'mirror' in reflecting the questions of "who we are" and "how we are seen by the outsiders" (see Dutton & Dukerich 1991). Fourth, in addition to being an important arena for identity construction, media articles were also a source of information about industrial and institutional context where AffCo's identity construction was taking place. Thus, media texts provided me with 'interpretative resources' for analyzing the data and linking the texts to the larger societal context.

The media texts used in this study consist of 107 articles published in a daily national business newspaper and 182 articles published in a daily local newspaper between January year 1 and May year 5. I conducted searches in the Internet article retrieval archive of the respective newspapers with the former and current names of AffCo. I selected those articles in the analysis in which AffCo was the main target of the news. Most of the articles were concerned with the events and actions that were related to AffCo's public listing and MCorp's acquisition of AffCo.

Media texts can be regarded as 'naturally occurring data', since they are produced without the researcher's intervention (Potter 1997; Potter & Wetherell 1987; Silverman 2001). In discourse analytic research, this type of data is seen as valuable, since it provides an opportunity to study how people construct the social world in au-

thentic situations without being provoked by the researcher's questions (Silverman 2001).

3.2.2 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION MATERIAL

The internal communication material included in this study consists of 35 editorials and other managerial articles published in AffCo's employee magazine and 18 intranet newsletters from the period of April year 1 to March year 6. The main audience for these texts is AffCo's employees. These texts were selected for the analysis because they present managerial voice in the organizational identity construction.

Managers actively produce value-based articulations to employees, for example, in their messages in employee newsletters and in the form of mission statements, in attempts to manage employees' identification with and understandings of the organization (Larson & Pepper 2003). When managers justify organizational undertakings, project future goals and aspirations, and speak about organizational events, they come to contribute to a lengthy narrative in which organizational identity is continually reconstructed (Czarniawska 1997).

Like media texts, internal communication material can also be regarded as naturally occurring data, produced without the researcher's intervention (Potter & Wetherell 1987; Silverman 2001). As such, I was able to peek into authentic managerial communication processes and observe the language used by managers when addressing AffCo's employees and the attributes employed by them in reference to the organization.

3.2.3 INTRANET DISCUSSIONS

The intranet discussion data included in this study consist of 554 individual addresses produced during the period from February year 4 to September year 5. I gained access to all the forum material and selected those discussions, which I regarded as relevant from the viewpoint of this study. These topics concerned employees' reactions to managerial change efforts such as cutting costs, improving customer service, growing through acquisitions, public listing, name change, structural changes, and MCorps' acquisition of AffCo. Discussions concerning, for example, staff's free time activities were cut out of the data.

Access to the intranet discussion forum is open to all personnel. Discussions are mostly anonymous and therefore the number of members participating in the discussion is not known exactly⁷. However, the forum is one of the arenas of social interaction in the organization, and all organization members have access to the forum and are able to participate in the conversation and to follow others' discussion. The content of the discussion is not edited before publishing.

Similarly to internal communication material and media texts, this type of data is naturally occurring talk in an organization (Potter & Wetherell 1987; Silverman 2001). The discussion forum presents a polytonal arena of organizational identity construction, since it also allows employees' voices to pervade the text; this is normally missing from a more traditionally conducted research (Phillips & Hardy 2002). Boje (1995) emphasizes the importance of researching everyday communication processes that open up a way to multiple interpretations of different organizational members and goes beyond the managerial and public relations stories. Boyce (1995) also argues that the everyday conversations of organizational members as well as the formal communication of managers are ingredients in the construction of shared meaning.

In addition to above mentioned advantages of using naturally occurring conversations as data, there are also great challenges. First, humor and irony used by the employees may not be easily understood. Second, conversation is dynamic and controlled by the participants themselves, not by the researcher. It may, therefore, be challenging to come to grips with the eclectic data. Unlike the interview situation, it is impossible to ask about issues that remain unclear.

To summarize, the data presented so far can be considered multiple types of naturally occurring texts consisting of media texts, internal communication material, and intranet discussions. Table 7 sums up the quantitative details of these 'written' texts used

⁷ The communication manager of the case company estimated that around 20 individuals actively used the forum, that is, wrote their opinions there. The number of passive users could be much higher, however.

in this study. Next, I will present the interview material, or ‘spoken texts’, used in this study in more detail.

Table 7 Quantitative details of written texts used in this study

Source / primary audience	Type of data	Number of articles / documents / addresses			Total
		Pre-acquisition	Acquisition	Post-acquisition	
External / external	Newspaper articles	231	41	17	289
Internal / internal	Employee newspaper editorials and articles	21	7	7	35
	Intranet newsletters	1	13	4	18
	Intranet discussions	68	363	123	554
Total		321	424	151	896

3.2.4 ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

Interviews and interview data are approached in this study from a ‘localist’ perspective (Alvesson 2003), which means that interviews are not seen as “vehicles for tapping people for knowledge of their social realities and/or their subjective world” (Alvesson 2003, 14), but rather situations, in which people produce “situated accounts, drawing upon cultural resources in order to produce morally adequate accounts” (Alvesson 2003, 17). In line with the constructivist epistemology of this study, interviews are, thus, not given “an ontological status different from other events and situations” (Alvesson 2003, 16). Interviews are approached as events occurring in a certain time and space, in which realities and subjectivities are constructed in the interaction between the researcher and the interviewee(s). In this study, interviews are not seen as instruments for acquiring information about social world, here organization identity, but as situations, in which organizational identities are constructed, challenged, and sustained.

I approach organizational identity in this study as a phenomenon that cannot be understood by treating interviewees as informants about what identities their organization has, or by asking what those identities lead them to think and do (see Antaki and

Widdicombe 1998). Rather, organizational identity comes into being in the discursive processes when interviewees talk about various organizational events and actions, clients, products, competitors, their daily work, and relationship with different constituents (see Kärreman & Alvesson 2001).

My colleagues in the STRADA research program conducted 25 one-on-one interviews with senior managers, middle managers, and operative employees in the case company's marketing unit prior to the acquisition. The interviewees were chosen randomly, but it was ensured that different departments, work groups, and tasks were represented in equal terms. The interviews dealt with the implementation of a relevant strategic theme, customer service process improvement, which was chosen by the representatives of the company and considered critical for the organization's success and operations at the time of the study. Semi-structured questions lead the interviewee to address this topic during the interview. The interview outlines for senior managers, middle managers, and operative employees can be found in Appendix 1. The interviews lasted from 60 to 120 minutes and were tape recorded and transcribed after the interview.

These interviews conducted by my colleagues were part of a larger research project on strategy implementation in Finnish organizations. Even though the interviews dealt with strategy implementation, I found the interview material to be useful data for the purposes of this study. Especially the questions such as "why customer service improvement is important for the company in your opinion?" and "how do you see the future of this company?" produced interesting accounts for this study. When interviewees reflected the importance of customer service improvement and unvisioned the future of their company, they also produced various identities for the company. Furthermore, since the interest in this study is to approach texts as such as important arenas where organizational identity construction is taking place, the notion that I did not conduct the interviews myself did not seem to hinder the use of the texts. I am not interested in whether the identities that they produced are 'valid' constructs representing the 'truth' of their organization's identity, nor in the individual attitudes that make them produce the identities in the way they do.

In addition to these 25 interviews, which were conducted by my colleagues, I conducted a one-on-one interview myself with the new managing director of AffCo's

service operator company after the acquisition. The interview was guided by a set of open-ended questions, which allowed the conversation to unfold dynamically and as naturally as possible, since I wanted the interviewer to be an active participant in the interview rather than ‘a speaking questionnaire’ (Potter & Wetherell 1987). The aim was to construct a narrative from the company’s past to the future with the help of guiding questions. I asked the managing director to name events of the past few years that he considered organizationally critical for AffCo’s current existence. The events that he named were discussed in more detail. I asked him to tell me more about the event, for example, “when did the event happen?”, “what happened next?”, and “what kind of ambiance was in the organization at the time?”. The guiding questions for the interview can be found in Appendix 2. The interview lasted 60 minutes, and it was tape recorded and transcribed.

3.2.5 GROUP INTERVIEWS

Group interviews seemed to be a suitable method for the purposes of this study, which focuses on the construction of collective identity. I conducted three group interviews during the post-acquisition period in AffCo’s service operator unit (the former marketing unit). Senior managers, middle managers, and operative employees were interviewed in separate groups. Altogether, 15 individuals were interviewed in these three group sessions. My intention was to choose individuals, who were also interviewed prior to the acquisition by my colleagues. However, due to changes in personnel, only a few of the same people could be interviewed, and others, who were chosen, came from the respective departments and work groups performing similar tasks. All three group interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim, and they lasted from 1.5 to 2 hours.

The group of managers represented the management team of the service operator company apart from the managing director. A reason for interviewing the new managing director separately from the management team was to secure an equal conversation between the interviewees and to avoid any status-related problems. Also, the managing director had not been part of the management team before the acquisition, and I therefore considered that his interpretations of the events (especially prior to the acquisition) would be construed from a point of view that differed from that of the other senior managers’ interpretations. All the other members of the management

team were the same as before the acquisition, although one of the members had been moved to the headquarters due to centralizing procedures, and, therefore, was not a member of AffCo's management team at the time of the interview. Because of his history in the management team prior to the acquisition, he was interviewed with the others.

Since there has been a call for interview techniques in discursive studies that allow diversity rather than those, which eliminate it (Potter & Wetherell 1987), I considered group interviews to result in informal conversational exchanges between participants better than individual interviews, in which the dynamism is mostly controlled by the researcher. Interviewees were involved in the process of reflecting their interpretations of the organizational key events with others. Interviewees took part in a joint storytelling process and constructed a narrative of the organization's change journey with key events, actions, and characters.

Interview questions⁸ guided the structure of the interviews loosely, allowing the conversation to unfold dynamically and as naturally as possible between the interviewees. First, I asked organization members to name events of the past few years that they considered critical for their company's current existence. The events considered most critical by the interviewees were discussed in more detail. In order to get people to share their recollections of the events and their evolution in time, I asked them to tell me more about the event: "from where did the event come into being?", "when did it happen?", and "what happened next?". Then, in order to learn more about the events they constructed, I asked them event-specific questions such as "what was the ambience in the company during the personnel negotiations?", "how were you informed about the acquisition?", and "can you give me an example of how your own job changed after the acquisition?".

In order to sum up the discussion in the group interviews and to allow everybody to equally contribute to the narrative, each individual of the group was asked to write down the critical events in the organization's past, with each event on a separate card.

⁸ See Appendix 3.

After individual work, the whole group together arranged the cards on a flapchart in a chronological order and, at the same time, explained to the researcher in their own words what they had written on the cards and why. The horizontal axis of the flapchart indicated the time range and the vertical axis the ‘criticality’ of the events. The groups were then asked to give titles to the different phases in the company ‘autobiography’.

Table 8 sums up the quantitative details of the interview data, or ‘spoken texts’, used in this study.

Table 8 Quantitative details of the interview data

Interviewee’s hierarchical position	Number of interviewees		Total
	Pre-acquisition	Post-acquisition	
Managing director (old)	1	-	1
Managing director (new)	-	1	1
Senior managers	2	5	7
Middle managers	6	6	12
Operative employees	16	4	20
Total	25	16	41

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Since there are no instruction available on how to conduct data analysis in discourse analytical study, “researchers need to develop an approach that makes sense in light of their particular study and establish a set of arguments to justify the particular approach they adopt” (Phillips & Hardy 2002, 74). In this chapter, the aim is to carefully describe and give explanations for the steps that have been taken in analyzing the data in order to answer the research question set for this study.

The traditional analysis methods within qualitative research tradition (see e.g. Miles & Huberman 1994), such as content analysis, do not seem to be very suitable for discourse analysis, since they “aim at rapid consolidation of categories” from a large amount of data (Phillips & Hardy 2002, 74). Since the analysis method should enable the researcher “to identify (some of) the multiple meanings assigned to texts” (ibid.), the most labor-saving forms of qualitative data analysis seem, therefore, to be counterproductive for the purposes of discourse analysis. However, the analysis process in this study has many similarities to qualitative data analysis, which can be described as a continuous, iterative enterprise (Miles & Huberman 1994) driven by the researcher’s interpretation (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000).

The analysis process for this study can be characterized as a challenge to find some order in processual and ‘messy’ data (Langley 1999), without losing the richness of the lively and diverse discussions. Because the interest is in reflecting upon the taken-for-granted realities that are constructed in various texts (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000), the ideas of critical discourse analysis have been central in conducting the analysis (e.g. Wodak 2004; Fairclough 1992). Furthermore, since the texts used in this study are unfolding in time and produced in multiple arenas, I have also found the strategies for analyzing process data useful for the purposes of this study (Langley 1999).

Fairclough’s (1992; 2001) theoretical-methodological framework of critical discourse analysis has provided a basic structure for analyzing the data. According to Fairclough (1992), discourse consists of three mutually overlapping and interlinked levels that should be considered in data analysis: the level of text, the level of discursive practice, and the level of social practice (see Figure 6 in page 50). The level of *text* attends to

very detailed analysis of textual material, in which one looks, for example, at the wording and structure of texts and different metaphors used. As such, this level of analysis is closely related to the domain of linguistics. The level of *discursive practice* is related to the analysis of the nature of the processes of text production and interpretation, for example, which types of discourse are drawn upon, and how they are combined in language use. This level of analysis is related to the interpretive or micro-sociological tradition of seeing social practice as something, which people actively produce and make sense of on the basis of shared commonsense procedures. The level of *social practice* refers to issues of concern of social analysis such as the institutional and organizational circumstances of the discursive event, and how they shape the nature of the discursive practice and the constitutive and constructive effects of discourse. This level of analysis is related to the macro-sociological tradition of analysing social practice in relation to social structures.

These three levels of discourse refer to different analytical phases in conducting discourse analysis: description, interpretation, and explanation (Fairclough 2001; see figure Figure 9). The linguistic analysis of texts involves *description* of formal properties of text such as vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures. The analysis of the level of discursive practice involves *interpretation* of texts. This means that the researcher seeks to understand how the texts under study are produced by using the texts as resources in his or her own interpretation. The analysis of the level of social practice requires *explanation*. This involves being sensitive to the context of text production and interpretation, which means, on the one hand, looking at how social conditions affect the language use and, on the other hand, what are the social effects of the language use.

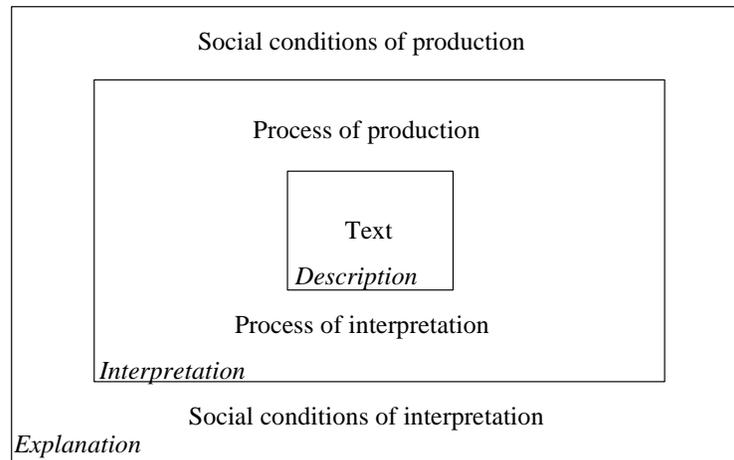


Figure 9 Description, interpretation and explanation as analytical processes forming critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2001)

The data analysis of this study consisted of several stages of going back and forth between data and theory. An inductive, data-driven, orientation has been used in describing and interpreting what the data are about. A deductive, more theory-driven, orientation has been initiated in generating explanations for the findings and in linking them with earlier literature.

Critical discourse analysis worked as a ‘metatheory’ in this study promoting “creativity at the interface between the empirical material and its interpretation” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000, 253). First, it encouraged “asking questions about what lies behind the initial, self-evident interpretations that the researcher sometimes automatically produces”, and second, it provided “alternative points of departure for thinking about what the empirical work produces” (ibid.).

Next, I will describe in more detail the analysis procedures in answering the research questions set for this study. The analysis stages are presented in a linear and ‘neat’ way in order to give an understandable story of my sense-making during the analysis process. This type of presentation oversimplifies the process of data analysis, since it forces it into a static mould, but is also necessary for the transparency of the analysis. The presentation of the analysis represents “a recognized irony” in process research (Van de Ven & Poole 2005, 1390) because “we must truly learn to think in different terms than our largely substance-based educations have prepared us for”, but at the same time, “visualize and reify the processes of description, interpretation and expla-

nation which are ephemeral and in flux” (ibid.). Given this challenge, I try to think ‘in process terms’, yet carefully describe the analysis procedures.

3.3.1 FIRST STEPS IN THE ANALYSIS PROCESS

The analysis process for this study started while I was conducting the strategy implementation research and development project for the company together with my colleagues in the STRADA research program. The texts that I was originally interested in were the discussions in the intranet discussion forum to which I had access, since I was interested in employees’ reactions to the acquisition, and how the change process was communicated and interpreted in the company. The vivid discussions in the intranet and the dynamics between employees’ anxiety and managers’ rationalizations drew my attention to the multiple voices that the data provided.

During the field work in the company, I became more and more interested in multiple interpretations that were given for the change process, and how people made sense of the events and issues occurring in the company at the time. I wrote my own field notes from every visit in the company and started to reflect my observations and interpretations of the intranet discussions in the light of my dissertation work. At that time, I had a rather broad research interest, which was to understand a large-scale change from a discursive perspective.

In the first place, the 25 interviews with managers, middle managers, and employees that my colleagues had conducted in the company gave me background information about the development needs concerning strategy implementation in the company. However, I later realized their value as texts providing me with interesting insights on how people made sense of the change process prior to the acquisition, and how different those interpretations were compared with the intranet discussions produced at the time when the acquisition had already been announced. Since I had an opportunity to produce more data during the development project in the company, I conducted three group interviews and an interview with the new managing director in order to also have a post-acquisition perspective on the change process. I also acquired a different kind of company communication material, such as annual reports, employee magazines, intranet newsletters, media and investor newsletters, and customer newsletters, from which I later selected the internal ones for the analysis. Furthermore, later during

the analysis process, I enriched the data with media articles retrieved from the electronic archives of a daily national business newspaper and a daily regional newspaper.

After the development project in the company, I put myself seriously into this dissertation work. I read the texts several times, made notes from them with the open coding function in the ATLAS/ti software for qualitative analysis and tried to make sense of what the data were about. While going through the large amount of data over and over again, I came to acknowledge that the texts were to a large extent perceptions and versions about the past, the present, and the future of the company in terms of what makes the company what it is. That is when the concept of organizational identity entered into this research process. Because of my earlier research interests and projects (e.g. Mantere et al. 2007), I was already quite familiar with the literature of organizational identity and became motivated about the notion that there were still unexplored areas within the field to which I could contribute with my research and the longitudinal data that I had. I started to narrow my research problem from the issue of organizational change in general to more focused research questions concerning the discursive construction of organizational identity and its change.

After having grounded my study to the theory, I began to look at the data with ‘organizational identity lenses’. I paid attention to those sentences in which speakers defined the distinctive elements labeling them and what is similar and different between them and the others. I was interested, for example, in their use of ‘we’ in constructing sameness and otherness in talk especially inter-organizationally vis-à-vis the parent company (see Billig 1996). I was also interested in how individuals talked about the clients they serve, the products or services they provide, the know-how and resources that are relevant to their business, the issues concerning their leadership and management culture, and how they positioned themselves with regard to competitors and other relevant constituents (see Kärreman & Alvesson 2001). I also recorded in ATLAS/ti how they talked about different identity-related symbols, for example, management team, company name, and physical facilities.

Furthermore, I started to probe more closely the constructive properties of language, in other words, what kind of effects individuals’ language use has on the formation of organizational identities in the acquisition context (see Hämäläinen 2004; 2005). At this point, a general framework for analyzing different discursive strategies in texts

started to emerge. Closer analysis of data also focused my interest more clearly on the power dynamics involved in the identity construction. There seemed to be an ongoing dynamic between managerial efforts to control the representations of “who we are” and employees’ alternative, often contradictory voices constructing a counter-force to managerial discourse. This insight led to a more detailed analysis of those discursive resources that were used in constructing different versions of AffCo-identity.

3.3.2 IDENTIFYING DISCOURSE TYPES

While analyzing the texts more closely, I noticed that the same phenomena were constructed very differently depending on which words and figures of speech were used in the text. This notion led me to analyze the reoccurring themes or characteristics in the text more rigorously that formed sub-categories for the different *discourse types* that I identified in the data.

I found metaphors especially useful vehicles for identifying different discourse types. For example, the metaphors ‘big brother’ and ‘partner’ in reference to MCorp seemed to construct a very different kind of identities for AffCo and were, thus, categorized as belonging to different ‘pools’ of linguistic resources. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), metaphors are useful as they enable researchers to see beyond their existing frameworks and models. Furthermore, metaphors are vehicles that enable us to see what kind of identities actors construct, since they “give insights into hidden, barely conscious cognitions and feelings, which the actors have about belonging to a particular group” (Vaara et al. 2003, 422). Metaphors are also seen as good data-reducing devices, as they are able to convey many connotations and meanings to the reader in a particularly concise way (Miles & Huberman 1994). In naming my findings, I therefore tried to choose those metaphors that illustrated the character of the discourse types in a memorable and understandable way.

In interpreting and explaining my findings, I tried to link the situated, micro-level talk to larger societal-level discourse in order to understand the interdiscursivity of texts with wider societal or organizational issues (Fairclough 1995). Here I drew, for example, on my own ‘stock of knowledge’ of how mergers and acquisitions are discussed in public and on different bodies of knowledge in organizational theoretical

literature (e.g. Vaara & Tienari 2002). At this stage, I tried to figure out what kind of societal ‘values’ social actors reproduced in their talk.

3.3.3 IDENTIFYING DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES

The interest in constructive properties of language led to the identification of *discursive strategies* used in the construction of organizational identity. The basic interest with regard to this research question was to understand what different discursive acts *do*. I therefore analyzed in detail the verbs, temporal modalities, and other structural features in text segments and tried to interpret the *function* of different utterances in terms of identity construction. In the interpretation of my findings, I found helpful the earlier research on speech acts (Searle 1979), rhetorical strategies (Billig 1996; Potter 1996), and discursive strategies used in the construction of national identities (Wodak et al. 1999). Thus, the identification of discursive strategies was a constant iteration between data-driven and theory-driven stages.

In order to find the ways in which change and continuity in identity were produced in talk, I examined how social actors used *time* as a resource in their argumentation. I therefore paid attention to the tense of sentences, and how different temporal adverbs were used in talk in ‘working with’ the past, the present, and the future in language use. The research on social agency (Emirbayer & Mische 1998) was useful in the interpretation of my findings at this stage.

3.3.4 CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

When I identified discursive strategies and discourse types in data, I did not pay attention to questions regarding *where*, *when*, and *by whom* the texts were produced (Johns 2006), or how identity construction evolved over time. However, taking into account the research question 1.3, more contextual and processual analysis strategies were needed at this stage. Considering the nature of data that I had – different data types produced in different periods of time during the change process – there was an opportunity to take advantage of its multiplicity and longitudinality in the analysis.

I started to group these texts into different kind of ‘families’ in the ATLAS/ti software. Different types of data (media texts, internal managerial texts, managerial interviews etc.) formed separate families, and each type of data was further grouped into

three different time periods according to whether they were produced before, during, or after the acquisition. As such I was able to cross-tabulate discursive strategies and discourse types with data types from different time points of the change process in order to analyze how language use varied according to different periods.

In critical discourse analysis, it is important to note “both the immediate conditions of the situational context and the more remote conditions of institutional and social structures” affecting the language use of social actors (Fairclough 2001, 21). In analyzing “the more remote conditions of institutional and social structures” (ibid.), I examined the media texts produced during the change process and paid attention, for example, to the situation in the industry at the time of the change process. Also, with the help of internal communication material and my own field notes, I made sense of the events and actions that happened in the organization at the time. At this stage, my intention was to depict the non-discursive elements⁹ that were related to the change process in order to understand better what happened in the organization during the relevant time span and to track the key issues and events that were related to the change process. I found narrative strategy useful in contextualizing the data at the ‘meta-level’ (Langley 1999) and in sketching a ‘big picture’ of the case. The outcome of this analysis stage was a 20-page, single-spaced contextualized chronology of the change process, which presented an account of the context from the point of view of a narrator.

In order to analyze the situational context, I paid attention to the questions of where and by whom the texts were produced (Johns 2006). At this stage, I examined in more detail how the use of discursive strategies and resources varied according to different types of data and tried to understand why social actors used language in a particular way in a particular context. The notion of where the language was used led me to consider, for example, at whom the texts were first and foremost targeted. The notion of

⁹ I am aware of the epistemological and ontological assumption maintained in discourse analysis that there is no “real” world other than the one constructed through discourse (Phillips & Hardy 2002, 79-80). In this study, however, I assume that discourse both constitutes the social reality and is shaped and constrained by existing social structures (Wodak 2001). I therefore follow a view of those researchers, who admit the fixity of certain social structures and the existence of non-discursive elements constituting social practice (Reed 1998; Vaara et al. 2003).

target audience is related to the purpose of texts, that is, what is the effect of language use sought by the producer of the texts. The question of by whom the texts were produced focused my attention, for example, on how language use varied according to the social actors' formal position and whether the producer of the text was identifiable or anonymous.

In order to identify shifts in the language use during the change process, I used an analysis strategy close to temporal bracketing (see Langley 1999). Then discrete time periods – before, during, and after the acquisition – became comparative units of analysis. Temporal bracketing enabled me to examine how the identity construction process evolved over time, and how the use of discursive strategies and resources varied in different time periods. Temporal bracketing is particularly useful in examining the “mutual shaping” of action and structure over time (Langley 1999, 703). As such it helped me to make sense of how social actors, through employing discursive strategies, contributed to the construction of organizational identities by creating, reinforcing, or transforming identity structures, and how those structures, on the other hand, constrained and enabled the language use of social actors. At this stage of analysis, I examined, for example, how the metaphors that were used to describe the relationship between AffCo and MCorp varied between different time periods, and what kind of implications this had on the construction of organizational identities.

To sum up, the analysis process was characterized by iteration between the macro and micro level of analysis. The contextual, non-discursive understanding of the case and sensitiveness to societal and organizational level discourses were attempts to obtain a more macro-level understanding of the change process. The search for reoccurring themes and linguistic strategies in the texts was a way to examine the data at the micro-level. Furthermore, both time and place were addressed in the analysis in order to examine the variation and patterns in language use in different contexts and over time.

4 RESULTS

This chapter presents the empirical results of the study. In the first section, I will introduce the case company, AffCo, which provides the scene for the analysis. The second section introduces the discourse types used in individuals' discursive activity. The third section presents discursive strategies used in the construction of organizational identity. The fourth section examines the use of discursive strategies and discourse types in the context of their production through situational analysis of texts.

4.1 SETTING THE SCENE: INTRODUCING AFFCO

AffCo is a regional Finnish telecommunications company. Its predecessor Z-Phone¹⁰ was established at the end of the 19th century. For most of its long history AffCo – like the other 45 regional telephone companies in Finland – was a telephone cooperative serving regional customers in a monopoly situation. Finnish telephone cooperatives were in many ways anchored to the region where they operated; local telephone users owned the telephone cooperatives and local parliament representatives belonged to their politically elected boards of directors. The cooperatives were significant employers in their regions. Also, company names reflected strong regional roots, since they were named after the city or region where they operated.

The prevailing institutional logic of the telecommunications industry in Finland, which was based on the regional monopoly of the local cooperatives, characterized the identities of telephone companies prior to the 1990s. In 1987, deregulation of the telecommunication industry brought along a shift to “commercial market logic” within the industry. Deregulation forced local telephone cooperatives to consider new strategic ideas in order to survive and succeed in their new, competitive environment. In response to market pressures, collaboration between regional telephone cooperatives became more intense at the time. One strategic attempt was to found a nationwide alliance of regional telephone companies, and AffCo also took part in these negotiations during the 1990s. Yet, AffCo withdrew from these negotiations because of the conflicting views about the management of the alliance among the alliance partners. At the time of the withdrawal, AffCo was listed on the Helsinki Stock Exchange.

¹⁰ ‘Z’ refers to the name of the city where the company operates.

A few months after the listing, another Finnish telecommunications company, MCorp, became its biggest owner.

During the three-year period since MCorp's initial purchase, AffCo and MCorp operated in close cooperation with cross ownership of each others' shares. AffCo had small holdings in MCorp's successful subsidiary, and MCorp gradually increased its ownership of AffCo. During the period, AffCo was a profitable business firm and had intensive growth visions. As part of the growth strategy, the company changed its visual identity and name¹¹.

Only a few months after the change in AffCo's name and visual identity, MCorp made an offer to AffCo's other shareholders to buy the remaining shares in order to increase its ownership to 100%. At the end of the same year, 9 months after the initial offer, MCorp had acquired AffCo's entire share capital, and AffCo officially became MCorp's subsidiary. AffCo got to keep its own name despite the acquisition. AffCo's network and service operator businesses were incorporated into AffCo Service and AffCo Network, and its corporate function disappeared¹². Both companies obtained new managing directors, and AffCo's long-term managing director retired. AffCo Service's managing director came from the parent company.

After the acquisition, MCorp carried out significant organizational changes, which were the first integration measures. The number of AffCo's personnel decreased by some 30 people, and the layoffs were carried out mostly in the service operator company. The support services and product development were centralized at headquarters, and telephone directory business was sold off.

Some three years after the acquisition, AffCo was merged completely with MCorp¹³. AffCo lost its own name and became a local department of MCorp Group. After the merger plan was signed, MCorp started an intensive restructuring programme, which aimed at increasing the group's customer orientation and efficiency and at streamlin-

¹¹ Prior to the name change, AffCo was named after the city where it operates (Z-Phone).

¹² The company as a whole was still referred to as AffCo despite the rundown of the corporate function.

¹³ The actual merger exceeds the time span of the analysis of this study.

ing the corporate structure and operations. The group conducted negotiations with personnel, and the number of employees decreased by almost 700.

This study examines the five-year period from AffCo's public listing to the post-acquisition integration period just before the merger plan was signed. The focus of the analysis is on how AffCo identity was constructed in various arenas and at several points of time during this extensive change process. This five-year period exhibits an interesting combination of elements with respect to organizational identity change: it included the transformation from a telephone cooperative into a listed telecommunications company, the change in company name and visual identity, the retirement of a respected leader, and a takeover by another telecommunications company.

The tension between the 'protagonists' and 'antagonists' of these numerous change efforts and how, through their discursive activity, they came to construct particular identities for AffCo in legitimating and delegitimizing the different managerial decisions and actions that were made during the change process are central for the analysis. This tension was manifested in a form of discursive struggle over "who we are", when social actors mobilized and drew upon a different kind of discursive resources and employed a different kind of discursive strategies in pursuing particular ends in their argumentation.

Next, I will introduce the *discourse types* that I identified in the analysis of various texts produced during the change process and discuss what kind of effect the mobilization of these discourse types had on the shaping of AffCo identity. The next chapter functions as an introduction to a more detailed analysis of how these discourse types were drawn upon in the context of their production, which is discussed in chapter 4.4.

4.2 DISCOURSE TYPES AS RESOURCES IN ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

This chapter presents the discursive structures that were used in social actors' talk in the context of AffCo's change process. These structures are called *discourse types* here. I identified three different discourse types from the data, which were mobilized by the actors during the change process in their argumentation. I have called them *economic-rationalistic*, *power*, and *cultural* discourses. Each of these discursive frameworks had a different kind of implications regarding how AffCo identity was constructed while the discourse was mobilized.

The discourse types presented in this chapter were identified empirically from the data produced in the context of this particular study, and as such, they cannot be regarded as *a priori* categories or macro-level discourses (Alvesson & Kärreman 2000b), or generalizable to other social contexts. However, they have links to more institutionalized, macro-level discourses, or 'Grand Discourses' (ibid.), that were present in society at the time of their production, for example, the discourse of global capitalism (Fairclough 2001) and the enterprise discourse (du Gay 1996). Discursive activity of individuals is linked to wider organizational or societal discourses that affect how social phenomena are constructed and understood. Social actors draw, for example, on the institutional norms of the time (Czarniawska 1997) and on current social norms and values (Cheney & Christensen 2001) that help to establish accreditation and legitimacy for their various decisions and actions. Hence, despite the context-sensitivity of the discourse types identified in this study, they appear to be related to wider discursive structures available in the society that affect our language use and understanding of social reality (Fairclough 1992). The available discourses can be seen as *enabling resources* for social actors in promoting a certain view of reality, while at the same time their discursive activity is also constrained by the availability of 'suitable' discourses (Hardy et al. 2000).

Next, each of the identified discourse types – the economic-rationalistic, power, and cultural discourses – is presented with illustrative examples from the empirical data. As mentioned above, the aim of this chapter is to introduce the reader to a variety of language use in the organization, which is discussed in more detail in chapter 4.4,

when the use of these discourse types is examined in the temporal and situational context of their production.

4.2.1 ECONOMIC-RATIONALISTIC DISCOURSE

Managers typically argued within a framework that emphasized the economic rationales and advantages of the acquisition and other managerial actions and decisions made during the change process. This kind of discourse type is called the *economic-rationalistic discourse* here. Within this discursive framework it was common to draw upon values and ideals that are characteristic of neo-liberal ideology (Chomsky 1999), the discourse of global capitalism (Fairclough 2001), and the enterprise discourse (du Gay 1996), which can be regarded as constituting the dominant business discourse of Western societies today. It was therefore a very appropriate and beneficial discursive frame for managers to use, since it reproduced the norms, beliefs, and definitions that were valued in Western business culture at the time of the change process and thus helped to legitimize the change initiatives pursued by managers. Indeed, this kind of discourse seems to have dominated, for example, the recent discussion of mergers and acquisitions in the media (Vaara & Tienari 2002; Tienari et al. 2003; Vaara et al. 2006) and how managers construct the failure and success of mergers and acquisitions in their talk (Vaara 2002).

The following excerpts are examples of the appearance of the economic-rationalistic discourse type in the data:

1: *“In collaboration with MCorp we expect to gain significant synergy benefits through management of our nationwide business and a division of labour between the companies.”*

2: *“We will look for partners with whom we are able to offer comprehensive telecommunication solutions regionally, nationally, and also internationally.”*

3: *“The loud, but penniless Pro Z¹⁴ movement was not able to preserve AffCo’s independence. All that was left was MCorp, which had money and expertise.”*

4: *“For the AffCo-team, collaboration with MCorp means an opportunity to respond better than before to the challenge that we have announced to our owners and our customers in our basic promise.”*

¹⁴ ‘Z’ refers to the city where AffCo operates.

5: “AffCo is sort of – maybe like an old-fashioned elephant – and has remained in a sense in the bureaucratic era (...) Keeping up with the times requires that operations in some respects are rationalized out of the stone age level. It simply has to be done. Otherwise what we do will be so expensive that it won’t make any sense.”

6: “(...) I have been able to look at things from the group’s point of view and tried to link those local interests and group interests, which are of course always the same (...)”

The texts that were based on economic-rationalistic argumentation typically emphasized the *economic and financial benefits* that various actions and decisions would or would not bring (see extracts 1, 3 and 5). Within this discursive frame, the fundamental rationale for change initiatives was, then, to make money, and that ideal was a guiding force in the argumentation of those mobilizing the economic-rationalistic discourse type. Usually, it was not specified *who* would benefit from the decisions and actions. The style of economic-rationalistic argumentation was, thus, objective and neutral, and AffCo was often nominalized as an actor or constructed as a collective ‘we’ in the language use.

Another guiding ideal within this framework was that of *rationality*, which was manifested, for example, by emphasizing the efficiency and effectiveness of various actions and decisions (see extracts 1 and 5). The ‘streamlining’ and ‘rationalizing’ of the company and its operations were seen as solutions to ‘problems’ such as inefficiency and unprofitability and thus to ensure the desired business outcomes. These problems were mostly related to AffCo’s cooperative identity, which was constructed with the use of such metaphors as ‘old-fashioned elephant’, ‘remained in a bureaucratic era’, or at ‘stone age level’ (see extract 5).

The salient features of the economic-rationalistic discourse type were also *collaboration* and *partnership* (see extracts 1, 2 and 4). The inevitability of ‘partners’ in gaining economic benefits and in surviving in competition was emphasized. Collaboration and partnership were seen to bring ‘mutual benefits’ for the collaboration parties. Often the speaker referred to the ‘synergies’ that different actions and decisions would bring. It was characteristic of the economic-rationalistic discourse to represent the collaboration parties as equal, sharing the same interests and goals (see extract 6). As such, the economic-rationalistic discourse pictured partnership as free of political connotations and emphasized the consensus between the collaboration parties.

A further characteristic of the economic-rationalistic discourse was the emphasis on *customers* (see extract 4). Many change efforts were justified in terms of bringing value to customers, and good customer access was seen as one of the most important cornerstones of AffCo's competitiveness. 'Staying close to the customer' was one of AffCo's renewed values during the change process, and customer service improvement was one of the strategic themes pursued in the company at the time. As such, the economic-rationalistic discourse reproduced the 'culture of the customer', which can be seen as a legitimate ideal for business enterprises to pursue in today's business environment (du Gay & Salaman 1992).

Economic-rationalistic ideals were often *objectified* and *factualized* in talk, which provided a powerful means for managers and other change protagonists to present managerial actions and decisions as undisputable (cf. Vaara & Tienari 2002). Objectification and factualization also helped to *normalize* economic-rationalistic ideals such as acquisitions, partnerships, and public listings in the telecommunications industry and in the business environment in general. AffCo was, then, presented as one of the many that attend to financial interests, and managerial actions and decisions were presented as part of the 'normal' business discourse. For example, a business partnership stemming from "company-based interests" was constructed as the "normal daily order" in the telecommunications industry and AffCo's public listing as one of many similar cases, which have already been seen or will be seen in the industry:

7: *"Efforts to force the nationwide companies [of the telephone company alliance] into a single entity did not lead to a result that would have satisfied all the parties sufficiently. The project was abandoned at the beginning of the year. Since then, developments on this front have been in another direction; we are no longer voluntarily building a large joint concern. Instead, we are proceeding more on the basis of the interests of individual companies. So we work together when both/all parties feel like there's something in it for them. In a way, this is also a move from 'collectivism' to a normal order of business."*

8: *"Within less than a year, the Helsinki Stock Exchange will already list the [n:th] telecommunications company when it starts to quote the shares of AffCo at the beginning of April. However, the invasion of the Stock Exchange by telephone companies will not stop here."*

Texts did not only refer to similar cases in the telecommunications industry, but also to a "spirit of the time" that is favorable to mergers and centralization of business more generally:

9: "Although the spirit of the time is in fact favourable to concentration and mergers, the first reactions in [the city where AffCo operates] about MCorp becoming the owner of AffCo were negative, emotional outbursts that pretty much rejected the idea outright."

What is essential from the viewpoint of this study is that the mobilization of the economic-rationalistic discourse had particular effects on how AffCo identity was constructed in language use. When the arguments were framed within and justifications for various actions and decisions were given by using economic-rationalistic arguments, AffCo was presented as a "rationally ordered, appropriately structured, and emotion-free" business enterprise in which "the right decisions are made for the right reasons by the right people, in a reliable and predictable manner" (Kersten 2001, 452). The economic-rationalistic discourse served as a resource for the construction of a progressive and customer-oriented identity for AffCo. It helped to frame and legitimate managerial actions and decisions as 'solutions' to the perceived business 'problems'.

In addition to constructing a business enterprise status for AffCo as a company, those mobilizing the economic-rationalistic discourse also came to construct a particular identity for themselves. While drawing on the economic-rationalistic discourse, the speakers presented themselves as agents having specific *knowledge* and *skills* and being able to take part in this kind of language game. Those taking part in the economic-rationalistic discourse were constructed as strategists, rational decision-makers, and business-minded individuals. In mobilizing economic-rationalistic arguments, the speakers were able to show their ability to "'employ' reason" (Vince 2006, 345) and to act in a rational way.

4.2.2 POWER DISCOURSE¹⁵

The second discourse type identified in the data was based on a very different kind of argumentation than the economic-rationalistic discourse. This discourse type, which I

¹⁵ A remark should be made here between the discourse type called power discourse in this study and underpinnings of critical theory, which is a metatheory of this study. Critical theory assumes that power inequalities are an inherent feature of organizations, and *all* language use is exercise of power (Mumby 2001). Hence, the mobilization of the economic-rationalistic discourse and the cultural discourse are as much political acts as the mobilization of the power discourse, even though their content does not touch power issues in the organization as that of the power discourse does.

call *power discourse*, can be seen as a counter-discourse to the economic-rationalistic discourse type. On the one hand, those mobilizing economic-rationalistic discourse usually defended themselves from arguments framed within the power discourse, and on the other hand, those mobilizing power discourse often attacked the arguments that were framed within the economic-rationalistic discourse.

Whereas within the economic-rationalistic discourse the decisions and actions were presented as outcomes of rational, consensus-based decision-making free of politicking, within the framework of power discourse the power inequalities and diverse and conflicting interests in the organization were the basis of argumentation.

Within this discursive framework it was typical to present the relationship between AffCo and MCorp as based on MCorp's *domination* and *control* over AffCo. Then, the acquisition was pictured not in terms of 'collaboration' or 'strategic partnership', as within the economic-rationalistic discourse, but in terms of a "hostile takeover" (see extract 10) or of MCorp's dominance over AffCo (see extract 11). Furthermore, MCorp was not constructed as a 'partner' like within the economic-rationalistic discourse, but as a 'corporate raider' (see extract 10) or "unconquerable windmill" (see extract 11). In these versions AffCo was not presented as an active agent seeking partners that would fit its own strategic goals, as within the framework of economic-rationalistic discourse, but rather as a target of domination with restricted possibilities for agency.

10: "*In general, nobody expected that a hostile takeover of this kind was possible (...)*"

11: "*When you followed the shareholders' meeting of AffCo (...) for five hours, it is not difficult to imagine what Don Quixote felt in fighting against that unconquerable windmill.*"

MCorp's dominant position vis-à-vis AffCo was also manifested in the form of an unequal knowledge/power relationship between the parent company and its subsidiary:

12: "*(...) the prices and products come quite clearly and simply, period. I don't even necessarily know the net prices. I don't have a clue whether the business I'm doing is profitable or unprofitable, and I think it's already pretty hopeless in sales.*"

Another manifestation of the power discourse was to present the acquisition process in terms of a *struggle for independence*, in which AffCo was constructed as fighting for its autonomy. In these versions, AffCo was constructed as an actor having agency,

since it was able to resist MCorp's dominance. For example, different events and actions during the acquisition process, like the change in company name, were presented as conscious decisions to grow out of MCorp:

13: "(...) it was such a struggle for independence there that in a way one did not want to admit it yet. Then we also made a kind of conscious decisions that would get us to sort of grow out of MCorp."

The metaphor 'struggle for independence' puts the acquisition process in a very different light compared with the economic-rationalistic discourse. The acquisition was not a 'natural continuation' to a partnership between MCorp and AffCo, but a power struggle, eventually leading to the loss of AffCo's independence.

In addition to emphasizing the power inequalities between AffCo and MCorp, those who mobilized the power discourse also presented AffCo's own management-labour relations as unequal. These versions concerned managers' manipulative rhetoric in persuading employees of the benefits related to the acquisition, secrecy in the decision-making during the change process, and the managers' control over information. For example, managers were constructed as 'manipulators' of the employees' will (see extract 14), as political actors pursuing their own interests (see extract 15), and as information gatekeepers (see extract 16):

14: "(...) those managers succeeded pretty well in brainwashing that maybe it [MCorp] is not such a threat after all."

15: "In AffCo business works like in parliament, decisions are made behind closed doors. If you are not close to those in power then your career will not advance or may even come to an end."

16: "Communication is really weak or non-existent. Maybe the idea is that if "we" know something then it is pointless to tell the employees."

Typically, the power discourse was mobilized by those, who criticized managerial change efforts or tried to render managerial actions and decisions illegitimate. The power discourse often appeared in the employees' and middle managers' versions of the change process and in the anonymous voices in the intranet discussion forum. It was also typical for journalists to mobilize the power discourse when they reported about the events related to the acquisition in the media. In managerial texts, on the contrary, this discursive framework was typically mobilized in those accounts in which speakers denied the politics and power related to their own behavior or to

managerial actions and decisions more generally. The power discourse was then mobilized in order to defend one's own argument 'beforehand' by drawing on a potential counter-argument before stating one's own:

17: "(...) I emphasized all the time to the staff that I did not come here from MCorp to discipline you, but (...)"

Especially in managerial texts, this discourse was also drawn upon in order to construct AffCo as an empowered, capable agent. Then, AffCo's own decision-making power vis-à-vis the parent company was emphasized, and AffCo was constructed as an actor with its 'own will' and decision-making power within the MCorp Group:

18: "To belong to MCorp Group does not, however, mean that AffCo will adapt to MCorp's will in everything. On the contrary, it has to make its own decisions and shape its own role in MCorp independently. (...) If [we] did not have our own decision-making power here, [we] would not have our own managing director either (...)"

To summarize, the mobilization of the power discourse constructed a very different kind of identity for AffCo compared with the economic-rationalistic discourse presented earlier. Within the framework of power discourse, AffCo was presented as the site of power struggle (Mumby 2001) or as a political battlefield, characterized by diverse and conflicting interests and unequal power relations. The power discourse was a resource with which social actors could build AffCo and themselves either as agentless actors without their own will and decision-making power, or as fighters for their own independence and sovereignty. Furthermore, it helped to construct different groups and individuals within organization as unequal. Thus, the power discourse produced a very different view of organizations when compared with the economic-rationalistic discourse. Whereas the economic-rationalistic discourse helped to present organizations as "rationally ordered, appropriately structured, and emotion free" business enterprises (Kerstin 2001, 452), the power discourse enabled the construction of organizations as sites, where irrationalities and ambiguity occur.

4.2.3 CULTURAL DISCOURSE

Within the framework of cultural discourse the constructions of organizational identity were based on a notion that AffCo is an identifiable unity or sub-culture (Martin 1992), and that the cultural framework of the company shapes and defines understandings of "who we are". Then, AffCo's traditions, history, norms, and values were the

basis of how different change efforts were made sense of, and how organizational identity was constructed in language use when the cultural discourse was drawn upon.

The most salient features of the cultural discourse were AffCo's *regionalism and localism*. Within this framework, AffCo was constructed first and foremost as a regionally operating, local company. These characteristics were also seen as the basis for AffCo's distinctiveness vis-à-vis the parent company. It was typical to refer to the 'local' culture of subsidiaries and the 'national' culture of the parent company and to state the differences between them:

19: "They think that now when we're making a kind of nationwide system, then everybody will become a part of the nationwide processes, and everybody will adapt to them while we show with PowerPoint that this is how things go without ever really going to the field to see what actually happens. And then when they eventually come to the field to see, they understand that in fact nationwide processes won't work, because every company is different."

In addition to emphasizing the differences in terms of locality and nationality, it was also characteristic of the cultural discourse to refer to differences in *values* and *norms* between AffCo and MCorp. For example, in the following extract, one of the AffCo's middle managers referred to AffCo's 'no mass layoffs' policy, which had been abandoned immediately when AffCo became MCorp's subsidiary:

20: "(...) immediately when [we] became AffCo and a subsidiary of MCorp (...) then for the first time in our whole 100-year history there were layoffs. [The former managing director] had always done his work so that they [layoffs] did not come even during recession years."

Confrontation between 'we' and 'them' was typical of the cultural discourse. The use of 'we' emphasized the particular group from within which the social actor interpreted and made sense of social reality. The parent company was, then, constructed as 'the other' and employees of AffCo as 'our people' or 'us'. This kind of talk strengthened the view of AffCo and MCorp as two separate cultures:

21: "On the other hand, what has been great in these 'jobs-are-moving-to-other-companies' figures in my opinion is that at present when one talks to the people who are moving to other companies, well they still, when they talk about us, they talk about AffCo. Like in a certain way they are our people, but within that other company."

A further manifestation of the cultural discourse was to present the acquisition process in terms of 'conspiracy-theory', when social actors pictured themselves as having been betrayed by their 'own people', who they have trusted:

22: *“There was a common front that everybody was against it [the acquisition] and felt betrayed.”*

AffCo’s name, history, and regional roots were symbols of the cultural heritage that those mobilizing the cultural discourse often defended. The cultural discourse provided a means for social actors to criticize or undermine managerial change efforts that were seen to be leading to a loss of AffCo identity. For example, the change in AffCo’s visual identity and name was criticized, because it was presented as a threat to AffCo’s familiarity that was established among the stakeholders during AffCo’s long history:

23: *”Q: How about... you mentioned the name change when Z-Phone changed its name to AffCo, how would you describe that time in the organization, what kind of an atmosphere or mood was there when that change happened?”*

A: Well, there was quite a lot of negative feedback. We were Z-Phone people for a long time. AffCo still hadn’t been internalized.

Q: What was it that aroused negative feelings the most? What aroused resistance?

A: Well I think that it was that because we were Z-Phone for 100 years, over 100 years, then I suppose it had some weight, like why was it changed when everyone know us as Z-Phone people (...)”

The cultural discourse was not only a resource for change ‘antagonists’ to resist and criticize change efforts, but also a means for change ‘protagonists’ to reassure and calm down those who were opposed. For ‘protagonists’ the selective use of culturally framed arguments was a powerful strategy to win support and legitimize the change efforts especially in the eyes of AffCo’s employees and other local stakeholders:

24: *”I do not however believe, that if MCorp would come to [the city where AffCo operates], it would put MCorp’s signboards on the roof. If I were MCorp’s manager, I wouldn’t do it. AffCo has a strong [regional and local] identity and it is also the basis for customer relations to a large extent.”*

To summarize, when the cultural discourse was drawn upon, AffCo was presented as a group of people, who belong to an identifiable sub-culture sharing a common history, norms, beliefs, values, and interests that differentiate them from other groups and cultures. The organization’s cultural heritage was the basis of identity construction, and AffCo was often constructed as a regional and local company with its own traditions rooted in the company during its long history. Those mobilizing the cultural discourse often constructed themselves as one of ‘us’ identifying with this specific group.

4.2.4 SUMMARY

In Table 9, the discourse types identified in the textual data are summarized. The characteristics of each discourse type, that is, how they were manifested in texts, are presented. I also summarize how AffCo identity was constructed when each discourse type was mobilized.

It is important to note that the mobilization of discourse types did not only produce ‘desirable’ organizational identities; certain characteristics of AffCo were also criticized and undermined from within that discourse type. For example, mobilization of the economic-rationalistic discourse came to produce both a ‘progressive’ and an ‘old-fashioned’ identity for AffCo, depending on the situation and the discursive strategy that the speaker employed. In the next chapter, I will present what kind of discursive strategies were used in the mobilization of different discursive resources, and what kind of function they served in the identity construction process.

Table 9 Summary of discourse types identified in the textual data

Discourse type	Economic-rationalistic	Power	Cultural
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economical and financial benefits • Rationality • Collaboration / partnership • Customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domination • Subordination • Superiority / inferiority • Politics • Independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditionality • Locality • Regionality • We / them – confrontation
Produced identity constructs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business enterprise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Customer-oriented ○ Progressive ○ Bureaucratic ○ Old-fashioned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political battlefield <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Independent ○ Autonomous ○ Empowered ○ Subordinated ○ Dependent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Traditional ○ Local ○ Regional

4.3 DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES AS TOOLS IN ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Discursive activity often aims to shape particular concepts in order to change or reinforce individual understandings of the world and, hence, how social relations are accomplished (Hardy & Phillips 1999). Through discursive activity AffCo's members – intentionally or unintentionally – engaged in shaping the reality of the organization of which they are a part. As outlined in the previous chapter, this activity is affected by discursive structures that are available for the discussant.

Whereas discourse types provided resources for social actors to construct a particular version of reality, the discursive strategies presented in this chapter are linguistic tools and techniques the mobilization of which helped to change or reinforce different identity-related meanings in AffCo. In other words, by mobilizing discursive strategies individuals were able to manage understandings of “who we are”, “who we are not” and “who we are going to be” in their language use. This chapter serves as an introduction to the nature of these discursive strategies, and in chapter 4.4 their use is examined in more detail in the temporal and situational context of their production.

Even though the strategies are presented in this chapter one by one for the sake of clarity, in the texts that were analyzed they were intertwined and creatively combined while in use. Individuals may even use different strategies in the same utterance. Furthermore, it is important to note that the use of discursive strategies does not necessarily refer to the speakers' deliberate intention to use discursive acts in favor of their own interests (see Hardy et al. 2000), but is related to the constructive qualities of language in forming and shaping social reality more generally.

First, I will introduce the group of strategies, which were used to change and challenge the understandings of “who we are”. Then, I will present those linguistic strategies the mobilization of which contributed to the construction of continuity in identity.

4.3.1 DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES OF CHANGE

In this section, I will introduce two types of discursive strategies and related communicative tactics that were employed to challenge and change understandings of “who we are”. The *destructive* strategy worked to dismantle certain identity attributes and

was used in attempts to give sense to and make sense of “who we have become”, whereas the *transformative* strategy worked to construct a new identity for the company in attempts to give sense to and make sense of “who we are becoming”, “who we want to become”, or “who we need to become” (cf. Wodak et al. 1999). Both types of strategies and related communicative tactics are discussed in detail below.

4.3.1.1 Destruction

It was characteristic of various texts in AffCo during the study period to make sense of and give sense to “who we have become” by constructing a difference or discontinuity between the past and the present. This kind of strategy is called here the *destructive* discursive strategy, since it worked to dismantle certain identity-attributes by ‘disconnecting’ AffCo from those features that no longer characterized it. There were two communicative tactics that emerged for accomplishing this strategy: metaphors of discontinuity and comparison between the past and the present.

Metaphors of discontinuity. One communicative tactic to destruct certain identity-related attributes was to make visible a change in identity by using those metaphors that connote a shift from ‘one identity’ to ‘another’. For example, in the following extract, AffCo’s managing director announced AffCo’s new subsidiary-identity by using the expression “AffCo has now become MCorp’s subsidiary”. His speech act, thus, constructed a transformation from the former status as an independent company to the present one as MCorp’s subsidiary through a metaphor of ‘becoming’:

25: “As a result of an agreement between MCorp and AffCo signed in March, AffCo has now become MCorp’s subsidiary.”

This communicative tactic was not only used by managers in giving sense to the change in the company’s ‘official’ identity, but it was also used for the purpose of resisting managerial change efforts and trivializing or challenging managers’ official identity statements, for example, through scepticism and cynicism (see Fleming & Sewell 2002). As an example, one anonymous discussant in the intranet discussion forum argued that the “firm” had become a “kiosk” after the acquisition. He or she also used the metaphor “run down”, which dismantled those attributes that were used to characterize AffCo before (“successful” and “rich”):

26: *The firm became a kiosk*

Sender: *How's that?*

"Again [we] saw how rapidly a successful and rich company can be run down."

The discussant attempted to undermine official managerial identity articulations by providing an alternative reading of "who we have become". This kind of reframing may be a subtle form of resistance, or "disguised dissent" (Scott 1990), which functions to "subvert the logics and practices of the established order" (Emirbayer & Mische 1998, 1001). It can, thus, be interpreted as a possibility for liberation from hegemonic representations of "who we are" by enlarging discursive space via alternative readings and interpretations of AffCo identity.

Comparison between the past and the present. Another communicative tactic to make sense of or give sense to "who we have become" was to compare the past with the present situation. The tactic of comparison often manifested itself in AffCo's members' nostalgic memories of the 'good, old past', which was contrasted with the conditions of the present (see Gabriel 1993). Through nostalgia, social actors thus made it rhetorically visible that certain identity-related attributes no longer characterize AffCo and its present existence. Typical of nostalgic talk was to contrast the past and present with the help of temporal adverbs such as 'nowadays', 'formerly', or 'in the old days'. For example, the following employee made sense of the cultural change that has occurred in AffCo since the acquisition and contrasted the constant hurry of the present situation with more convivial working culture in times past:

27: *"Nowadays there is a constant hurry, in the old days it somehow felt, that one got through the workday a bit easier (...)"*

4.3.1.2 Transformation

Whereas the destructive strategy aimed at making sense of or giving sense to the change in identity from the past to the present, the *transformative* strategy worked to construct a new, future identity for AffCo. There were four communicative tactics identified in the data for accomplishing this strategy: problematization of the current identity, the discrepancy between image and identity, declaration of a desired future identity, and imagination of a future identity.

Problematization of the current identity. This communicative tactic constructed current identity as a problem or liability for future success, and as such it worked as a tool to persuade others of the need to renew identity. Then, certain aspects of AffCo identity were constructed as ‘stigmas’ (see Carroll 2002) that negatively affected AffCo’s possibilities to survive in the future competition. Often, the construction of a problem also involved the construction of a solution¹⁶. For example, in the following extract, the speaker criticizes AffCo’s current rigid, bureaucratic, and old-fashioned identity and suggests the streamlining of operations as a way to get rid of the problematic identity constructs that are hindering AffCo’s possibilities to “keeping up with the times”:

28: “*AffCo is sort of – maybe like an old-fashioned elephant – and has remained in a sense in the bureaucratic era (...) Keeping up with the times requires that operations in some respects are rationalized out of the stone age level.*”

In the previous example, the speaker drew upon those discursive resources that helped to legitimize the solution. By drawing on economic-rationalistic justifications (“keeping up with the times...”), the speaker was able to argue within a frame that presents what is suitable and required behavior for today’s business enterprise. The problematization tactic, thus, helped to construct one’s own solution as legitimate vis-à-vis the current problematic situation by drawing on the hegemonic discourse of what business is about.

Discrepancy between image and identity. A further tactic to construct a need for a change in identity was to create a discrepancy between “who we are” as seen by ourselves and “who we are” as seen by outsiders. As Dutton and Dukerich (1991) have argued in their study, image works as a mirror for organizational members in providing a picture of “who we are” as seen by outsiders. By constructing incoherence between identity and image, the speaker was able to justify and legitimize the identity-related actions and decisions that she or he promoted in talk. For example, one of the middle managers claimed that AffCo needed a more effective marketing strategy in

¹⁶ In the study of rhetoric the construction of a ‘problem’ is seen as a technique of argumentation to pave the way for one’s own argument, which is presented as a ‘solution’ to the problem (Toulmin et al. 1979, in Vaara et al. 2004). Doolin (2002, 386) argues that “one of the fundamental power effects of a discourse is the way it constitutes the problem for which it claims to be the solution”.

order to change the old-dated perception that outsiders of the company have of AffCo, and which does not correspond to what AffCo actually does and is:

29: “(...) *we are regarded as local and yet [we] operate nationwide (...)*”

Declaration of a desired future identity. Another communicative tactic to construct a new identity for AffCo was to explicitly state a desired future identity in talk. Unlike the strategies presented above, this strategy was not persuasive, but declarative in nature. It did not work to persuade others of the need to change, but rather ‘informed’ them about the ideal future identity of the company. For example, AffCo’s vision statement was an official declaration of “who we will” or “who we want to be” in the future:

30: “*The ideal identity (...) is to be a leading telecommunications solutions provider in [the region where AffCo operates].*”

The declaration of a desired future identity often also involved the stating of those actions that would help to realize “who we want to be” in the future:

31: “*We will look for partners with whom we are able to offer comprehensive telecommunication solutions regionally, nationally, and also internationally.*”

Imagination of a future identity. AffCo’s members also engaged in speculating about or imagining possible future identities for AffCo. This communicative tactic was neither persuasive nor declarative by nature like the previous tactics. Rather, social actors were then expressing their hopes and fears about “who we seem to become” or “who we think we are becoming”. For example, the following extract illustrates how AffCo’s middle managers constructed a future identity and role for AffCo in the MCorp Group a year after the acquisition:

32: *Q: Then, if one now looks forward into the future, how would you see AffCo let’s say three years from now?*

(...)

A: We will be selling and installing. And there’s nothing else we’ll be doing.

A: Yes, most probably under MCorp’s name.

A: Yes, most probably, yes.

A: We will not be here as AffCo’s fist, but as MCorp’s finger.

4.3.2 DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES OF CONTINUITY

In this section, I will introduce two types of discursive strategies and related communicative tactics that were employed to achieve stability and continuity in organizational identity. The *perpetuative* strategy worked to construct persistence for certain established, and usually undesirable, identity-attributes from the past that were seen to still characterize AffCo in the present (cf. Wodak et al. 1999). By employing the strategy of *construction*, social actors constructed coherence between the present and the future for certain, usually desirable, identity attributes and, as such, reinforced the enduringness of the notion of “who we are” (cf. Wodak et al. 1999). Both types of strategies and related communicative tactics are introduced below.

4.3.2.1 Perpetuation

The strategy of perpetuation made visible the persistence of certain established identity-attributes and created continuity between the past and the present. These attributes were mostly seen as undesirable features from the past still characterizing AffCo in the present despite of attempts to renew identity. There was one communicative tactic identified in data employed for accomplishing this strategy: metaphors of ‘stickiness’.

Metaphors of ‘stickiness’. Typical for the perpetuative strategy was the use of metaphors that connote the persistence and ‘stickiness’ of some identity-related characteristics or meanings. For example, in the following extract, which is an extract from a larger discussion in the intranet discussion forum concerning the weakening employee benefits in AffCo, discussants criticized managerial attempts to cut costs by changing the mobile communication policy in the company and restricting the number of employees’ free calls. They constructed this managerial decision as “a remnant” of the cooperative spirit that is still alive in the company despite managerial attempts to renew identity:

33: *“I think this is still a remnant of the (notorious?) COOPERATIVE spirit, which still seems to be living strongly in the more slowly changing parts of the company....”*

Typically social actors used temporal adverbs such as ‘still’ in making visible the persistence of identity-related understandings. For example, in the following extract, one employee argues that despite the managerial attempts to modernize identity through

the change in the company name and visual identity, customers still perceive AffCo as a telephone cooperative, the one it used to be in the past:

34: *"But customers still come to Z-Phone and to the telephone cooperative, whatever name is on the roof won't make any difference. They'll come to the telephone cooperative."*

4.3.2.2 Construction

Constructive strategy made visible the coherence between the past, the present, and the future and thus helped to create a consistent self-narrative. Then, the emphasis was rather on the positive and desirable characteristics and those identity-attributes that reinforce the understanding of "who we are". It also helped to promote legitimacy for present undertakings, since it framed the present and the future as a continuation of past attributes or events (see also Chreim 2005). The communicative tactics of construction were: identity reinforcing rhetoric and metaphors of continuity.

Identity reinforcing rhetoric. The most common means to construct continuity for identity was to reinforce the meanings of "who we are" in talk. Social actors typically referred to a certain type of behaviour or action, which helped to construct a particular identity for the company and strengthen the understandings of "who we are". Sometimes this also involved the negation of a certain type of behaviour or action, which was in contrast with the desired identity or image. For example, when MCorp's managing director emphasized that the reason to increase MCorp's ownership of AffCo was "rational business cooperation" instead of "a payment for power", he, at the same time, reinforced an image of MCorp as a rationally operating enterprise free from politicking:

35: *"We do not pay for power, but for rational business cooperation (...)"*

Another manifestation of identity reinforcing rhetoric was to produce present identity-attributes as solid and enduring by expressing explicitly "who we are". For example, after the acquisition managers worked to construct an independent position for AffCo vis-à-vis the parent company and as such reified the continuity of AffCo's autonomous role also from now on:

36: *"We are an independent company and we make independent decisions (...)"*

Also, when social actors used certain metaphors or linguistic expressions, they came to produce a particular identity for the company in a more implicit and undeliberate way. For example, by referring to MCorp as a “big brother”, AffCo’s managing director came to produce an inferior ‘little brother’ identity for AffCo vis-à-vis its major owner:

37: *“It is pleasant to notice that big brother from the south has also found AffCo a good and attractive company.”*

Metaphors of continuity. The link between the present and the future was made rhetorically visible through use of metaphors connotating continuity and futurity such as “we will”, “carry on” and “continue”. For example, managers stressed that despite the acquisition, regionality and locality will also characterize AffCo in the future, or that AffCo will also keep its own identity from now on:

38: *“Locality will remain strong (...)”*

39: *“We will keep our AffCo identity (...)”*

Metaphors of continuity were often used for reassuring purposes in talk. It has been noted in the previous literature that the construction of continuity in identity reassures during times of turbulence and creates ontological security for individuals (Giddens 1991) by preventing any fear of loss of identity and existence (Albert & Whetten 1985). This kind of reassuring rhetoric typically involved the explicit denial of changes. For example, after the acquisition, AffCo’s new managing director reassured AffCo’s employees about his unwillingness to change anything at AffCo and emphasized the maintenance of AffCo’s traditional identity:

40: *“(...) I really did not want to change anything, but to maintain things as they have been (...)”*

As another example, AffCo’s managing director’s future concern after the acquisition was to show that AffCo would not change and to present AffCo to its external constituents as “the traditional actor” that it has been despite the change in company status:

41: *“(...) [I] have to show in particular that [we] do not change, that despite being part of a nationwide group we are capable of being the traditional actor that we have been.”*

4.3.3 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have presented different discursive strategies and related communicative tactics that social actors used in managing and shaping the understandings of “who we are”. I first introduced the strategies of transformation and destruction that were used to change identity-related meanings, and then the strategies of perpetuation and construction that were employed to promote a sense of continuity and stability in identity.

The strategies identified in this study thus perform different *functions* in the identity construction process. On the one hand, with the help of perpetuative and constructive strategies social actors are able to reify and reproduce certain identity-related meanings and thus contribute to the construction of stability in organizational identity. On the other hand, with the help of transformative and destructive strategies social actors are capable of changing and replacing certain identity-related meanings, and therefore they contribute to the construction of instability in organizational identity. Discursive strategies are thus tools for social actors to create and manipulate social structure.

The discursive strategies and related communicative tactics identified in the data are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10 Discursive strategies and communicative tactics used in the construction of organizational identities

Discursive strategy / communicative tactic	Description	Example
Destruction	Dismantling of certain identity attributes	
Metaphors of discontinuity	Using of metaphors that connote discontinuity in identity	"As a result of an agreement between MCorp and AffCo signed in March, AffCo has now become MCorp's subsidiary."
Comparison between the past and the present	Comparing past identity attributes with those of the present	"Nowadays there is a constant hurry, in the old days it somehow felt, that one got through the workday a bit easier (...)"
Transformation	Construction of a new identity	
Problematization of the current identity	Constructing a current identity as a problem or liability for future success	"AffCo is sort of – maybe like an old-fashioned elephant – and has remained in a sense in the bureaucratic era (...) Keeping up with the times requires that operations in some respect are rationalized out of the stone age level."
Declaration of a desired future identity	Stating explicitly a desired future identity	"Ideal identity (...) is to be a leading telecommunications solutions provider in [the region where AffCo operates]."
Discrepancy between image and identity	Constructing a discrepancy between "who we are" and "how we think that outsiders perceive us"	"(...) we are regarded as local and yet [we] operate nationwide (...)"
Imagination of a future identity	Speculating and imagining of new, future identities	"(...) we will not be here as AffCo's fist, but as MCorp's finger."
Perpetuation	Construction of persistence for (undesirable) identity attributes	
Metaphors of 'stickiness'	Constructing persistence for certain established, and usually undesirable, identity-attributes from the past	"But customers still come to Z-Phone and to the telephone cooperative, whatever name is on the roof won't make any difference."
Construction	Construction of continuity for (desirable) identity attributes	
Metaphors of continuity	Constructing coherence between present and future identities	"We will carry on with the AffCo identity (...)"
Identity reinforcing rhetoric	Strengthening the understandings of "who we are" by referring to or denying a certain type of behaviour or action and/or by using identity reinforcing metaphors and expressions	"We are an independent company and we make independent decisions (...)"

When we look at the strategies identified in the data more closely, we can see differences in how they treat the notions of the past, the present, and the future. We can, thus, further examine these discursive strategies in terms of how they differ in their *temporal orientation*. By taking into account the capacity of individuals to use discourse strategically (Hardy et al. 2000), social actors could use different temporal orientations in their language use for achieving certain objectives in their talk. On some occasions, it was beneficial for the speaker to use more past-oriented strategies, whereas on some other occasions more future-oriented strategies were more effective in achieving particular objectives in talk.

By drawing on Emirbayer's and Mische's (1998, 963) notion that human agency is a "temporally embedded process of social engagement" informed by the past in its habitual aspect, but also oriented toward the future as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities, we can differentiate between *iterative* and *prospective* strategies. Iterative strategies were primarily oriented toward the past, whereas prospective strategies were primarily future-oriented. Social actors engaged in projective imagination of the future by mobilizing constructive and transformative discursive strategies. Both of these strategies gave shape and direction to future possibilities and constructed images of "where we are going", "where we want to go", or "how we can get there from where we are at present". Perpetuative and destructive strategies were more past- than future-oriented and thus iterative by nature. These strategies constructed images of "who we have been", "who we have become", or "who we still are at present".

When both the temporal orientation and the function of discursive strategies are taken into account, we can place the strategies identified in the data in a matrix figure (see Figure 10). It is noteworthy that the different strategy types presented in the matrix are analytical categories, and in the texts they often appear to be combined and intertwined.

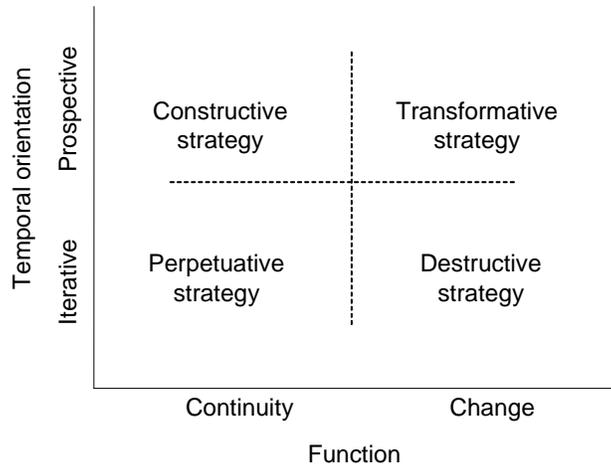


Figure 10 Discursive strategies differ in their function and temporal orientation

So far, I have examined discourse types and discursive strategies separately in this study. When both the discourse types and the discursive strategies that were identified in the data are combined, we can examine the interplay between agency and structure in the construction of organizational identity with empirical examples. In Table 11, I have illustrated with quotations from the data, how social actors – by mobilizing different discursive strategies and by drawing on different discourse types as their resources – were able to creatively create and shape the meanings of “who we are” in their language use.

In the following chapter, the interplay of discursive strategies and discourse types is examined in more detail in the situational and temporal context of their production.

Table 11 Examples of the interplay between the discursive strategies and discourse types identified in the data

Discourse type Discursive strategy	Economic-rationalistic	Power	Cultural
Construction	"We will continue in all business areas!"	"We are an independent company and we make independent decisions."	"Locality will remain strong (...)"
Perpetuation	"This is no doubt like a smokestack industry, really. It's as stable as an industry or business can be."	"There has been fighting behind closed doors and there is still fighting (...)"	"But customers will still come to Z-Phone and to the telephone cooperative, whatever name is on the roof won't make any difference."
Destruction	"As a result of an agreement between MCorp and AffCo signed in March, AffCo has now become MCorp's subsidiary."	"(...) before we were completely independent. We did everything ourselves, internally. [We] had our own services, our own products, and then you could influence the support things in a completely different way. Now we are downright dependent on others."	"(...) the whole set of values has changed fundamentally here since we got listed. Now only money counts everywhere."
Transformation	"AffCo is sort of – maybe like an old-fashioned elephant – and has remained in a sense in the bureaucratic era (...) Keeping up with the times requires that operations in some respect are rationalized out of the stone age level."	"(...) we will not be here as AffCo's fist, but as MCorp's finger."	"(...) we are going in a direction that we take merely the nationwideness with good and bad sides and throw the locality to the hell."

4.4 ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN THE ACQUISITION CONTEXT

The examples that I used to illustrate the discursive strategies and resources in the previous chapter were presented as extracts detached from the context of their production. In this chapter, the emphasis is not on the discursive strategies and discourse types *per se*, but on their use in various temporal and situational contexts. The aim is to examine *when*, *where*, and *by whom* the various discursive strategies were mobilized and the different discursive resources were drawn upon, and how the identity construction process evolved over time during the acquisition process.

The question of *when* the language is used refers to the historical context of identity construction. Language use does not happen in a vacuum; it is related to historical events and to the wider social context where the discursive activity takes place (Fairclough 1992). Especially relevant from the viewpoint of this study is how language use by social actors was related to the various events and timepoints of the acquisition process.

AffCo's acquisition process is examined in this study through three temporal lenses, which I have identified over the five-year period covered by this study (see Figure 11). The first lens is called the 'pre-acquisition period' and it corresponds to the period from the preparations for AffCo's public listing to MCorp's initial offer to AffCo's shareholders covering a time span from January year 1 to March year 4. The second temporal lens refers to the period from MCorp's initial offer to AffCo's shareholders to its 100% ownership of AffCo covering a time span from March year 4 to December year 4. This period is called the 'acquisition period'. The last temporal lens is called the 'post-acquisition period', and it corresponds to the time span from January year 5, when AffCo legally became MCorp's subsidiary, to April year 6, when data production for this study ended. At this point, AffCo's merger with MCorp was still ongoing, and it was completed 14 months later.

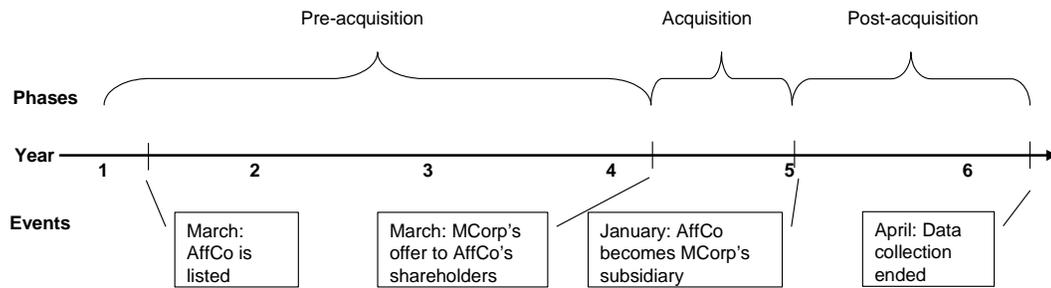


Figure 11 Temporal context of the analysis

In addition to the question of when the language is used, I am also interested in how the language use of social actors varied depending on *where* the language is used. This refers to the various social arenas in which organizational identity work is done. The social arenas where the data for this study were produced can be compared, for example, in their degree of publicity (see Figure 12). For example, a discussion between a researcher and an interviewee can be regarded as more private than an article in a national newspaper. The higher the publicity of the social arena, the wider the audience the speaker has to take into account. By taking into account the notion of audience, we can better interpret the purpose of texts, for example, why certain discourse types were more beneficial for social actors to use than certain others in a particular social arena.

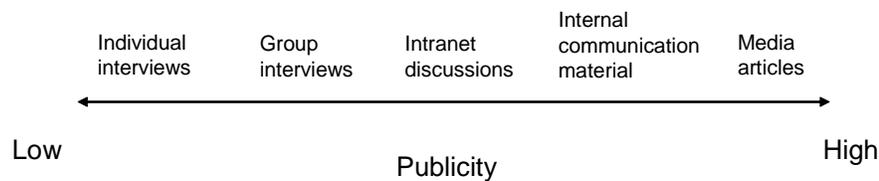


Figure 12 Publicity of social arenas analyzed in this study

A third interesting feature of the data is *by whom* the language is used. This question is related, for example, to the formal organizational position of the speaker or to whether the speaker is an ‘insider’ or an ‘outsider’ in relation to the organization. Also, the notion of whether the speaker is identifiable or anonymous is of interest. For example, one might assume that the speaker may use a variety of face-saving strategies when he or she is identifiable, whereas anonymity leaves more space for resistance because it hides the formal power relations.

Next, organizational identity construction is examined in detail, taking into account when, where, and by whom the language is used. The analysis starts from the pre-acquisition period.

4.4.1 PRE-ACQUISITION PERIOD

The first temporal lens examines the period from January year 1, when AffCo was preparing its public listing for the Helsinki Stock Exchange, to March year 4, when MCorp's initial offer to AffCo's shareholders to buy the remaining of AffCo's shares was announced.

The texts examined in the following are produced in the aftermath of the governmental deregulation of the Finnish telecommunication industry. Deregulation forced local telephone cooperatives to consider new strategic ideas in order to survive and succeed in their new competitive environment. As a response to market pressures, collaboration between regional telephone cooperatives became more intense at the time. One strategic attempt was to found a nationwide alliance of regional telephone companies, and AffCo also took part in these negotiations. However, the negotiations did not succeed in the intended way, and AffCo withdrew from them in year 1.

In March year 1, AffCo was listed on the Helsinki Stock Exchange, and only a few months after the listing, MCorp became its major owner. During the three-year period after MCorp's initial purchase, AffCo and MCorp operated in close cooperation, with cross-ownership of each others' shares. AffCo had a small holding in MCorp's successful subsidiary, and MCorp gradually increased its ownership in AffCo. During the period, AffCo made profitable business and had intensive growth visions. As part of the growth strategy, AffCo changed its visual identity and name in the end of the period¹⁷.

In addition to these events, the discussions during the pre-acquisition period also dealt with AffCo's customer service improvement, which was one of the strategic themes relevant for AffCo at the time.

¹⁷ Before the name change, AffCo was named after the city where it operates (Z-Phone).

In this chapter, I will examine the discursive construction of AffCo identity in five different social arenas during this period. These arenas are 1) media texts, 2) internal managerial texts, 3) interviews with senior managers, 4) interviews with middle managers, and 5) interviews with operative employees.

4.4.1.1 Media texts during the pre-acquisition period

During the pre-acquisition period, most of the articles dealing with AffCo-related events in the media were framed around economic-rationalistic arguments and in that way reflected the dominant business discourse in the media in general and the way in which mergers and acquisitions are legitimized in public in particular (see e.g. Vaara & Tienari 2002; Tienari et al. 2003; Vaara et al. 2006). Economic-rationalistic arguments were used in justifying and legitimizing managerial decisions and actions during the period, such as AffCo's public listing, MCorp's increasing ownership of AffCo, and AffCo's name change.

The reasons that were given for AffCo's public listing in the media were economic; money was needed for growth through acquisitions and to realize investments that were related to AffCo's efforts to expand to new market areas. Public listing was thus constructed as a solution for perceived business needs related to AffCo's strategic intentions. Managerial talk was forward-looking, emphasizing AffCo's strategic future direction and development needs:

42: "Getting listed opens up an opportunity to make good use of the capital market. Money is needed, for example, for potential acquisitions and transforming the landline network for multimedia use." (AffCo's managers in a national business newspaper, year 1) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Transformative strategy)

43: "Money is needed, since we are looking actively for companies worth buying that support our strategy." (AffCo's administrative director in a national business newspaper, year 3) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Transformative strategy)

The economic-rationalistic discourse was a resource for managers not only to justify the public listing *per se*, but also to build a business-oriented identity for AffCo in the eyes of its potential shareholders, customers, and own employees. Managerial argumentation in the media constructed an image of AffCo as a growing company actively seeking partners and acquisition targets that would support its own strategic intents. In

their language use, they constructed an ideal future identity for AffCo and outlined actions that would realize what the company wanted to be in the future.

Not only managers, but also journalists contributed to the construction of AffCo's business-oriented identity in the public arena. For example, journalists referred to AffCo as a company that was gradually starting to resemble a "real listed company", when members of its politically elected board of directors were replaced by business professionals. As such, journalists rhetorically constructed a change in AffCo identity from a cooperative into a listed company:

44: "The administrative bodies of AffCo are also gradually beginning to resemble those of a listed company." (National business newspaper, year 3) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Destructive strategy)

Journalists also highlighted the personal achievements and managerial skills of AffCo's managing director in the media and constructed him as a 'strategic manager' who was leading the company from a cooperative past to the financial market.

In general, AffCo's public listing was pictured in the media in a highly positive light at the time. Hence, the way in which the media constructed events and actions related to the public listing contributed to the normalization of the ideals of neo-liberalism that the economic-rationalistic discourse reproduces. For example, media texts presented stock exchange listings in the telecommunications industry as an inevitable phenomenon necessary for survival in the competition.

If the argumentation of managers and journalists was relatively coherent with regard to AffCo's public listing, there was more variation in the media texts with respect to MCorp's ownership of AffCo. The dynamic between journalists and managers presented an interesting discursive struggle in the media over AffCo identity, when AffCo was constructed as both an independent company and one dominated by MCorp, depending on what purpose various discursive resources were drawn upon in their language use.

It was typical of journalists to construct MCorp's intention to increase its ownership of AffCo as a takeover initiative and domination attempt and thus to construct AffCo as a victim of MCorp's domination by drawing on the power discourse. Journalists also used the 'big brother' metaphor in reference to MCorp, which connotes the

owner company's dominant position vis-à-vis the associated company (see extract 46).

Managers, for their part, used economic-rationalistic arguments in their defensive rhetoric against the power discourse drawn upon by the journalists. For example, speculation in the media about MCorp's thirst for power with regard to its interest in AffCo was undermined by managers by justifying ownership for rational partnership or collaboration purposes. Managers constructed AffCo and MCorp as business partners, thus undermining the construction of an unequal power position between the companies by journalists:

45: "We do not pay for power, but for rational business cooperation (...)" (MCorp's managing director in a national business newspaper, year 1) (Power discourse; Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)

46: "In so choosing, MCorp could also exercise a strong master's voice in AffCo. For example, in the shareholders' meeting this spring, MCorp's company network was guaranteed with over half of total votes. At AffCo, however, it is not admitted that [the company] is on its big brother's leash. 'We are an independent company and we make independent decisions', emphasizes administrative director [name]. He sees MCorp as a good cooperation partner, for example, in R&D and in bringing in major customers." (National business newspaper, year 1) (Power discourse; Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)

Both AffCo's and MCorp's managers worked hard to construct an independent and autonomous identity for AffCo in the media. In addition to picturing MCorp as a strategic partner, it was also essential in the construction of autonomy to emphasize AffCo's own decision-making power vis-à-vis its owner (see extract 46). It was important to construct MCorp's ownership as a result of the strategic thinking and initiatives of AffCo's managers by emphasizing the benefits that the partnership with MCorp would bring to AffCo. In this way, AffCo was presented as an actor with credible agency, not as a victim or a passive implementer of MCorp's orders.

Even though most of the public argumentation used by the managers constructed the relationship between AffCo and MCorp as equal, there was an exception in the data that is worth mentioning. It is related to the 'big brother' metaphor that AffCo's managing director used himself in reference to MCorp:

47: "It is pleasant to note that the big brother from the south has also found AffCo a good and attractive company." (AffCo's managing director in a local newspaper, year 1) (Power discourse; Constructive strategy)

At first sight, the managing director's comment seems to conform to other public managerial texts, since he constructs MCorp's interest in AffCo as a positive and favourable issue. However, when reading the quotation more closely, my attention focused on the 'big brother' metaphor used by the managing director. By employing this relatively often used and 'harmful' metaphor, he categorized AffCo as less 'mature' than MCorp and engaged in constructing an inferior position for AffCo vis-à-vis MCorp (see Vaara et al. 2003). Earlier research has shown that the construction of a little brother–big brother relationship is typical in the context of mergers and acquisitions and reflects a patronizing attitude and dominant position on the part of the acquiring company (ibid.). However, it is less often used by representatives of the acquired company in the self-construction of an inferior position (ibid.).

In addition to the economic-rationalistic and power discourses, the cultural discourse also appeared in the media texts. Within this framework, AffCo was produced as a local, traditional, and regional company, and these characteristics were constructed as essential pillars of its identity. Often those drawing on the cultural discourse based their own identification with AffCo strongly on the cultural characteristics that they attributed to the company. For example, AffCo's public listing aroused a 'regional spirit' among its minor shareholders, and the decision to either sell their telephone share or to keep it for themselves was not based on a rational calculation, but on 'irrational' cultural sentiments:

48: "In our family, the telephone share has been passed down to me from my father. My father, for his part, got it from his dad. Now I am about to make a decision concerning the destiny of the heritage (...)" (AffCo's shareholder in a local newspaper, year 1) (Cultural discourse; Constructive strategy)

Interestingly, the regional spirit of minor shareholders was constructed as a problem for AffCo's public listing in the argumentation of financial experts. Financial experts thus drew upon cultural arguments in determining why AffCo's share exchange had proceeded more slowly than expected:

49: "I believe that it is a matter of some sort of [regionality]. People want to keep their "own" telephone company's shares for themselves at least so far (...)" (Financial expert in a local newspaper, year 1) (Cultural discourse; Constructive strategy)

The relationship between AffCo and MCorp was also pictured in the media in terms of a regional confrontation, thus drawing upon both the cultural and the power dis-

courses. The following extract, which is from a larger article about AffCo's third meeting of shareholders, provides an example of this. By presenting the meeting as a confrontation between MCorp and AffCo's minor shareholders, the text also constructs a struggle between the *regions* that both parties symbolize. For local, minor shareholders AffCo was a symbol of their own regional identity, of 'pride in their region', which they lost rapidly to MCorp after AffCo's public listing:

50: "The bitterness and rebellious spirit of minor shareholders stem from two years ago when AffCo was transformed from a cooperative into a public company. MCorp quickly incorporated the [region's] pride into its own sphere of power." (National business newspaper, year 3) (Cultural discourse; Power discourse; Destructive strategy)

The cultural discourse was drawn upon by the managers of AffCo and MCorp for purposes of reassuring in the media. They both worked to reassure the public of the continuity of AffCo's regional and local identity in the future, despite MCorp's growing ownership. This kind of reassuring argumentation appeared especially in the local newspaper, whose target audience was AffCo's local stakeholders, such as customers, employees, and minor shareholders, whose favourable attitude toward the acquisition can be seen as crucial for future success:

51: "I do not believe, however, that if MCorp comes to [the city where AffCo operates], it will put MCorp signboards on the roof. If I were MCorp's manager, I would not do it. AffCo has a strong [regional and local] identity and it is also the foundation of customer relations to a large extent." (AffCo's administrative director in a local newspaper, year 1) (Cultural discourse; Constructive strategy)

At the end of the pre-acquisition period, there was an interesting discursive struggle over AffCo's regional identity in the media when the company changed its name and visual identity. Due to this change, the name of the city where AffCo operates disappeared from its name, but the new name had, however, a connection with AffCo's local roots. On the one hand, AffCo's locality and regionality were constructed as a 'burden' for the company, which the managers wanted to get rid of in order to succeed in their expansion into national and international market areas (see extract 52). On the other hand, locality and regionality were produced as important building blocks of AffCo's future identity, which were also preserved in the new name of the company (see extract 53).

This kind of contradictory talk can be seen as an attempt to meet the multiple expectations that different constituencies have about the company. Even though managers

constructed a new, national, or even international identity for the company, it was still beneficial for them to sustain certain regional characteristics in their argumentation. AffCo's name change received a lot of critical publicity in the local newspaper, and managers tried to alleviate the criticism against them by emphasizing the value of the region where they operate despite the name change. As such, managers tried to increase the legitimacy of their undertakings in the eyes of AffCo's local stakeholders (see Suchman 1995).

52: "The company is already more than [the city where AffCo operates] and telephone, in the future more and more a national and international actor (...)" (AffCo's managing director in a local newspaper, year 4) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Destructive strategy; Transformative strategy)

53: "We want to be a company that keeps its headquarters in [the city where AffCo operates], which stems from [local] roots." (AffCo's managing director in a local newspaper, year 4) (Cultural discourse; Constructive strategy)

4.4.1.2 Internal managerial texts during the pre-acquisition period

It is characteristic of internal managerial texts during the pre-acquisition period to emphasize the need for AffCo to change, which was seen as inevitable if it was to survive in the changing telecommunications industry. There were three features in AffCo's current identity that were constructed as problems for its competitiveness at the time: AffCo's past as a cooperative, its locality and regionality, and its identity as a mere telephone company. Managerial actions and decisions during the period such as the public listing, the customer service improvement project, the change in company name and visual identity, and cooperation with MCorp were justified as solutions for perceived problems in AffCo's current identity.

The decision to withdraw from the regional telephone company alliance negotiations and intensifying cooperation with MCorp were given sense through a metaphor of "transition from 'collectivism' to a normal daily order of business" in managerial communication. Collaboration based on (economic) benefit, not on 'voluntary work', was presented as normal or natural for a business enterprise and, hence, a welcome solution for the 'collectivism' that characterizes the nature of cooperative organizations:

54: "(...) we are no longer voluntarily building a large joint concern. Instead, we are proceeding more on the basis of the interests of individual companies. So we work together

when both/all parties feel like there's something in it for them. In a way, this is also a move from 'collectivism' to a normal order of business." (AffCo's development manager in the employee newspaper, year 1) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Destructive strategy)

Partners with whom AffCo could expand its business from local to national or international markets were presented as a solution to the problem of 'localism' that characterized its current identity. Also, instead of merely providing telephone calls, managers emphasized the need for know-how in new business areas in order to provide, for example, wireless telecommunications solutions to the customers:

55: "We will look for partners with whom we are able to offer comprehensive telecommunication solutions regionally, nationally, and also internationally." (AffCo's managing director in the employee newspaper, year 1) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Transformative strategy)

It was typical of internal managerial communication to picture AffCo as an active agent looking for the partners that would fit its own objectives and goals. With suitable partners AffCo was constructed as being able to realize its strategic intents, and thus partnership was constructed as a solution to its current, problematic situation. This kind of argumentation also helped to promote the relationship between AffCo and MCorp as one based on mutual interests and benefits, thereby highlighting AffCo's autonomy in making decisions concerning its future direction.

Internal managerial communication during the pre-acquisition period provided direction for AffCo's employees about who the company wants to become in the future. The overall vocabulary that was used in internal managerial communication at the time contributed to the construction of a new organizational identity for the company. The attributes that were used to characterize AffCo's desired future identity in the managerial communication – for example, 'dynamic', 'modern', 'progressive', 'pioneering', and 'business-oriented' – differed from the vocabulary that had characterized the traditional cooperative identity of the company and thus contributed to the construction of change in AffCo identity.

Despite the mostly transformative nature of managerial talk at the time, there was, however, a simultaneous reinforcement of some features in AffCo's traditional identity. Even though managers emphasized the need to get rid of the image of a regional telephone company, there was a simultaneous reinforcement of the importance of its

regional role. Managerial rhetoric thus functioned to transform and sustain the very same feature of AffCo identity:

56: "Until very recently, AffCo persistently built and strengthened its position as a traditional regional telephone company. In the future that role will certainly remain the same, but another direction in AffCo's development could also be to provide national services." (AffCo's R&D manager in the employee newspaper, year 2) (Cultural discourse; Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy; Transformative strategy)

The strong focus on AffCo's regionality in internal managerial communication can be interpreted as an effort to provide a sense of familiarity and to facilitate acceptance of change among employees (see Pondy 1983): a renewed identity is possible without threatening the enduringness of AffCo's traditional identity.

It was typical of internal managerial texts to emphasize that AffCo was going through 'a total cultural change' with 'no precedent' in company history. All the change events that AffCo had encountered within a short period – the public listing, the customer service improvement project, the change in company name and visual identity, MCorp's growing ownership of AffCo, and turbulence in the industry – were constructed as evidence of this historical change process. This kind of rhetoric intensified the weight and importance of the ongoing changes in the stream of AffCo's 100-year old history and helped to focus employees' attention and energy on the change efforts.

4.4.1.3 The interviews with senior managers during the pre-acquisition period

In the interviews made during the pre-acquisition period, senior managers gave sense to and made sense of the changes that AffCo had gone through and reflected their implications for managerial work. For example, they stressed that AffCo's rules of communication have changed because of the listed company status, which had complicated internal managerial communication. Also, there were new stakeholder groups to be taken into account in external communication; this increased the challenges to managerial communication:

57: "(...) during the cooperative [era] everything could be said as early as you wanted. Now you have to keep your mouth shut quite a long time." (Cultural discourse; Destructive strategy)

58: "(...) you have to remember the investor, which is of course a new aspect compared with those cooperative times. We had only members and customers. Now [we] have inves-

tors and owners, whose role must be remembered.” (Cultural discourse; Destructive strategy)

Senior managers also made sense of and gave sense to the change from a cooperative into a listed company by quoting investors’ perceptions of the company and their experiences of its renewal. Whereas AffCo was seen before as an “order reception office”, the current image of the company was that of a public company:

59: “(...) when investors came, when we had the opening a week and a half ago, they noted that [it] now looks a bit like a public company. Before this it was like an order reception office.” (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Destructive strategy)

As in internal managerial communication (see chapter 4.4.1.2), the interviews with senior managers also emphasized the need for AffCo to change in order to survive in the present competitive environment. The regional market focus was not seen as competitive enough, and it was necessary to specialize in chosen areas instead of mastering everything alone. Furthermore, senior managers stressed AffCo’s intention to expand through acquisitions:

60: “(...) we have to specialize more strongly in some direction. One cannot be good in everything anymore in this world.” (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Transformative strategy)

61: “Now it is not enough anymore to be the leading telecommunications deliverer [in the region where AffCo operates]. We have to expand that entity.” (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Transformative strategy)

62: “We have said clearly that we will also expand into acquisitions.” (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Transformative strategy)

AffCo’s relationship with MCorp was constructed in the interviews with senior managers as one based on consensus and joint interests. The interviewees reproduced the dominant economic-rationalistic discourse within which managers also constructed the relationship with MCorp in other arenas during this period:

63: “(...) we have of course one big major owner, with whom the goal has so far been very consistent. According to their latest announcement, neither are they interested in increasing their ownership here.” (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)

4.4.1.4 The interviews with middle managers during the pre-acquisition period

One of the strategic themes at AffCo during the pre-acquisition period was customer service improvement, which aimed at streamlining AffCo’s internal processes and shaping the company culture in a more customer-oriented direction. The interviews

conducted with middle managers show that improvement of customer service processes was seen as necessary in getting rid of AffCo's cooperative identity, which shadowed its image in the eyes of its customers:

64: *"(...) we have a past in the co-operative, and thus the customer may very easily [think] that you will not get it [service] from the co-operative this month." (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Perpetuative strategy)*

AffCo appeared to the interviewees as an "old-fashioned elephant" that had remained in the "stone age" or "bureaucratic era", for which rationalization of operations was "a real necessity" if it was to survive the competition. The inevitability of change was constructed in the interviewees' talk with normative expressions such as 'we must', 'we should' and 'it is necessary':

65: *"AffCo is sort of – maybe like an old-fashioned elephant – and has remained in a sense in the bureaucratic era (...) Keeping up with the times requires that operations in some respects are rationalized out of the stone age level. It simply has to be done. Otherwise what we do will be so expensive that it won't make any sense." (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Transformative strategy)*

In addition to cooperative identity, AffCo's regionality was also problematized in the interviews with middle managers. Middle managers reproduced the same pattern in their talk as senior managers at the time. Also, like the internal managerial texts, the middle managers also constructed the need to remain local in the future despite the new directions that should be explored:

66: *"(...) AffCo is kind of a local company, operated locally to a large degree. Some things have also been made nationwide, but the direction should be to expand our own lot, in one way or another. This does not of course mean that in our enthusiasm we forget these local issues in which we have been so good." (Cultural discourse; Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy; Transformative strategy)*

Middle managers constructed the change from a cooperative into a listed company in a positive light, since it helped to get rid of an 'establishment' identity and to become a more 'dynamic' and 'business-oriented' company, as the following quotations from middle managers illustrate:

67: *"(...) this public company thing was good for AffCo, I mean, we got rid of a kind of establishment culture. I think this is quite a dynamic company." (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Destructive strategy)*

68: *"(...) Things have cleared up while I've been here, because we were then an institution and now we are clearly a business." (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Destructive strategy)*

Middle managers were optimistic and hopeful about AffCo's future and constructed a strong agency for the company as an actor looking actively for a partner that would suit its own interests and benefits:

69: *"Q: How, if [we] now think about AffCo as an entity or a company, how do you see AffCo's future?"*

A: *Optimistic, very optimistic. It has found its ally, and I really believe that some kind of a shared strategy is going to emerge, meaning who does things, where are they done, what are they, and who supports them." (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Transformative strategy)*

4.4.1.5 The interviews with operative employees during the pre-acquisition period

Also, operative employees engaged in making sense of AffCo's change process from a cooperative to its present status as a listed company. However, unlike the senior and middle managers, operative employees constructed the change process in less optimistic terms. For example, one of the operative employees argued that it is only money that counts in AffCo after it was listed on the stock exchange:

70: *"(...) the whole set of values has fundamentally changed here since we got listed. Now only money counts everywhere." (Cultural discourse; Destructive strategy)*

Furthermore, operative employees felt that AffCo did not have a coherent culture anymore, and people did not 'pull together' as in the old times:

71: *"(...) the company's style has otherwise changed. Even though a manager talks about pulling together, I think that people pull in quite many directions here." (Cultural discourse; Destructive strategy)*

Also, operative employees were concerned about AffCo's need to change in the future, but they were sceptical about how successfully they could realize the intended changes. Employees constructed a gap between AffCo's desired future image and how they perceived that customers saw the company at present. They felt that AffCo's identity as a traditional telephone operator would stay in customers' 'heads', which was at odds with the desired future image of the company; this was to be "the creator of connections and number one in the field":

72: *"Well, what it [the desired future image] is at moment is to be the creator of connections and number one in the field. (...) but how could one get it into the customers' heads so that they would be more interested in the sectors that are possible, so that there is something besides telephones." (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Perpetuative strategy)*

The views of AffCo's employees about the company's future were strongly tied to its relationship with MCorp. The relationship with MCorp was constructed either in terms of a threat or an opportunity, depending on the speaker. In more positive versions of the future, MCorp was constructed as providing opportunities for AffCo to develop and realize its strategic intents. Even the potential merger with MCorp was not presented as a threat, but as an opportunity:

73: "This is certainly the kind of company that will develop and will be developed, since we have that big brother watching us." (Power discourse; Constructive strategy)

74: "The big brother MCorp has a slight influence (...) This AffCo is too a big to be a small institution or (...) a company, but anyhow too small to be a kind of national (...) opinion leader. Through MCorp we may become something. Either we will merge with it or remain AffCo. I myself think that within five years we will be the same company with MCorp. It is not necessarily a bad thing." (Power discourse; Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy; Transformative strategy)

In the more optimistic versions of the future, MCorp was constructed as a 'big brother' (cf. extract 47) contributing to AffCo's development and keeping an eye on it. AffCo was thus produced as dependent on MCorp and in need of its support and guidance in 'becoming something' in the future. In the more pessimistic versions of the future, MCorp was constructed as a source of fear and ambiguity, and the future was seen as unclear because of the threat posed by MCorp. Then, fear about the loss of one's own identity and becoming MCorp caused worry and uncertainty amongst the employees:

75: "(...) it [AffCo's future] is a total mystery for all of us and it seems very likely that one day AffCo will be the same as MCorp. Somehow, everybody is kind of apprehensive about what our future will be, like, how strongly [will it be] MCorp (...)" (Cultural discourse; Transformative strategy)

Not every operative employee saw AffCo's future as tied to MCorp, even though it was the most common frame in the interviews. As the following quotation illustrates, one operative employee believed in the continuity of the AffCo identity in the future, at least as long as the respected managing director – a strong symbol of AffCo – remained on the job:

76: "(...) at least as long as he [the former managing director] is here, he has said until he's 65, four or five more years, well then I believe that at least during that time AffCo will be AffCo." (Cultural discourse; Constructive strategy)

4.4.1.6 Summary

By mobilizing various discursive strategies and drawing on different discursive resources, social actors were able to negotiate various identities for AffCo during the pre-acquisition period. These findings from the analysis of the texts produced in various social arenas and by various social actors are summarized in the following.

It was characteristic of managerial talk in the public arena, in local and national newspapers, to build an image of AffCo as a growing and progressive company and to rhetorically construct for AffCo a new identity as a listed company. The economic-rationalistic discourse was a resource for managers to justify various change efforts and to build a business-oriented identity for AffCo in the eyes of its many stakeholders. It was easy for managers to win public acceptance for the change process, since public listings were at the time discussed uncritically, if not affirmatively, in the press. As such, the media contributed to the naturalization of public listings and their economic rationales as legitimate business ideals.

AffCo's regionality was constructed in contradictory ways by the media at the time. On the one hand, managers problematized AffCo's regionality and locality and constructed them as a burden for realization of the company's growth and expansion plans. On the other hand, there was simultaneous reinforcement of the importance of AffCo's regional roots, and managers presented them as a value for the company. This kind of contradictory talk can be seen as a means of striking a balance between various expectations towards the company. It was advantageous for managers to build a national or even international image of the company in the eyes of investors, but, at the same time, to keep AffCo's local stakeholders convinced of the continuity of AffCo's traditional identity. Indeed, several change events, such as the public listing and the name change, aroused a 'regional spirit' amongst AffCo's local stakeholders, and thus the company's change process became a regional issue in the media.

Furthermore, in this kind of 'regionalist' atmosphere, it was important for managers to present MCorp's ownership of AffCo in terms of a 'strategic partnership' and to emphasize AffCo's voluntarism toward MCorp's ownership and to highlight AffCo's independent position vis-à-vis MCorp. This was important, because journalists contributed to the construction of a dependent and dominated identity for AffCo, when

they wrote about the resistance of AffCo's minor, local shareholders to MCorp's increasing ownership. Both MCorp's and AffCo's managers worked hard to sustain AffCo's autonomous and independent identity in their talk in order to gain legitimacy for MCorp's undertakings.

Even though managers seemed to use discourse strategically for building an autonomous identity for AffCo, their use of certain metaphors can, however, be interpreted as an example of more automatic and unconscious engagement in discursive activity. When MCorp was referred to as 'big brother', managers contributed to the construction of an inferior position for AffCo vis-à-vis MCorp that contradicted their dominant 'strategic partnership' and 'independence' rhetoric, which emphasized equality between the companies. While using established discursive practices more or less automatically, managers eventually produced and sustained certain meanings and versions of reality non-deliberately.

Managers' internal communication reproduced to a large extent those themes that appeared in the media at the time. Managers emphasized AffCo's visions for growth, but, at the same time, highlighted the continuity of its regional identity. Compared with their public rhetoric, managers used more destructive strategies to give sense to the change from a cooperative to a listed company in their internal communication. This can be interpreted as part of change management, in that destructive strategies helped to facilitate employees' understanding of the changes that the company had gone through.

In one-to-one interviews, senior managers made sense of and gave sense to AffCo's new role as a listed company and the changes that it brought for managerial work. They also emphasized AffCo's need to grow, to expand, and to specialize in chosen areas and problematized AffCo's past as a cooperative and its strong, regional market focus. These same themes appeared in the interviews with middle managers. In the interviews with both senior and middle managers, AffCo's public listing was constructed as a solution to transform the company in a more dynamic and business-oriented direction. Furthermore, both senior managers and middle managers were optimistic and hopeful about AffCo's future and constructed a strong agency for the company in shaping its own future direction.

There was a contrast between the interviews with senior managers and middle managers and those with operative employees regarding how AffCo's change process was constructed and what kind of meanings were attached to it. Whereas in the interviews with senior and middle managers, AffCo's transformation from a cooperative to a listed company was produced as an opportunity to become a dynamic, customer-oriented, and progressive organization, operative employees saw the change in terms of a loss of integrity and a turn toward a more capitalist culture. They were also sceptical about the realization of AffCo's desired future image because of AffCo's strong current image as a traditional telephone cooperative. Unlike the interviews with senior and middle managers, those with operative employees constructed AffCo's future as mostly dependent on MCorp's will and desire rather than on AffCo's own initiative.

Table 12 summarizes how social actors used various discourse types as their resources in shaping AffCo identity in various social arenas during the pre-acquisition period.

Table 12 A summary of how social actors used discourse types as resources in shaping AffCo identity in various social arenas during the pre-acquisition period

Social arena	Social actor	Economic-rationalistic discourse	Power discourse	Cultural discourse	
Media texts	Senior managers	<p>A resource to build a business-oriented identity for AffCo through giving sense to strategic actions that would realize AffCo's ideal future identity (<i>transformative strategy</i>)</p> <p>A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo and MCorp as equal through the use of a 'strategic partner' metaphor</p> <p>A resource to <i>destruct</i> AffCo's local telephone company identity and to <i>transform</i> AffCo into a national and international actor</p>	<p>A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as independent and autonomous vis-à-vis MCorp</p> <p>(Presumably unintentional) use of a taken-for-granted 'big brother' metaphor with reference to MCorp <i>constructed</i> AffCo as inferior to MCorp</p>	<p>A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as a regional and local company especially in the eyes of its local constituencies</p>	
	Journalists	<p>A resource to <i>destruct</i> AffCo's cooperative identity by presenting it as having become a 'real listed company'</p>	<p>A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as inferior to MCorp through the use of a 'little brother' metaphor with reference to AffCo</p>	<p>A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as anchored to its region by referring to its telephone shares as 'family heritage'</p>	
			<p>AffCo is referred to as a 'regional pride', which MCorp has affiliated to include in its 'sphere of power' (<i>destructive strategy</i>)</p>		
	Local shareholders				
	Financial experts				<p>AffCo's strong regional identity was constructed as a problem for its public listing (<i>Constructive strategy</i>)</p>
Employee magazine and newsletters	Senior managers	<p>A resource to <i>destruct</i> AffCo's telephone cooperative identity and to <i>transform</i> AffCo into a 'telecommunications solution provider'</p>		<p>A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as a traditional and regional telephone company</p>	
One-on-one interviews	Senior managers	<p>A resource to <i>transform</i> AffCo's local, telephone company identity through 'specialization', 'expansion', and 'growth through acquisitions'</p> <p>A resource to <i>construct</i> the relationship between AffCo and MCorp as equal by means of referring to mutual interests between the companies</p>		<p>A resource to make sense of / give sense to the change from a cooperative to a listed company by referring to changes in company communication culture (<i>destructive strategy</i>)</p>	

Social arena	Social actor	Economic-rationalistic discourse	Power discourse	Cultural discourse
	Middle managers	<p>A resource to argue the persistence of AffCo's cooperative image in the eyes of the customers (<i>perpetuative</i> strategy)</p> <p>A resource to <i>transform</i> AffCo's cooperative image into a dynamic business-oriented image</p> <p>A resource to make sense of / give sense to AffCo's change from an 'institution' into a 'dynamic' company (<i>destructive</i> strategy)</p>		<p>A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as a local company</p> <p>A resource to <i>transform</i> AffCo's local identity into a national identity</p>
	Operative employees	<p>A resource to <i>transform</i> AffCo's cooperative image into a dynamic business-oriented image in the eyes of the customers</p>	<p>A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as inferior to MCorp through the use of a 'little brother' metaphor with reference to AffCo</p> <p>A resource to construct a positive and hopeful scenario of AffCo's future as part of MCorp (<i>transformative</i> strategy)</p>	<p>A resource to <i>construct</i> continuity for AffCo-identity by referring to AffCo's managing director's remaining years in the company before his retirement</p> <p>A resource to make sense of / give sense to the change from traditional and monolithic identity into a business-oriented identity by referring to prevailing economic values in the company (<i>destructive</i> strategy)</p> <p>A resource to construct a negative and frightening scenario of AffCo's future as part of MCorp (<i>transformative</i> strategy)</p>

4.4.2 ACQUISITION PERIOD

In this chapter, I will examine the texts produced during the period from MCorp's initial offer to AffCo's shareholders to buy the remaining shares to the end of year 4, when AffCo legally became MCorp's subsidiary.

Only a few months after the change in AffCo's name and visual identity, MCorp made an offer to AffCo's minor shareholders to buy the remaining shares in order to gain complete control of AffCo. By the end of the same year, 9 months after the initial offer, MCorp had acquired AffCo's entire share capital, and AffCo officially became MCorp's subsidiary. AffCo kept its own name despite the acquisition.

AffCo's network and service operator businesses were incorporated into AffCo Service and AffCo Network, and AffCo's corporate function disappeared. Both companies obtained new managing directors, and AffCo's long-term managing director retired. AffCo Service's managing director came from the parent company.

At the end of the year 4, MCorp started negotiations regarding layoffs with its personnel as part of the cost-saving strategy. These negotiations were conducted in AffCo's service operator business unit, which became unprofitable after the acquisition due to the parent company's unprofitable business.

In the following section, I will examine the language use in three different social arenas during this period. These arenas are 1) media texts, 2) internal managerial texts, and 3) anonymous discussions in the intranet discussion forum.

4.4.2.1 Media texts during the acquisition period

When MCorp's share exchange offer to AffCo's minor shareholders was announced, the rationales given for the acquisition in national and regional newspapers were economies of scale, synergies, international business opportunities, and better customer service. The economic-rationalistic discourse thus continued to be a dominant framework for how AffCo's ownership and business arrangements were justified in the media and especially how MCorp's and AffCo's managers legitimated their cooperation in public. Managers reproduced AffCo's image as a business-oriented enterprise in the public arena by emphasizing the economic benefits that can be reached through the acquisition:

77: "Through the division of labour between the companies we expect to gain millions of marks in synergy benefits." (MCorp's managing director in a national business newspaper, year 4) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)

By using 'no choice rhetoric' ("only a big enough telecommunications company..."), managers were able to legitimize the acquisition as the only alternative for survival in competition in the telecommunications industry and to expand to international market areas. At the same time, they reproduced and sustained the values and ideals of the discourse of global capitalism (Fairclough 2001), which has become the dominant business idea not only in the telecommunications industry, but also more widely in the globalized economy:

78: *"In MCorp's view, only a big enough telecommunications company can build a service network that satisfies everybody, including local customers. At the same time there will be an opportunity for at least limited international activity."* (National business newspaper, year 4) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)

In addition to 'synergy benefits', the intensified cooperation between the companies was also linked to societal benefits, since it was justified because it would bring new jobs to AffCo and to the region where AffCo operates. When this kind of an 'employment' argument was used to justify the acquisition, managers were constructing a socially responsible image for AffCo and MCorp in their public rhetoric:

79: *"AffCo's managing director [name] estimates that closer cooperation may bring plenty of new jobs to [the region where AffCo operates]."* (National business newspaper, year 4) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)

80: *"The purpose is not to decrease personnel, but probably to increase it."* (Local newspaper, year 4) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)

As during the pre-acquisition period, during the acquisition period managers also used partnership and collaboration rhetoric as their resource against politically framed arguments that tended to focus attention on the power relationship between the companies. With the rationalistic partnership discourse managers were able to construct the relationship between AffCo and MCorp as free from power connotations and based on mutual interests and benefits:

81: *"In this [shareholders'] meeting attention was naturally directed to the ownership issues. Our focal objective is, however, to make business cooperation closer, we are partners."* (MCorp's director in a local newspaper, year 4) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)

In addition to the economic-rationalistic argumentation, another significant element of the managers' public discourse during the acquisition period was to reassure the readers about the continuity of AffCo's regional identity despite the ownership arrangements. In addition to regionality, the emphasis on AffCo's independence vis-à-vis MCorp was intensive in the managers' public discourse at the time. Especially MCorp's representatives and the new managing director, who came to AffCo from the parent company, emphasized that AffCo's autonomous and regional position vis-à-vis MCorp would continue. Reassuring rhetoric of this kind appeared particularly in a local newspaper, whose readers can be seen as important stakeholders for AffCo and who are sensitive to the issues concerning AffCo's independence and local decision-making possibilities. Hence, the mix of economic-rationalistic, cultural, and power

discourses were important resources for managers in winning public acceptance for the acquisition in the eyes of AffCo's local stakeholders:

82: "[New managing director] guarantees that a mini MCorp is not going to be created in [the city where AffCo operates]. – It probably doesn't make sense to continue operations in a group format, but neither does it make sense to create an MCorp here. AffCo's strong position is a value that cannot be lost. It is exactly what MCorp has been looking for (...)" (Local newspaper, year 4) (Power discourse; Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)

83: "The relationship between AffCo and its customers will remain, also local services and pricing solutions. MCorp Group's idea is not to flatten regional operations, but to strengthen regional activity." (MCorp's director in a local newspaper, year 4) (Cultural discourse; Constructive strategy)

Part of the cultural discourse in the media was to stress the regional roots of the new managing director and his family. The new managing director was described as strongly identified with the region where AffCo operates. The managing director himself also emphasized his regional roots. Through culturally framed talk he was able to build a relationship of trust with the local audience (Potter 1996).

By the end of the acquisition period, the tone of the media texts had altered significantly from the earlier 'growth rhetoric' to 'cost cutting rhetoric'. Whereas earlier, during the acquisition period, managers produced an image of AffCo and MCorp as socially responsible companies by emphasizing both the economical and the social benefits of the acquisition, at the end of the acquisition period journalists constructed MCorp as a 'threat' to AffCo; it would extend its cost cutting to the region where AffCo operated. Interestingly, whereas earlier managerial rhetoric emphasized the 'cooperation' and 'synergies' between the companies as keys to higher employment, now AffCo was presented as a 'victim' of its parent company's cost cuts:

84: "MCorp's economies are threatening to affect also [the city where AffCo operates] and to reduce jobs in AffCo." (Local newspaper, year 4) (Power discourse; Constructive strategy)

4.4.2.2 Internal managerial texts during the acquisition period

After MCorp's share exchange offer to AffCo's shareholders was announced and AffCo's forthcoming status as MCorp's subsidiary was declared, there was a strong emphasis on the continuity of AffCo's own identity in internal managerial communication. Managers emphasized the role of AffCo's own know-how and resources for

future success despite the ownership arrangements. Even though AffCo had become a subsidiary of MCorp, there was a simultaneous reinforcement of the continuity of the ‘old AffCo identity’:

85: *“We’ll continue with our AffCo identity, relying on the parent MCorp’s know-how and resources when necessary. Our success, however, will mainly depend on our own competence.”* (AffCo’s managing director in an intranet newsletter, year 4) (Cultural discourse; Power discourse; Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)

Interestingly, when the managing director employs the commonly used metaphor ‘parent’ with reference to MCorp, he produces an inferior and less mature identity for AffCo in his language use (cf. use of the ‘big brother’ metaphor with reference to MCorp in extract 47). Hence, this expression produces a very different kind of identity for AffCo compared with the managers’ language use in the public arena, where AffCo and MCorp are presented as ‘partners’ and the ‘ownership issue’ is avoided (see extract 81).

Independence rhetoric was used in internal managerial communication in order to reassure employees of the continuity of AffCo’s own decision-making despite the acquisition and to construct a strong agency for the company. It was important to picture the acquisition in a voluntaristic light and to emphasize AffCo’s own initiative in shaping its future role in MCorp Group. For example, in the following quotation, the new managing director trivializes those opinions in which the acquisition is presented in a deterministic light (“driven into MCorp’s arms, partly even against its own will”) or as MCorp’s attempt to subordinate AffCo (“they can come here to peacock”). He presents these versions of reality as subjective opinions (“I understand an employee who thinks that...”, “it is human to think that...”) and constructs his own version of reality as a ‘fact’ or a ‘truth’ by providing evidence for his statement (“if we did not have our own decision-making power here, we would not have our own managing director either”):

86: *“Somehow I do understand an AffCoan who thinks that ‘we have done our things well and then they can come here to peacock and bring nothing but harm with them’... it is human to think that AffCo has been an independent listed company, which has, in a way, been driven into MCorp’s arms, partly even against its own will. To belong to MCorp does not, however, mean that AffCo will bend to MCorp’s will in everything. On the contrary, it has to make its own decisions and shape its own role in MCorp independently. (...) If [we] did not have our own decision-making power here, [we] would not have our own managing director either (...)”* (New managing director in the employee newspaper, year 4) (Power discourse; Constructive strategy)

By the end of the acquisition period, earlier growth visions disappeared in internal managerial communication, and managers started to reattach AffCo more strongly than before to its traditional, local identity. The changing market situation was used as a resource in justifying the need to focus on AffCo's traditional and local core business instead of looking for new business areas. The characteristics that were problematized during the pre-acquisition period were now constructed as desired identity attributes for AffCo:

87: "In recent years AffCo has been going through a kind of struggle for independence and wanted to develop as itself and as a listed company. Visions for growth have been expected from this industry, and this has also led AffCo to look for new business. Now, when the market is in another phase, you have to adapt operations. You do not have to give up everything new, but you do have to be ready to admit that the core business is quite traditional and local. Now you have to restrain your drive to do something new." (New managing director in the employee newspaper, year 4) (Power discourse; Economic-rationalistic discourse; Cultural discourse; Destructive strategy; Constructive strategy)

The new managing director uses the metaphor 'struggle for independence' when he refers to AffCo's former change efforts. Again, this metaphor depicts AffCo's change process in a very different light compared with the managers' discourse so far. Whereas during the pre-acquisition period AffCo's change initiatives, such as the public listing and the name change, were presented as strategic choices in AffCo's expansion into new market areas, they were now constructed as acts of resistance in the struggle for distinctiveness under MCorp's ownership.

Interestingly, managers constructed AffCo's earlier growth and expansion visions as responses to 'external expectations', not as AffCo's own strategic intents as during the pre-acquisition period. During the pre-acquisition period, managers also justified many of the change efforts by referring to external market conditions; those conditions were, however, presented in terms of 'enabling resources' or 'opportunities' for AffCo, rather than in terms of 'constraining rules' or 'pressures' like during the acquisition period. Hence, AffCo's agency is constructed in very different terms in these two versions of reality. The former constructs a strong agency for AffCo, whereas the latter is more deterministic and constructs AffCo as having a weak agency and as being constrained by external market conditions. Based on this result, one can suggest that the construction of agency is context dependent, and that social actors can use the notion of agency for strategic purposes in their language use. In the pre-acquisition context, the construction of a strong agency for AffCo was beneficial in order to pro-

mote the needed change efforts in AffCo and to build AffCo as a dynamic and strategic actor in the eyes of its potential investors. During the acquisition period, the construction of a weak agency helped to focus attention from change to stability, which was desirable in AffCo's subsidiary role.

The construction of a weak agency also helped to exclude managers from responsibility for untoward actions at the end of the acquisition period, when AffCo started the personnel negotiations regarding layoffs (see Scott & Lyman 1968). For example, when AffCo was pictured as 'a victim' of "global emotional uncertainty and economic recession", it was a legitimate framework for managers to justify forthcoming layoffs and economizing efforts, because these actions were attributed to external forces beyond the managers' control:

88: "At the moment we are caught in global emotional uncertainty and economic recession (...) As part of MCorp Group we now have to examine potential overlaps open-mindedly from business to business and look for synergies of cooperation (...) we have to concentrate on our core competence and, at the same time, inevitably adjust our human resources next year." (Managing director in the employee newspaper, year 4) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)

4.4.2.3 Anonymous discussions during the acquisition period

On the day when MCorp's share exchange offer for AffCo's shareholders was announced, there was speculation in the intranet discussion forum about who AffCo was going to become. The following extract is an illustrative example of how anonymous discussants were able to engage in shaping AffCo identity by producing 'counter-texts' to the managerial economic-rationalistic discourse within which AffCo's 'official' identity narrative was produced. By drawing on power discourse, discussants undermined managers' 'strategic partnership' discourse with sarcastic remarks ("we will get rid of this useless "strategic" partnership"). Also, discussants ironized the rapid tempo for changing AffCo identity by referring indirectly to the recent change in visual identity and name ("what we are becoming *now*", emphasis added):

*89: "Great – the logo changes !!!!
sender: Strainer
What we are becoming now, An orange or some other fruit.*

*Re: Great – the logo changes !!!!
sender: erik
[symbol of MCorp's logo]*

Re: Great – the logo changes !!!!

sender: Frank

...hopefully that [symbol of MCorp's logo]. we will get rid of this useless "strategic" partnership. knowhow to [MCorp] and role of retailer to [AffCo]."

(Anonymous voices in the intranet discussion forum, year 4)

(Power discourse; Transformative strategy)

Another example of sarcastic humor is the following extract produced after the acquisition, in which one anonymous discussant presented AffCo as being swallowed by the big, bad she wolf¹⁸. By borrowing the story line from a well known folktale, the discussant was able to trivialize and challenge official managerial 'independence' and 'collaboration' rhetoric by providing an alternative story of the acquisition process:

90: "Christmas tale

sender: Sarcastic christmas piggy

One upon a time there were three small piggies: Brother [name of a regional telephone company], Brother AffCo, and Brother [name of another regional telephone company]. They were all afraid of a cruel she wolf, whose name was MCorp. (...)"

(Anonymous discussant in the intranet discussion forum, year 4) (Power discourse; Constructive strategy)

A typical feature of anonymous discussions was the dynamic between the economic-rationalistic arguments that were used to justify the acquisition and the sarcastic comments that undermined the economic-rationalistic arguments. One example of this kind of dialectic between arguments and counter-arguments is the following discussion that took place in the intranet discussion forum a few days after the share exchange offer was announced:

91: Re: Thank you

sender: JS

"Well the truth is that it will be quite a disappointment if for some reason the undertaking runs aground. The decision made now, if it succeeds, is in the right direction in my opinion, and we AffCoans can calmly transfer our competence and resources to those focus areas, which are essential for us. It is not worth doing everything alone in this world, because our resources are limited. Otherwise the whole exercise can be written off as 'amateur puttering'." (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Transformative strategy)

¹⁸ 'She' refers to MCorp's name

Re: Thank you
sender: Boo
”:D (funny)”

(Anonymous voices in the intranet discussion forum, year 4)

In the above example, the discussant ‘JS’ argues in favor of the acquisition and reinforces the argument by presenting it as a ‘truth’ (“the truth is”) and thus seeks to build the argument as a neutral fact and not an opinion. ‘JS’ also compares the decision made with a worse scenario (“otherwise the whole exercise can be written off as ‘amateur puttering’”). By categorizing AffCo’s employees in the other scenario as “amateurs”, ‘JS’ is able to legitimize the acquisition, since it allows construction of the acquisition as a ‘professional’ decision. ‘JS’ also identifies with the audience (“we AffCoans”) and thus constructs consensus with other AffCo’s members. ‘We’ rhetoric is a typical feature of persuasive talk; the speaker constructs a picture of ‘us’ as a homogenous group whose interests are similar (Billig 1996). The economic-rationalistic discourse (“because our resources are limited”) is drawn upon in order to build legitimacy for the opinion.

The counter-argument of ‘Boo’ seems at first glance to be trivial, but from the discursive point of view it enables the researcher to make interesting interpretations about the *effect* of the comment in this particular context. With a short reply to ‘JS’ (“D: funny”), ‘Boo’ is able to trivialize the former’s argument by framing it as ‘a joke’ and thus undermining its ‘truth’ status. This simple-looking comment is in fact an example of the ‘hidden’ resistance to dominant discourse (Scott 1990).

Ironic remarks were not only related to the acquisition, but also to AffCo’s internal development efforts during this period. In the following extract, an anonymous discussant refers to the customer service improvement project and states that this is the project that would eventually “blow the dirt away”, that is, streamline the organization. The use of a smiley at the end of the extract focuses attention on the contradiction built into the statement. In earlier discussions in the intranet discussion forum, there was a lot of suspicion about the success of this development project and criticism about the poor implementation and realization of the project objectives. When the following statement is interpreted in the light of this background, one can easily read it as an ironic remark trivializing managerial efforts to streamline the organization by referring to this unsuccessful project:

92: “*Re: Fair play*
sender: %
[name of AffCo’s customer service improvement project] will truly blow the dirt¹⁹ away
=)”

(Anonymous voice in the intranet discussion forum, year 4) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)

It is interesting to note that irony is not only used in trivializing other arguments, but also maintaining stability and producing change in language use. The use of ironic humor constitutes contradictory realities and encourages switching between them (Hatch 1997) and thus points to a paradoxical understanding of organizational change and stability. As Hatch (1997, 283) argues, “if irony can constitute contradictory emotional and mental states, then it can support stability and change as contradictory realities and may even help us to understand the paradoxical relationship between them.” Those using irony hold different meanings in tension, which produces a state that is simultaneously different and the same (Hatch 1997; Durand & Calori 2006).

Many texts in the intranet discussion forum drew on other texts produced elsewhere, especially in the media. When criticizing, for example, poor communication and leadership during the change process, the discussants drew on articles by work life experts, such as consultants and academics, who wrote about the importance of good change management and communication during large-scale change. Hence, employees used *authorities* as their “social resources” (Fairclough 1995, 200) in order to make their comments more persuasive and authoritative to the audience. For example, in the following extract, an anonymous discussant in the intranet discussion forum questioned the truthfulness of AffCo’s managers’ independence rhetoric by using MCorp as an authority in delegitimizing the managers’ argument and in legitimizing one’s own argument. The discussant constructed a paradox between the reassuring independence rhetoric of the managers, which emphasized that ‘due to the acquisition, nobody will be laid off’, and MCorp’s employee release about the forthcoming rationalization of operations in its subsidiaries:

¹⁹ In Finnish, when you add one letter to word ‘dust’, the connotation changes to ‘excess’.

93: *“questions (MCorp’s dismissals)*

sender: small

How can we argue while reading this text that we are really independent; it is MCorp who directs us.”

(Anonymous voice in the intranet discussion forum, year 4) (Power discourse; Constructive strategy)

MCorp’s share exchange offer caused confusion about AffCo’s new role amongst the employees. Employees raised many questions in the discussion forum concerning, for example, the structure of the new organization, what it will mean to be part of MCorp, and what changes the subordinate role will bring to the discussant and to the whole organization. For example, in the following extract, one discussant required more information about the acquisition and its meaning for AffCo, and AffCo’s administrative manager replied to this request two days later:

94: *“MCorp’s new offer*

sender: Developer

Could somebody again clarify where we are going? What does it mean that MCorp wants AffCo entirely for itself. There is rumour and speculation. What role will AffCo have in the future?

(...)

Re: MCorp’s new offer

sender: [AffCo’s administrative manager]

MCorp’s further offer was made because of the securities act. According to the law, a shareholder who owns more than two-thirds of the company’s shares has to make an offer to purchase the remaining shares. If the shares in excess of the two-thirds limit were bought with a public offer, the obligation to redeem the shares does not arise while the offer is in effect. It was therefore reasonable for MCorp to extend the offer time; otherwise it would have been obliged to redeem AffCo’s shares with money, which would have, of course, strained MCorp’s liquidity. There is nothing else behind the further offer.”

(Anonymous voice and AffCo’s administrative manager in the intranet discussion forum, year 4) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)

The extract above provides an interesting insight into knowledge/power relations in the organization (Foucault 1972). AffCo’s administrative manager, who replies to the message, is explicitly identified as a manager by using his own name in the forum. By so doing, the manager indicates possession of the ‘right knowledge’ about the acquisition and constructs himself in a powerful position vis-à-vis those who have not taken part in the acquisition negotiations. This indicates that the one who has ‘the right’ to speak on behalf of the organization is entitled to know the ‘facts’ about the acquisition

process (Potter 1996). Furthermore, the manager not only has the ‘right’ knowledge about the acquisition process, but he has also access to the linguistic resources required to speak as a person with legal and economic training or a relevant profession. This further confirms his knowledge about the acquisition and strengthens the economic-rationalistic justifications on which he draws.

4.4.2.4 Summary

In this section, I will summarize the central findings from the analysis of texts produced in various social arenas during the acquisition period. In the public arena, managers continued to legitimize MCorp’s acquisition intents with economic rationales. Partnership with MCorp was constructed as a solution to serve customers satisfactorily and to expand into new market areas. Acquisition was also legitimized for social reasons by emphasizing its positive impact on regional employment. Furthermore, managers highlighted AffCo’s local value and stated that AffCo’s own identity would continue despite the acquisition. By drawing on the cultural discourse managers were therefore able to implement ‘hard’ managerial practices while using the language of ‘soft’ practices such as empowerment, autonomy, independence, and identity.

A central finding in managerial internal communication was *a shift from the rhetoric of change to the rhetoric of stability*. Whereas during the pre-acquisition period, the key message in internal communication was AffCo’s need to change, to grow, and to expand, at the end of the acquisition period, managers emphasized the need to concentrate on local and traditional ‘core business’ instead of looking for new business areas, and hence to adapt to AffCo’s new subsidiary role within MCorp. Those features that were constructed as problems during the pre-acquisition period were now presented as desirable identity-attributes.

At the end of the acquisition period, MCorp laid off AffCo personnel as the first integration measures due to MCorp’s unprofitable business. These measures were justified by appealing to the need to ‘adapt personnel resources’ to ‘global emotional uncertainty and economic recession’. When the company’s environment was presented in a deterministic light, AffCo’s managers were constructed as having restricted possibilities for action, as being forced into particular behavior even against their own will. This leads to an interesting notion of the construction of agency as context-dependent.

The construction of a weak agency mitigates one's responsibility for action and facilitates legitimation of undesirable, painful, and hard decisions (Scott & Lyman 1968). Through the construction of a weak agency, managers were able to defend themselves against potential or overt criticism regarding layoffs and cost cutting, which were carried out in the company. This is in contrast with the pre-acquisition language use, when AffCo's managers were presented as actors able to choose between strategic alternatives in the prevailing competitive environment. External conditions were then presented rather in terms of opportunities for the company. The construction of a strong agency at that time highlighted managers' responsibility for action and helped to construct a 'heroic' and 'strategic' image for them. At the time, this was appropriate strategy for emphasizing managers' own initiative in the course of events, because the surrounding discursive climate was favorable toward AffCo's public listing and growth visions.

The intranet discussion forum provided a public, although intra-organizational arena for various organizational members to engage in rhetorical debates concerning organizational events and their consequences. It provided an opportunity for the researcher to peek into 'naturally' occurring conversations in the organization and look at the identity construction processes at the 'grass-root' level in the organization. Very different versions of "who we are" emerged from the analysis of intranet discussions compared with the managerial texts. It was characteristic of anonymous discussions to resist and undermine managerial 'independence' and 'strategic partnership' discourse, for example, through sarcastic and ironic comments and jokes in which AffCo was constructed as an inferior and agentless actor vis-à-vis MCorp.

Even though most of the discussions in the discussion forum were anonymous, managers took part in the conversation with their own names; they constructed 'facts' and 'truths' about the course of events. This notion is interesting from the point of view of power/knowledge relations in the organization. When managers took part in the conversation with their own name, they produced themselves as entitled to know the 'facts' about the acquisition process and thus warranted their 'right' knowledge about the issues concerning, for example, AffCo's future role in MCorp Group. They brought 'realism' to otherwise 'subjective' and distorted conversations concerning AffCo-related issues.

Table 13 presents a summary of how social actors used different discourse types in diverse social arenas as their resources in shaping AffCo identity during the acquisition period.

Table 13 A summary of how social actors used discourse types as resources in shaping AffCo identity in various social arenas during the acquisition period

Social arena	Social actor	Economic-rationalistic discourse	Power discourse	Cultural discourse
Media texts	Senior managers	A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as an international, customer-oriented, profitable, and socially responsible company A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo and MCorp as equal business partners	A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as independent and autonomous actor vis-à-vis MCorp	A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as regional and local actor
	Journalists		A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as a victim of MCorp's cost cutting	
Employee magazine and newsletters	Senior managers	A resource to give sense to AffCo's new status as a subsidiary company (<i>destructive</i> strategy) A resource to direct attention from change to stability by referring to the changing external market situation (<i>destructive</i> strategy) A resource to justify cost cutting and forthcoming layoffs in AffCo by <i>constructing</i> AffCo as having a weak agency	A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as an agentic actor in MCorp Group	A resource to <i>construct</i> continuity for AffCo identity despite the acquisition
Intranet discussion forum	Anonymous discussants	A resource to <i>transform</i> AffCo into a professional business company A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as an inefficient company by ironizing managerial modernization efforts	A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo in an inferior position vis-à-vis MCorp	
	Senior managers	A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as a rational business company that plays according to the rules of the stock exchange		

4.4.3 POST-ACQUISITION PERIOD

The discussions that are examined in detail in the following were produced during a two-year and four month period after the acquisition. During this period, MCorp took the first steps toward integration by carrying out some significant organizational changes. For example, AffCo's support services and product development were centralized at headquarters, and AffCo's telephone directory business was sold off. Statutory labour-management negotiations allowed AffCo to lay off some 30 employees, mostly in the service operator company.

Despite the acquisition, AffCo was able to keep its own name as a brand in marketing, even though its corporate function was fully integrated with MCorp. The actual merger was realized three and a half years after the acquisition and 14 months after data production for this study had ended. Then, AffCo lost its own name and became a local department of MCorp Group.

In the following section, I will examine the language use of social actors in six different social arenas during this period. These arenas are 1) media texts, 2) internal managerial texts, 3) anonymous discussions in the intranet discussion forum, 4) interviews with senior managers, 5) interviews with middle managers, and 6) interviews with operative employees.

4.4.3.1 Media texts during the post-acquisition period

Two interesting features characterize managerial post-acquisition language use in the media; ex-post rationalization of the acquisition that was used against criticism appeared in the media and emphasis on the stability of AffCo's operations despite the acquisition-related changes in the company. Both findings are examined with empirical examples in more detail in the following.

After the acquisition, AffCo's ex-managing director had to counter the criticism that was directed against him in the media. A national business newspaper wrote that antagonists of change accused him of having driven AffCo into MCorp's 'camp'. The loss of AffCo's independence was thus constructed as a consequence of his strategic and deliberate actions. The ex-managing director relied on ex-post rationalization to

legitimate the causes and consequences of the acquisition in a situation where both were questioned:

95: “Loud, but penniless Pro Z²⁰ movement was unable to preserve AffCo’s independence. MCorp alone had money and expertise. (...) It was the only reasonable alternative after the [national telephone company] alliance attempt failed.” (National business newspaper, year 5). (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)

By referring to MCorp as “the only reasonable alternative”, AffCo’s ex-managing director constructs a situation when more than one alternative existed, and there was thus room for choice. The decision-making in this situation was based on careful calculation of the reasonability and rationality of the alternatives, and the only reasonable one was chosen. To justify the acquisition, the ex-managing director referred to MCorp’s ‘money and expertise’ as a basis for the decision-making. Thus, the economic-rationalistic discourse played a central role in legitimization of the acquisition. It was morally acceptable for and even expected from the top management of the company to give priority to the profitability of the company and its owners’ economic interests. The other alternative, ‘the penniless Pro Z movement’, was thus not constructed as a reasonable alternative from the economic-rationalistic perspective.

Through rationalization, the ex-managing director did not merely legitimate the acquisition *per se*, but also his own role and AffCo’s managers’ undertakings prior to the acquisition. He was able to show that an important decision concerning the future of the company was made by rational actors, not as an outcome of emotional or political processes.

The ex-managing director’s public statement is an interesting example of a linguistic device that is used when the speaker’s actions are morally questioned. By employing an *account*, the ex-managing director protects himself from criticism by shifting his responsibility and blame with rationalization and thus bridges the gap that is constructed in the media between his actions and moral expectations (see Scott & Lyman 1968). The account works as a neutralizer of his actions and its consequences in a situation where both are called into question.

²⁰ ‘Z’ refers to the city where AffCo operates.

Another feature of managerial post-acquisition language use in the public arena was the emphasis on the continuity of AffCo identity despite the structural and ownership arrangements. AffCo's long history in the region was constructed as the basis of its mission, and managers stressed that AffCo's 'former policy' as a local service provider would remain the same regardless of 'new faces' in the company:

96: *"We have a clear policy, our task is to serve [people of the region] as we have already done for over 120 years. (...) There have come new faces, but we will continue with the same policy. There will not be very many changes in our operations (...)" (Marketing manager in a local newspaper, year 5) (Cultural discourse; Constructive strategy)*

This kind of identity reinforcing talk appeared after the acquisition, especially in a local newspaper. By framing the present as a continuation of the past, managers were able to promote legitimacy and justify the acquisition in the eyes of those stakeholders who were most concerned about AffCo's regionality and integrity (see Suchman 1995).

4.4.3.2 Internal managerial texts during the post-acquisition period

Like the media texts during this period, AffCo's ex-managing director also used ex-post rationalization in legitimizing and justifying the causes and consequences of the acquisition in internal managerial communication. The rationality behind the decisions made was juxtaposed with the irrational, "emotional outbursts" of the antagonists of change. Also, economic reasons were constructed as the central basis for decision-making favoring centralization and merger instead of 'reinforcing' the regional shareholders' ownership:

97: *"Even though AffCo had strong support in [the city where AffCo operates], regional protection would not have succeeded here. There was Pro Z spirit in the air, but there would not have been enough money, and this kind of 'reinforcement' of ownership would not necessarily have been wise either." (Ex-managing director in the employee newspaper, year 5) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)*

98: *"Although the spirit of the time is in fact favourable to concentration and mergers, the first reactions in [the city where AffCo operates] about MCorp becoming the owner of AffCo were negative, emotional outbursts that pretty much rejected the idea outright (...). The decisions over the years have been justified and deliberate (...)." (Ex-managing director in the employee newspaper, year 5) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)*

Managers continued to frame the benefits of the acquisition and future undertakings within MCorp Group by drawing on economic rationales. For example, managers em-

phasized the ‘economies of scale’ behind the acquisition, and the ongoing ‘optimization’, ‘trimming’, and ‘centralization’ efforts were presented as solutions for better efficiency:

99: *“Economies of scale will be realized through nationwide MCorp Group cooperation (...) Efficiency will be sought within the group by optimizing service production, eliminating overlaps and centralizing competencies in a suitable way.” (MCorp’s managing director in the employee newspaper, year 5) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Transformative strategy)*

The ‘partnership’ rhetoric persisted in managerial communication during the post-acquisition period. By framing the acquisition as ‘cooperation’ with MCorp, it was easier to promote it in terms of an ‘opportunity’ instead of a ‘threat’:

100: *“For our part, we can see many opportunities in MCorp-cooperation.” (New managing director in the employee newspaper, year 5) (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)*

In addition to economic-rationalistic justifications for the acquisition, managers also emphasized the continuity of AffCo’s regionality and locality in their internal communication at the time. Managers stressed that AffCo’s name would be kept despite the acquisition and that local customers would also be served in the “local dialect” in the future. Furthermore, managers emphasized autonomy in local decision-making and explicitly denied the ‘politicking’ or conspiracy theories behind the acquisition:

101: *“There is a desire to preserve the ‘AffCo’ name to emphasize consciously the localness of operations and decision-making. We may also serve our customers in the ‘local dialect’ in the future, and matters will not have to be circulated through [the city where MCorp operates]. Thus, MCorp does not have any secret plans in its back pocket for us.” (New managing director in the employee newspaper, year 5) (Power discourse; Cultural discourse; Constructive strategy)*

102: *“(...) MCorp Group’s regional companies will also make independent decisions in the future in their daily operations.” (MCorp’s managing director in the employee newspaper, year 5) (Power discourse; Constructive strategy)*

Managers emphasized the initiative and agency of AffCo’s employees in shaping their future role in MCorp Group. They also stressed that AffCo’s future will not be predetermined by MCorp, but will depend instead on the will of AffCo’s employees. This kind of rhetoric reassured employees about AffCo’s autonomy and independence despite the acquisition:

*103: "What AffCo's future will look like is largely dependent on AffCoans themselves."
(Ex-managing director in the employee newspaper, year 5) (Power discourse; Constructive strategy)*

4.4.3.3 Anonymous discussions during the post-acquisition period

Uncertainty, ambiguity, and criticism were central characteristics of anonymous discussions in the intranet discussion forum also during the post-acquisition period. There was, for example, uncertainty and ambiguity about the duration of statutory labour-management negotiations, criticism of leadership in the company, claims about the politically biased recruitment of people in new positions in the new companies, and agitation for work stoppages because of the layoffs and poor information sharing in the company. Compared with discussions during the acquisition phase (see chapter 4.4.2.3), in addition to subtle or covert forms of resistance, such as humor and irony, there were also overt forms of resistance such as agitation for a strike during the post-acquisition phase.

Interestingly, the company's communication professionals tried to control the content of these discussions by reminding employees of proper 'Internet etiquette'. They encouraged people to identify themselves and to write those things that 'you would be ready to say to another person face-to-face'. These reminders caused more criticism about managerial attempts to restrict alternative voices in the company.

Compared with managerial discourse at the time, anonymous discussants constructed a very different kind of version of AffCo's change process and its outcomes and were thus able to enlarge the discursive space in the organization. For example, by reframing AffCo as 'a kiosk', the following discussant was able to create a relevant category with which to resist managers' official discourse of 'economies of scale' (see Billig 1996):

104: The firm became a kiosk

sender: How's that?

"Again [we] saw how rapidly a successful and rich company can be run down. Earlier you could be proud of working in this company, but not anymore."

(Cultural discourse; Destructive strategy)

The way people were appointed and recruited for positions in new organizations was criticized in the anonymous discussions. Discussants drew on power and politics in resisting the unjust appointment procedure. For example, the metaphors 'backroom', 'parliament', and 'behind closed doors' were used to connote the secrecy, politicking, and biased decision-making that characterized the recruitment process. As such, discussants constructed AffCo as a site of 'political struggle' and trivialized managers' rationalistic discourse, which presented AffCo as a 'rationally ordered' and 'emotion free' enterprise:

*105: "application procedure
sender: topsy-turvy
Things are agreed in "the back office", and job is not put in an open application.*

*Re: application procedure
sender: Hmm
In AffCo business works like in parliament, decisions are made behind closed doors."*

(Power discourse; Constructive strategy)

4.4.3.4 The interviews with senior managers during the post-acquisition period

The retrospective interpretations of senior managers about the pre-acquisition events and actions differed to a large extent from the managerial language use during the pre-acquisition period. Whereas prior to the acquisition, managers coherently emphasized the economic benefits of the acquisition, AffCo's own initiative to cooperate with MCorp, and the equality between the companies despite the ownership structures, during the post-acquisition period more varied interpretations emerged. Pre-acquisition decisions, such as the change in company name, were now pictured as tactics in the struggle for distinctiveness and independence and not as strategic decisions that were made in order to realize AffCo's growth intentions:

106: "(...) it was the kind of struggle for independence that one did not want to admit to yet, in a way. At the time we also made conscious decisions through which we tried to, like, grow out of MCorp." (Power discourse; Constructive strategy)

107: "(...) we had a kind of phase when we defended our independence. You could say that we still thought that we could operate longer, in a way, independently and autonomously." (Power discourse; Constructive strategy)

Interestingly, the responsibility and role of the managers in the acquisition were now mitigated with linguistic techniques. First, the acquisition was presented as a "hostile

takeover”, and thus the initiative of AffCo’s managers in the process was belittled. Second, managers were not presented as rational decision-makers making the right decisions in a predictable manner, but as irrational human beings, since the hostile takeover came us a surprise to them:

108: “This sort of thing shouldn’t been possible, but it was still made possible. It was not perceived in general that this kind of a hostile takeover could come, if you say so, and it was not perceived at all that when it gets listed, then you no longer have any control over your ownership.” (Power discourse; Constructive strategy)

Furthermore, the responsibility of AffCo’s managers for the events and actions was mitigated with the scapegoat strategy (see Scott & Lyman 1968). AffCo’s board of directors recommended that AffCo’s shares should be sold to MCorp under pressure from MCorp, thus against their own will:

109: “(...) largely under pressure from MCorp the board of directors then ended up thinking that there were not any other alternatives.” (Power discourse; Constructive strategy)

With regard to AffCo’s role in MCorp Group after the acquisition, the new managing director constructed AffCo as being now able to concentrate on its core business instead of doing everything alone. Thus, he relied on economic-rationalistic arguments in constructing AffCo’s future identity as a subsidiary. However, at the same time, he also reproduced an alternative identity for AffCo as “a mere customer company”, ‘a fake company’, or “a satellite of somebody” when he referred to the views of the antagonists to change about AffCo’s future role in MCorp Group. Interestingly, his own construction of AffCo’s role was presented as ‘true’ knowledge, whereas the views of the antagonists were referred to as ‘some people saying or thinking’ or ‘a completely wrong view’ about AffCo’s future role. Hence, he constructed not only a specific identity for AffCo, but also for himself as a person possessing the right knowledge about AffCo identity:

110: “(...) because we have been an independent company, done everything ourselves, and we have focused on being a customer company and taking care of sales, marketing, installing, invoicing, everything, that customers can see and cannot see, or if we get somewhere else, (...) then some have said that it will mean that we will wither away to a mere customer company, and that is a completely wrong view, hey, we can, for real, concentrate on what is important for us, which is of course true. But people have for some reason a kind of, like, [if] you have, in a way, all support functions yourself then it makes this a real company. Otherwise you are only a kind of satellite of somebody, which is silly. But this is how you often think.” (Power discourse; Economic-rationalistic discourse; Destructive strategy; Transformative strategy)

Interestingly, both the new managing director and other senior managers constructed the post-acquisition integration period as a clash between local culture and corporate culture, but from different discursive frameworks. Whereas the new managing director ridiculed AffCo's 'regionalist spirit' from the economic-rationalistic perspective, other senior managers criticized MCorp's centralization efforts and unrealistic views about local operations by drawing on the cultural discourse:

111: "(...) it is like any other group, which have a strong local company (...) you never know to what extent those local operations, to what extent it is wise to strengthen locally and to what extent it makes sense to streamline nationwide. And because you truly do not know, this leads to tension that a mostly local company through its history believes that by doing things alone locally, well that is more efficient." (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Constructive strategy)

112: " They think that now when we're making a kind of nationwide system, then everybody will become a part of the nationwide processes, and everybody will adapt to them while we show with PowerPoint that this is how things go without ever really going to the field to see what actually happens. And then when they eventually come to the field to see, they understand that in fact nationwide processes won't work, because every company is different." (Cultural discourse; Constructive strategy)

Moreover, the constructions of AffCo's future role in MCorp Group by the new managing director and the other senior managers also differed from each other. Whereas the new managing director was more deterministic in his views about AffCo's future identity and saw it as dependent on parent company's will ("it is highly possible that we will only be a MCorp's [local] department in the year xxxx..."), other senior managers constructed more agency for AffCo in shaping its future role in MCorp Group ("as long as we have will and value as an independent company then one cannot at that point..."). Even though both drew on the power discourse in constructing potential future identities for AffCo, the versions differed from each other in terms of how much agency was constructed for AffCo:

113: "(...) more and more the contradiction culminates in the fact that at MCorp's management board level one sees that this strong, local actor is permanently a local company, that there is a local brand in the company structure and so on, but at the same time there is that integration of the business, and those are contradictory to each other, and it is probably because of this conflict that it is highly possible that we will only be MCorp's [local] department in the year xxxx, if we play bad." (Power discourse; Transformative strategy)

114: "(...) [we] will either be an independent company or then not. That is something you don't know at this point, but our path is such that we are more and more guided by MCorp's service operator, and as long as we have will and value as an independent company, then one cannot at that point...when we do not have it, then we will probably, in some

way, merge with [MCorp] to be a regional organization.” (Power discourse; Transformative strategy)

4.4.3.5 The interview with middle managers during the post-acquisition period

In the group interview with middle managers, the cultural discourse was drawn upon in making sense of the atmosphere in the company when the acquisition was announced. In their version, there was bitterness in the company about losing their own identity and becoming ‘MCorpians’ and ‘a common front against the acquisition’. Middle managers thus constructed AffCo as a unity or culture, where people’s values and understandings of “who we are” were homogeneous. Furthermore, they also relied on conspiracy theories to argue that employees felt to have been betrayed by their ‘own’ people in letting the acquisition happen:

115: ”Middle manager 1: “(...) what was rumored in the corridors, well there was a kind of bitterness in the beginning that now we all are MCorpians. What this will going to be.

Middle manager 2: I bet no one took it positively. There was a common front that everybody was against it [the acquisition] and felt betrayed.” (Cultural discourse; Constructive strategy)

Locality and regionality, which were constructed as important building blocks of ‘being AffCo’, were seen to be replaced by nationwide focus in business “coming from the south coast”:

116: ”(...) [we] were a strong local opinion leader and now along with this new owner, there is this ‘nationwideness’ in every way present here, and I say it feels like, well, again there is something that came from the south coast.” (Cultural discourse; Power discourse; Destructive strategy)

In addition to cultural framing, it was also characteristic of middle managers’ accounts to construct the relationship between AffCo and MCorp as the one based on MCorp’s domination and authority over AffCo. This kind of framing appeared especially in those accounts when middle managers discussed the effects of the acquisition on their daily managerial work. The domination relationship was constructed, for example, by claiming that middle managers were excluded from the customer relationship management in their own area or forbidden to make and implement their own products at the local level. Hence, middle managers argued that they were denied proper agency because of the parent company’s centralization efforts:

117: *"We have even been told that it would not be worth your while to contact those customers in the area, they are taken care of from here [from MCorp] in a centralized way. It of course, neutrally speaking, bothers you, because it is like you think we are not capable of doing something here."* (Power discourse; Constructive strategy)

118: *"It ties your hands, too, that you cannot... previously could, like, implement a product pretty well here locally. Now implementation of a certain product is basically impossible, because there is already a solution for it at group-level even though we could make a better one or implement a better one here, it is not desirable because it is not, like, an official policy."* (Power discourse; Destructive strategy)

The quotation above (see extract 118) is an illustrative example of how by drawing on the power discourse, middle managers were able to present the post-acquisition integration process as an irrational one, since due to MCorp's 'official policy' rational and economically sound decision-making was not possible ("even though we could make a *better one* or implement a better one here, it is not desirable..." [emphasis added]).

Middle managers' reference to 'silencing' their voices or denying their agency in the integration process can be seen as a rhetorical resource to legitimate their own account of the change process and undermine senior managers' accounts that aimed at constructing an empowered role for AffCo (see Symon 2005). Hence, their account was counter to the managers' official discourse that emphasized the agency of AffCo's employees and their own decision-making power in MCorp Group.

Middle managers trivialized and reframed certain expressions that were used in senior managers' communication by drawing on their own experiences. For example, 'the co-operation agreement' that was signed between MCorp and AffCo to streamline and integrate the customer service processes was ironically reframed as "co-operation from MCorp toward us":

119: *"On the technical side there came this, it is called a co-operation agreement, but I say it is mainly co-operation from MCorp toward us. We have fewer cases toward them (...)"*(Power discourse; Constructive strategy)

For middle managers, the cooperation seemed to be rather one-way, and it was realized in the form of orders coming from the parent company concerning, for example, the way in which customers should be taken care of, what kind of data or reporting systems should be used, and which products should be sold and at what price.

MCorp was also constructed as exercising its authority by controlling the information in the subsidiaries. For example, one sales manager described how difficult it is to meet the set objectives in a situation when she does not get enough information concerning her team's tasks:

120: "(...) the prices and products come quite clearly and simply, period. I don't even necessarily know the net prices. I don't have a clue whether the business I'm doing is profitable or unprofitable, and I think it's already pretty hopeless in sales." (Power discourse; Constructive strategy)

Middle managers constructed discordance between the claims of multiple normative commitments that they encountered in their leadership role after the acquisition. On the one hand, their position as team leaders required them to act as representatives of the parent company and implement the parent company's will and orders in their own teams. On the other hand, as representatives of the acquired company, they tried to act in the interest of AffCo and fight for their own benefit in the new corporation:

121: "Well, perhaps it's more a matter of having to justify these things, and there you must in a certain way be an 'MCorpian' of course in order not to..., because you have to take things forward in a positive way, and they are often pretty contradictory situations when you have fought tooth and nail for something, and then you have to take a sort of 'this is just how it should be done and this is good like that' attitude. Like, you should go forward so that you can also make it work. Then [you] are sometimes in a contradictory situation, at least I feel like I am". (Cultural discourse; Constructive strategy)

This kind of role ambiguity and paradoxical identity also came up in the interaction with customers. Middle managers struggled between the requirements to act according to the company's official "one MCorp" policy and daily customer service, which were seen as contradictory to each other:

122: "(...) let's think about an example - a customer takes a very ordinary analogical interface and Internet, then you sell him AffCo's interface and MCorp's Internet connection. And then you are obliged to start talking about both companies, because customers will see it in the future in a way that AffCo will invoice the analogical interface and the phone costs involved, and MCorp will send the monthly Internet connection bill. And because you cannot even integrate these kinds of things, then you have to explain that role. (...) then, it is pretty hard to be a representative of one company". (Cultural discourse; Constructive strategy)

Middle managers strongly identified with AffCo and used 'we' in reference to AffCo's employees in their talk. They constructed AffCo and MCorp as two separate cultures, which was in contrast to the company's official 'one MCorp' policy:

123: “(...) at present when you talk to these people moving to other companies, well they still, when they talk about us they talk about AffCo. Like, in a certain way they are our people, but within that other company. (...)”. (Cultural discourse; Constructive strategy)

Furthermore, they did not want to succumb to a deterministic scenario of being ‘MCorp’s finger’ in the future, but ‘AffCo’s fist’. Hence, despite the most likely future role as a local department of the parent company, middle managers were still ready to fight for their independence and distinctiveness vis-à-vis the parent company:

124: Q: Then, if you now look forward into the future, how would you see AffCo, let’s say, three years from now?

(...)

A: We will not be here as AffCo’s fist, but as MCorp’s finger.

(...)

A: But on the other hand, it’s like you try to take the attitude that that is the worst scenario, where it unfortunately seems that we are going, but anyway you try to think, that it cannot happen like this. We cannot be so idiotic that we lose all the benefit from being AffCo’s fist and not MCorp’s finger.” (Power discourse; Transformative strategy)

4.4.3.6 The interview with operative employees during the post-acquisition period

Operative employees drew upon the power discourse in their retrospective sensemaking of the acquisition process. In their accounts, MCorp was constructed in a dominant position vis-à-vis AffCo ‘dictating’ orders in AffCo. For example, one operative employee described the layoff process as MCorp’s exercise of power over AffCo. The former managing director was presented as ‘one of us’, who was forced to behave according to the orders coming from the parent company:

125: “(...) this whole process felt like, these [the former managing director’s] times here, that even though [we] tried to prevent it [the layoffs] there were those labour-management talks at the time when these companies were being formed, then [the former managing director] was still in charge, and it was dictated from [the city where MCorp operates] quite clearly that 10% of people must be laid off, period.” (Power discourse, Constructive strategy)

In making sense of who AffCo had become after the acquisition, operative employees often referred to the loss of independence in local decision-making. Employees saw that their dependence on MCorp had in many ways affected their distinctiveness and uniqueness vis-à-vis the other companies in MCorp Group. For example, AffCo’s reputation as ‘a well-paying employer’ was destroyed:

126: "(...) salary and that kind of things (...) we do not make independent decisions here anymore, at some point we had quite a good reputation money-wise, but it's not the case anymore. We are now in exactly the same position as all the others in this group." (Power discourse; Destructive strategy)

During the group interview, the operative employees often engaged in collective remembering of AffCo's past. The sharing of nostalgic memories can be interpreted to have provided the employees with emotional support during what they experienced as a period of intense organizational change, by helping them to maintain a sense of collectivity (see Brown & Humphreys 2006). Employees waxed nostalgically about the times prior to the acquisition, identifying it as a 'golden age' (see Gabriel 1993) – a time when "on some days things were a little easier", and "you could somehow talk to your peers sometimes". By resorting to nostalgia, AffCo's members resisted the hegemonic claims of AffCo's managers' official accounts, which drew on the rationalistic, business-oriented discourse.

The persuasive rhetoric of senior managers about the acquisition as 'an opportunity for AffCo' was constructed as manipulation of meaning in the interview with the operative employees. The 'brainwashing' metaphor used by one operative employer constructed managers as manipulators trying to impose meanings favorable to MCorp on employees during the change process:

127: "(...) those managers succeeded pretty well in brainwashing that maybe it [MCorp] is not such a threat after all." (Power discourse; Constructive strategy)

Like the middle managers, the operative employees also reflected the effects of the acquisition on their daily work and customer service. The centralization of operations and ambiguous roles and responsibilities between different companies within MCorp Group were constructed as problems for good customer service. Interestingly, in the official discourse of senior managers, the acquisition was justified as 'the only possibility to serve customers satisfactorily', and thus the operative employees' version about the effects of centralization on daily customer service were in sharp contrast to the rhetoric of senior managers:

128: "Employee 1: Customers do not understand this, they are like, 'wait a minute, you are selling me services, but some of you are responsible for them in [the city where MCorp operates] and some of you here'. Where does he call when he has a problem? Customers are shunted between places here. And invoicing, some third party is handling it. (...)

Employee 2: Everything is in pieces in different places, so that even a customer has to interact with many different parties.”

Employee 1: Before it was only this location, and everything was handled here.” (Economic-rationalistic discourse; Destructive strategy)

The constructions of operative employees regarding AffCo’s future identity were deterministic, and unlike the senior and middle managers, they did not construct any agency for AffCo in shaping its future role in MCorp Group. Indeed, the company was already seen as being MCorp. Interestingly, the future identity, which they constructed in their talk, became ‘reality’ only 14 months after the interview, when AffCo was merged entirely with MCorp Group.

129: Q: What about the future then, if you think about what kind of a company this could be five years from now (...) How would you see AffCo’s future?

A: If we go at this pace then...

A: AffCo does not have a future. It is MCorp.

A: Yes.

A: Yes, we are already MCorp.

A: Yes, but that it would also say MCorp on the roof and in every other context.” (Cultural discourse; Transformative strategy)

4.4.3.7 Summary

In this section, central findings from the analysis of the texts produced in various social arenas during the post-acquisition period are summarized. An interesting finding in managerial rhetoric in the public arena was that managers framed AffCo’s acquisition process in terms of ‘a struggle for independence’ and thus brought a new element into their argumentation. During the pre-acquisition and acquisition periods, managers strongly constructed AffCo as an independent company despite the acquisition or avoided power-related connotations by emphasizing the ‘strategic partnership’ between the companies. During the post-acquisition period, the acquisition was still legitimized with economic rationales and presented as the only ‘reasonable’ alternative for AffCo, although managers did not deny the loss of AffCo’s independence as a consequence of the acquisition.

A similar kind of finding was made on the basis of the analysis of the retrospective interviews with managers. The events that happened and the actions and decisions that were made in the pre-acquisition period were now constructed within a very different discursive framework compared with the managerial communication at the time of their occurrence. Whereas during the pre-acquisition period, the acquisition was constructed in terms of 'strategic partnership' and 'collaboration', in retrospective interviews, it was referred to as a 'struggle for independence' and a 'hostile takeover'. Furthermore, whereas during the pre-acquisition period AffCo's managers were constructed as the ones who acted according to their own will and deliberately cooperated with MCorp, in the retrospective interviews they were presented as the ones who acted under MCorp's pressure and were forced to make a decision to recommend selling of AffCo's shares to MCorp.

Both in the media and in internal communication, the ex-managing director emphasized the 'reason' behind the decisions that have been made concerning AffCo. The economic-rationalistic discourse was a resource for managers to avoid a culturally illegitimate picture of the acquisition and to defend themselves against criticism of the acquisition that appeared in the media at the time. Economic-rationalistic arguments helped to deal with culturally strong issues, which were, however, problematical from the speaker's point of view. When the acquisition was presented as 'the only reasonable alternative' for AffCo to survive in the competition, it was a legitimate frame for managers to justify their undertakings in response to the criticism.

Managers emphasized the continuity of AffCo's regionality and autonomy in local decision-making both in the media and in internal communication. This can also be seen as an attempt to gain approval and legitimacy for managerial actions and decisions vis-à-vis employees and other local stakeholders. Managers constructed a strong agency for AffCo in shaping its future role in MCorp Group and in making independent decisions in daily work. By mobilizing the cultural framework, managers were able to reassure employees about the continuity of AffCo identity and their own cultural values despite the ownership arrangements.

The criticism and resistance toward managerial undertakings continued to be a central characteristic of anonymous discussions in the intranet also during the post-acquisition period. Discussants undermined managers' economic rationales by refram-

ing AffCo as a ‘kiosk’ and a ‘parliament’ and incited fellow employees to undertake work stoppages in response to poor change communication and the company’s plans to layoff personnel. Consequently, the power and cultural discourses were dominant frameworks within which anonymous discussants argued against the acquisition and made sense of who they are or had become as an organization.

In the group interviews with middle managers, the cultural discourse and power discourse were dominant frames within which the acquisition was constructed both retrospectively and prospectively. Interestingly, whereas in the interviews with middle managers prior to the acquisition, the potential merger with MCorp was seen in an optimistic, even desirable, light, in the retrospective interviews the middle managers construed the ambiance at AffCo at the time of the acquisition announcement as ‘bitter’ and negative toward the acquisition. Accounts by middle managers of their daily encounters with the representatives of MCorp effectively undermined public managerial rhetoric emphasizing local decision-making possibilities and AffCo’s autonomy. AffCo was constructed as powerless and unable to make local decisions under MCorp’s authority.

Both managers and middle managers constructed the post-acquisition integration process as a confrontation between regional and national cultures and local and corporate ways of doing things. Hence, they contributed to the construction of AffCo and MCorp as two separate cultures despite the official ‘one company’ policy. Both of them also produced a relatively strong agency for AffCo in shaping its future role in MCorp Group.

It was characteristic of operative employees during the post-acquisition period to engage in nostalgic remembering of AffCo’s past (cf. Brown & Humphreys 2006). Employees made sense of the changes that had occurred by destructing the past identity by comparing “who we were at the past” and “who we have become at the present”. Past managerial culture, working culture, and company policies were constructed as a ‘golden age’ compared with the situation at the present (see Gabriel 1993). Compared with the interviews with managers and middle managers, operative employees constructed AffCo as agentless in shaping its future identity in MCorp Group.

Table 14 presents a summary of how social actors used different discourse types as their resources in shaping AffCo identity during the post-acquisition period in various social arenas.

Table 14 A summary of how social actors used discourse types as resources in shaping AffCo identity in various social arenas during the post-acquisition period

Social arena	Social actor	Economic-rationalistic discourse	Power discourse	Cultural discourse
Media texts	Senior managers	A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo and its managers as rational actors by justifying the partnership with MCorp retrospectively		A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as a regional company
Employee magazine and newsletters	Senior managers	A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo and its managers as rational actors by justifying the partnership with MCorp retrospectively A resource to justify the acquisition as a solution in <i>transforming</i> AffCo into an efficient company A resource to <i>construct</i> MCorp as a possibility for AffCo	A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as an independent and autonomous actor with its own will vis-à-vis MCorp	A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as a regional company
Intranet discussion forum	Anonymous discussants		A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as a political battlefield by presenting it e.g. as a parliament	A resource to <i>destruct</i> AffCo's company status by presenting AffCo as a kiosk
Interviews	Senior managers	A resource to justify the centralization as beneficial in <i>transforming</i> AffCo into a more focused company	A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo's pre-acquisition actions and decisions as a 'struggle for independence' A resource to <i>destruct</i> AffCo's status as an independent company A resource to imagine AffCo's future roles in MCorp Group as dependent / independent (<i>transformative</i> strategy)	A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as a distinctive company vis-à-vis MCorp
	Middle managers		A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo as dominated by MCorp A resource to <i>destruct</i> AffCo's autonomy	A resource to <i>construct</i> the acquisition as a loss of own identity A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCoans as distinctive from MCorpians
	Operative employees	A resource to <i>destruct</i> AffCo identity as a good customer service company	A resource to <i>destruct</i> AffCo's autonomy A resource to <i>construct</i> AffCo's managers as manipulators of meaning	A resource to imagine AffCo's future in terms of loss of own identity and distinctiveness vis-à-vis MCorp (<i>transformative</i> strategy)

4.4.4 SUMMARY

In chapter 4.4, I have examined how social actors, by employing various discursive strategies and drawing on different discursive resources, were able to shape, manage, and resist the understandings of “who we are” in the context of AffCo’s acquisition process.

It was relevant to this study to analyze the variation in the language use in different periods of the acquisition process. I therefore divided the examination into three distinctive phases based on the unfolding of the acquisition process: pre-acquisition period, acquisition period, and post-acquisition period. The purpose of the analysis was to identify different contextual elements that are related to the argumentation of social actors, and eventually, how these contextual elements are related to how organizational identity is constructed in their language use.

Based on the situational and historical analysis three different elements contextualizing the argumentation and language use of social actors can be summarized. These elements are *the identity of the social actor*, *the historical time*, and *the social arena*. Each of these elements is discussed in detail below.

Identity of the social actor. The identity of the social actor refers to a notion of *by whom* different texts examined in this study were produced. There were several social actors who contributed to how AffCo identity was produced during the study period, such as managers, middle managers, employees, and journalists. Instead of summarizing here the variation in the language use of each of these groups separately, I will discuss, firstly, the variation in the language use between those social actors who could be identified as change ‘protagonists’ and those who could be identified as change ‘antagonists’. Secondly, I will briefly summarize how the authority of the speaker was constructed in the texts.

Firstly, the language use in the acquisition context varied between those social actors who could be identified as speaking on behalf of the acquisition and other AffCo’s modernization efforts (‘protagonists’) and those who could be identified as speaking against these efforts (‘antagonists’). It is noteworthy, however, that an individual actor could be both a change ‘protagonist’ and an ‘antagonist’ depending on the context,

and as such, protagonism or antagonism cannot be regarded as persistent attitudes of individual actors, but rather as emerging identities produced in their language use.

The discourse types identified in this study were employed both by change ‘protagonists’ and ‘antagonists’ through the entire change process in arguing either for or against the acquisition and AffCo’s modernization efforts. In other words, both ‘protagonists’ and ‘antagonists’ used the same discursive resources in their language use, but for different purposes. For example, change ‘protagonists’ drew upon the power discourse in denying the political motives behind the acquisition and in constructing AffCo as an independent and autonomous actor vis-à-vis MCorp. Change ‘antagonists’, for their part, used the power discourse as a resource in undermining the protagonists’ independence rhetoric and in picturing AffCo as subordinated by and dependent on MCorp.

Secondly, there were interesting findings concerning the construction of authority in texts. In the intranet discussion forum, one manager increased his authority by explicitly positioning himself as a manager by using his own name in the conversation and thus warranted a stronger voice in the discussions compared with anonymous discussants. By using his formal authority, the manager was able to construct himself as possessing ‘knowledge’ about the acquisition process vis-à-vis their subordinates who had not been part of the acquisition negotiations.

The framework of economic-rationalistic discourse also helped to construct authority for the speaker in the conversation. The economic-rationalistic discourse can be regarded as dominating the discursive climate of business life, and hence an appropriate and legitimate framework to justify various actions and decisions. The economic-rationalistic discourse therefore helped to legitimize the managerial prerogative in determining AffCo identity, reinforced the view that rational calculation is the only way to measure the value of the organization and undermined alternative versions of AffCo identity. The economic-rationalistic discourse was also a powerful tool for managers to legitimate hard and painful actions and decisions, such as downsizing and layoffs, because by using rational arguments different actions were constructed either as inevitable or as beneficial in the long-run for AffCo and its various stakeholders.

Historical time. The historical time refers to a notion of *when* the language is used and is thus related to how different acquisition-related events and actions were made sense of and justified at different times in the acquisition process. Language use does not happen in a vacuum, but it is related to historical events and to the wider social context of where the discursive activity takes place. Social actors' language use is related to other texts produced in specific temporal-historical context, and these texts affect what kind of linguistic resources are available for social actors and which of these resources are appropriate to use.

As noted earlier, the discourse types identified in this study were employed both by change 'protagonists' and 'antagonists' through the entire change process in arguing either for or against the acquisition and AffCo's modernization efforts. However, despite the persistence of these discursive frames, there was situational variation in the argumentation of the social actors. The variation did not always appear as sudden shifts from one discursive structure to another, but rather as variation within the frames and as the introduction of new discursive elements in the argumentation. For example, the relationship with MCorp was constructed in different ways in different periods depending on what kind of argumentation frames were appropriate to use in the respective discursive 'climates'. During the pre-acquisition period, it was appropriate for managers to emphasize their own initiative and agency in the acquisition by drawing upon the 'strategic partnership' between MCorp and AffCo. During the post-acquisition period, managers were pictured as rational actors making the best possible decisions in 'a struggle for AffCo's independence'. In both contexts, managers drew upon economic-rationalistic arguments in justifying their undertakings, but there was variation in how these discursive resources were used in their argumentation.

Furthermore, social actors used discursive strategies in different ways in constructing, transforming, sustaining, and destructing certain identity constructs in their talk depending on the context. For example, it was characteristic of managerial language use during the pre-acquisition period to invest a great effort in constructing a business-oriented identity for AffCo, and hence they used transformative strategies in 'selling' the change to employees and other constituents. After the acquisition, it was beneficial for managers to shift from the 'rhetoric of change' to the 'rhetoric of stability' and to use fewer transformative strategies in their talk. Hence, managers were able to fo-

cus attention back on local business opportunities and pave the way for forthcoming ‘rationalizations’ instead of intensive growth and expansion visions.

Social arena. Finally, there was variation in how organizational identity was manifested depending on *where* the texts were produced, that is, depending on the social arena of the language use. In this study, I examined the construction of organizational identity in five different social arenas: in the media, in internal managerial texts, in the intranet discussion forum, in the interviews with individuals, and in the group interviews.

The more public the arena, the wider the target audience of the texts. The notion of multiple stakeholders that had to be taken into account in the language use was manifested in the use of multiple legitimation strategies in the texts that were sometimes contradictory to each other. Social actors, then, drew on multiple discourse types and discursive strategies in their attempts to please various audiences. For example, during the pre-acquisition period, managers both transformed and sustained the very same feature of AffCo identity when they problematized AffCo’s locality and regionality as a burden for AffCo’s future success, but, in the same time, emphasized AffCo’s regional roots and their importance for AffCo. This kind of contradictory talk can be interpreted as an attempt to seek legitimacy both in the eyes of AffCo’s local constituencies, such as employees and minor owners, and national investors and business partners.

Furthermore, there were differences in how organizational identity was constructed between those arenas where the speakers were identifiable compared with those where they were anonymous. In the intranet discussion forum, where the discussants were mostly anonymous, I identified more resistance and criticism toward the acquisition-related actions than in other discursive arenas, for example, in the interviews. The use of irony and sarcasm were typical means to undermine managers’ dominant identity constructions in anonymous texts. Scott (1990) sees anonymity as a major form of political disguise by which subordinate groups manage to insinuate their resistance into the public transcript. Indeed, most of the discussions criticized managerial undertakings and tried to enlarge the discursive space in the organization by constructing alternative versions of “who we are”. In these versions, AffCo was presented, for example, as subordinated to the parent organization and the site of a political struggle.

5 DISCUSSION

In the beginning of this chapter, the empirical findings of the study are first summarized by answering the research questions set for this study. In chapter 5.1, the contributions of the study are discussed in the light of the relevant literature. In chapter 5.2, the practical implications of the study are discussed. In chapter 5.3, the study is evaluated with criteria suitable for discourse analytical research, and in chapter 5.4, the suggestions for further research are presented.

The generic motivation that has guided this research process has been *how can we approach and understand organizational identity and its change as social constructions, constituted in the processes of interaction?* In the light of this motivation, the objective of this study was to better understand organizational identity change as a discursive phenomenon and to provide a description of it. The research question and related sub-questions set for this study were:

1. How is organizational identity constructed in the discursive processes of social actors?

1.1 What kind of *discourse types* do social actors draw upon, and what kind of organizational identity constructions do the mobilization of these discourse types produce?

1.2. What kind of *discursive strategies* are employed in the construction of organizational identities?

1.3 What kind of *contextual elements* are related to the construction of organizational identities?

I identified three different discourse types that social actors used as their resources in their argumentation either for or against AffCo's modernization efforts and its merger with MCorp. These discourse types were *economic-rationalistic discourse*, *power discourse*, and *cultural discourse*. The mobilization of each discourse type had a different effect on how AffCo identity was constructed.

The economic-rationalistic discourse served as a resource for the construction of a progressive and business-oriented identity for AffCo. It helped to frame and legiti-

mate managerial actions and decisions as ‘solutions’ for the perceived business ‘problems’, such as inefficiency and rigidity. When the power discourse was mobilized, AffCo was constructed either in an inferior and subordinated position vis-à-vis the parent company or as an independent and autonomous actor having agency in determining “who we are” vis-à-vis the parent organization. When the cultural discourse was drawn upon, AffCo was presented as a group of people who belong to an identifiable sub-culture sharing a common history, norms, beliefs, values, and interests that differentiate them from other groups and cultures. AffCo was then constructed as a regional and local company with a long history and recognized values. Those mobilizing the cultural discourse often constructed themselves as one of ‘us’ identifying with this specific group.

In addition to discourse types, I identified different discursive strategies that were used in the construction of *continuity* and *change* in organizational identity. The strategies used to construct continuity in identity were called *constructive* and *perpetuative* strategies. The strategies employed to construct change in identity were called *transformative* and *destructive* strategies. A further analysis of these strategies allowed me to suggest how they differ in their temporal orientation. Constructive and transformative strategies were more future-oriented and worked to construct images of “where we are going”, “where we want to go”, or “how we can get there from where we are at present”. Perpetuative and destructive strategies were more past-oriented and worked to construct images of “who we have been”, “who we have become”, or “who we still are at the present”.

In addition to identifying the different discourse types and discursive strategies in the data, I also analyzed their use in the context of their production thus examining the situational and historical variation of argumentation. As a result of this analysis, three different elements contextualizing the argumentation and language use of social actors were identified. These elements were: *the identity of the social actor*, *the historical time*, and *the social arena* for language use.

The findings of this study are summarized in Figure 13. Different contextual elements – the historical time, the social arena, and the identity of the social actor – were related to what kind of discourse types social actors drew upon and which discursive strategies they used in the argumentation. Depending on which discursive structures

and strategies were employed and to what purpose, organizational identity was constructed in different ways in language use. The produced identity discourses were struggling for dominance in various organizational texts, in which traces of this struggle were found. The further discursive activity of social actors was related to the texts produced earlier and thus linked to what kind of discourse types were drawn upon and which discursive strategies were employed in further argumentation. Since organizational identity was approached as a product of language and social interaction in this study, it could be seen as constantly changing depending on the audience, context, and purpose of the interaction.

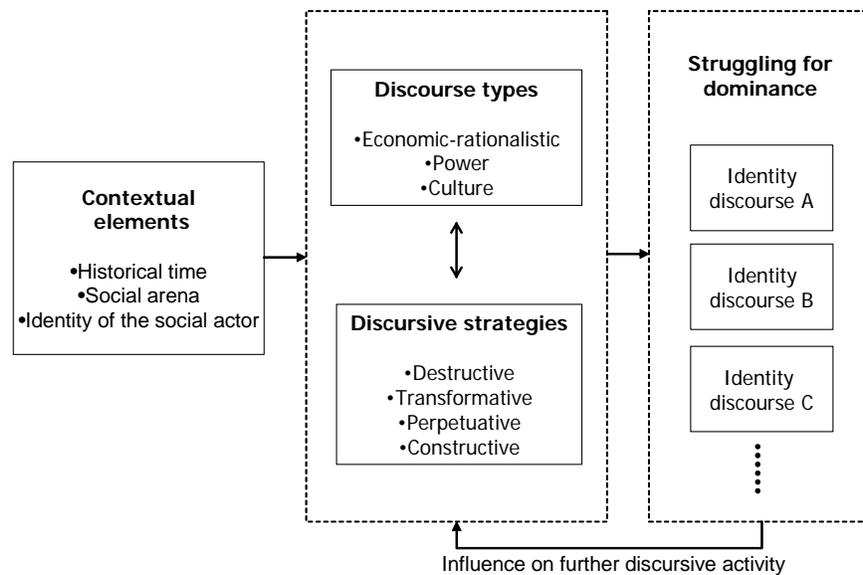


Figure 13 Summary of the research findings

5.1 CONTRIBUTION

This study contributes to several issues that are discussed in the light of the relevant literature in this chapter. Firstly, the study contributes to organizational identity theory by developing a discursive perspective on organizational identity change. Secondly, the study contributes to organizational discourse theory by taking both structure and agency into account within the same study, and thus it increases our understanding of the structuration of organizational identity. Thirdly, it answers the call made in previous studies about taking context seriously in studying organizational phenomena in general and organizational discourse in particular.

5.1.1 A DISCURSIVE PERSPECTIVE ON ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY CHANGE

Most of the earlier accounts on organization identity change have taken the punctuated equilibrium model of change as their starting point (see e.g. Fiol 2002; Corley & Gioia 2004; Reger et al. 1994). These studies tend to view organizational identity change as following a sequence of defreezing-change-freezing, which emphasizes the stability and status quo instead of destabilization and change. Furthermore, in these studies, language has been seen as a managerial tool for facilitating or carrying out the intended change process from initiation to completion. This representational view of language hinders us in understanding the complexity of identity change processes and the multiplicity of identities produced in the language use of various organizational actors, both 'insiders' and 'outsiders' of the organization.

In this study, I have approached organizational identity and its change and stability as social constructions constituted in the discursive activity of social actors. This study follows the view of those researchers who approach organizational change as a continuous rather than episodic process (see e.g. Durand & Calori 2006; Tsoukas & Chia 2002; Van de Ven & Poole 2005). Within this continuous view of change, organizational identity is approached as a constant, 'becoming' phenomenon in organizations (Weick & Quinn 1999; Tsoukas & Chia 2002) rather than as an entity, as traditional models tend to suggest.

The contribution of this study lies in describing organizational identity change as a much more complex and dynamic phenomenon than traditional models have so far

argued. A discursive perspective brings our attention to the constructive and constitutive properties of language instead of seeing language as merely a managerial tool or a gateway to ‘real’ organizational phenomena. Within a discursive view, the constructions of “who we are” are created, sustained, challenged, and destructed in the interaction of social actors in organizations. It also bring to the fore the multitude of identity manifestations in organizations, their temporality, and often controversial nature. Identity is constructed in different ways in different temporal-relational contexts, ‘old’ and ‘new’ identities intermingle, and the notions of ‘change’ and ‘stability’ of identity can be used strategically for different purposes.

This study also argues that what is traditionally regarded as the domain of managerial work also occupies to a large extent other social actors both inside and outside of the organization. Identity work happens in multiple arenas, since identity is enacted in everyday interactions with organizational insiders and outsiders. The official, public self-narrative of the organization is but one representation of “who we are”; other versions are constructed in mundane occasions of language use, for example, among employees and in the media. Because of its fluidity, multiplicity, and complexity, the management of identity and its change is also a much more complex task than has been previously argued. The ability of managers to manipulate identity through, for example, deletion, integration, compartmentalization, and aggregation (Pratt & Foreman 2000) gives an overly simplistic picture of this multifaceted phenomenon.

To summarize, the findings of this study provide one answer to the problems raised in the organizational identity literature concerning 1) the need for more dynamic models of organizational identity change (Ashforth 1998; Gioia et al. 2000a) and 2) the lack of understanding of power issues in the organizational identity construction. Firstly, when identity change is not viewed in terms of an old identity being replaced by a new one (see e.g. Fiol 2002), we can increase our understanding of organizational identity change as a much more dynamic phenomenon than the earlier literature has suggested.

Secondly, a discursive perspective outlined in this study made clear that the identity construction process is closely linked with power. Organizations are sites of struggle between different identity discourses that are (re)produced and challenged in discursive activity of social actors. The discursive perspective to organizational identity

change helps us to better understand why we often confront fragmented, ambiguous, and contradictory images instead of coherent and stable organization-wide identity constructions in changing organizations. This notion passes easily unnoticed with more traditional approaches.

5.1.2 AGENCY AND STRUCTURE IN ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Discourse analytical studies have been criticized for their Foucauldian deterministic view of discourse, which “downplays the role and significance of agency in the construction, reproduction and transformation of discursive formations” (Reed 2000, 525). As Reed (ibid.) argues, in Foucauldian discourse analysis “the functioning of discourses is treated as largely autonomous and independent of human agency”. In this study, I have suggested that organizational identity construction is a process in which social actors construct, destruct, transform, and sustain different identity formations in their use of various discursive strategies. Furthermore, social actors are capable of using social structures as their resources in language use and reflexively shift between discourse types that enable them to produce desired identity formations. Thus, this study highlights the role and significance of agency in the construction of organization identity.

I found Emirbayer’s and Mische’s (1998) views on agency helpful in approaching organizational identity construction as an agentic process. However, whereas Emirbayer and Mische (ibid.) see social actors as capable of distancing themselves from different temporal structures, which give them freedom and flexibility to act at present, in this study, social actors were seen as capable of using their knowledge of different temporal orientations in the construction of social reality in general and organizational identity in particular. Social actors switched between different temporal orientations in making of and giving sense to “who we are” and in shaping and moulding organizational identity in a desirable direction. Hence, in this study agency played a central role in the construction of social reality. The notion of agency in this study thus differs from Foucauldian view criticized by Reed (2000), which suggests that agency is located in the discursive structures, thus referring to an externalist view of agency.

When organizational identity construction is viewed as an agentic process, we also increase our understanding of how social actors *resist* discourses placed upon them.

This aspect is crucial in order to gain an understanding of how certain ideas are ‘taken’ and consumed in organizations. In this study we learnt that social actors are capable of expressing effective resistance against the dominant discourses, for example, through irony and sarcasm, and do not merely reproduce them in a deterministic way. As such the agentic view of discourse has micro-emancipatory possibilities (Alvesson & Willmott 2002), in that social actors are active creators of meaning and accomplished rhetoricians (Symon 2005) able to challenge and shape the discursive reality in organizations.

The findings of this study offer support for structuration models of discourse (Heracleous 2006; Heracleous & Hendry 2000). In earlier literature concerning organization-related identities, structuration theory (Giddens 1984) has been used in researching individuals’ identification with organizations (see e.g. Larson & Pepper 2003), but, to my knowledge, there have not yet been studies examining the structuration of collective, organization-level identities. Instead of focusing either on the discursive activity of social actors or discursive structures that enable and constrain the discursive activity of individuals, I have examined the interplay of both of them in the identity construction process.

5.1.3 CONTEXT IN ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

There has been criticism that organization studies in general (see e.g. Johns 2006) and discursive studies in particular (see e.g. Heracleous & Marshak 2004; Heracleous & Hendry 2000; Chreim 2006) lack interest in *context*. Contextuality is a key issue in critical discourse analysis, which is a methodological framework of this study (Fairclough 1995; Wodak & Meyer 2001). Fairclough (1995) emphasizes that texts should be analyzed in the situational and institutional context of their production, and Wodak and Meyer (2001), in turn, highlight the socio-historical context in which the emergence of specific discourses takes place.

In earlier literature, it has been noted that the language use of social actors varies in different social settings (see e.g. Potter & Wetherell 1987), and that context predisposes social actors to use some discursive resources while neglecting others (Mauws 2000). Despite its importance, however, only a few empirical discursive studies have taken context into account seriously (see e.g. Vaara & Tienari 2002 as an exception).

The notion of context is to a large extent related to the methodological choices made in the study. It has been noted that there is a need for more longitudinal studies examining how discourse unfolds over time, and more specifically, how organizational identity changes over time in merger and acquisition settings (Hogg & Terry 2000). Instead of ‘snapshot data’, I have sampled texts from different time periods along the relevant time span for this study and used both ‘real-time’ and retrospective data in the analysis. Thus, I was able to study identity construction process longitudinally and identify *historical time* as one of the key elements contextualizing the argumentation of social actors.

Earlier research has pointed out the significant role of target audience in discursive activity (see e.g. Carter & Jackson 2004). The notion of target audience is largely related to a specific genre of text (Fairclough 1992), or *the social arena* where the language is used. In addition to the social arena, this study has also pointed out another contextual element that is linked to how organizational identities are produced: *the identity of the social actor*. For example, it was noted that the anonymity of the speaker enabled the resistance to dominant identity constructions through the use of irony and sarcasm. Furthermore, speakers constructed authority for their texts by using their formal organizational position in making more convincing accounts.

Only few studies have looked at how authority is constructed in texts, and what significance this has for organizational identity construction (see Coupland & Brown 2004 as an exception). In this study, I noted that managers constructed authority for their texts in the intranet discussions by explicitly using their own name, which contrasted with the common use of pseudonyms in that arena. Hence, managers warranted their ‘fact-based’ knowledge about the acquisition process and its consequences, thus by making their formal power position in the company visible. The construction of authority in texts by stating one’s power position vis-à-vis the subject at hand sets the context in which the remaining text is interpreted by the readers.

The central role of image in the organizational identity construction has been emphasized in earlier research (Dutton & Dukerich 1991; Gioia et al. 2000a). Image has been conceptualized as a mirror for the organization, telling how external stakeholders perceive the organization, or how the organization wishes to be seen by the outsiders. In the light of the research findings, I argue that the distinction between organizational

identity and image gives an overly simplistic view of the complex process of organizational identity construction. Organizational members may construct their external audiences themselves and use them as resources in the identity construction purposes, for example, in legitimizing certain identity constructs. Furthermore, it is difficult to differentiate between internally (identity-related) and externally (image-related) directed communication (see Cheney & Chistensen 2001), since identity work is done in various 'internal' and 'external' discursive arenas between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' of the organization, as was noticed in this study (see Coupland & Brown 2004 for similar results).

5.2 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

One of the key challenges of discourse analytical studies is to illustrate that “organizational discourse analysis is not simply an intellectual luxury, but can have pragmatic, relevant implications” (Heracleous & Marshak 2004, 1285). The relevance of this study to practitioners lies in the contextualization of research findings to the acquisition context. Acquisitions and mergers are a recurring and central phenomenon in the corporate world, and they have a significant impact not only for individuals in the merging organizations, but also for the surrounding societies. This study has shed light on one salient element involved in the merger and acquisition processes: organizational identity and its change.

A central implication of this study for managers is that organizational identity change in general and organizational identity change in the acquisition context in particular is not the manageable and ‘neat’ endeavour suggested by earlier literature (see e.g. Pratt & Foreman 2000). This study has described the contradictory, complex, political, and ambiguous nature of identity change and shown that change processes are difficult to manage from the ‘top’ of the organization. The organization’s identity construction is not only a managerial endeavour or organization’s internal process only. Identities are built in various arenas inside and outside the organization – whether or not managers desire it. Also, managers may themselves use language ‘incompetently’, as this study has suggested. By drawing on institutionalized discursive practices, managers may also create meanings indeliberately and thus contribute to the construction of contradictory identities compared with those created in their more deliberate and intentional identity management talk.

Another important implication for managers is the notion that language constructs social phenomena and reality. Most managerial education is built on realist and objectivist models through which managers learn to make sense of organizations and understand their social side. I hope that this study will widen the perspective of managers and other practitioners on organizational phenomena and help them to better understand their socially constructed nature. Also, this study provides analytical tools for understanding ‘change’ and ‘continuity’ in organizational identity as achievements in language use and not phenomena occurring outside our linguistic understanding.

5.3 EVALUATION OF THE STUDY

The traditional evaluation criteria of research, validity and reliability, are not seen to be applicable as such to discourse analytical studies (Phillips & Hardy 2002). Discourse analysis does not try to capture the “real” world as accurately as possible, because it assumes that there is no “real” world other than the one constructed in language (ibid.). Hence, the criterion of validity seems irrelevant for discourse analysis, which is based on constructivist research epistemology. Furthermore, the results of discourse analytical studies are not repeatable, but context-sensitive, and based on the interpretations of the researcher (ibid.). The findings of discourse analytical study are only one possible reading of the empirical data; other researchers can arrive at different findings. That is why it also seems nonsensical to apply the criterion of reliability to discourse analytical studies.

Instead of validity and reliability, a number of specific criteria are suggested for evaluating discourse analytical studies and their limitations. Discourse analytic studies can be evaluated in terms of 1) how *plausible* the findings are, 2) how well the *evidence* is presented to demonstrate the arguments, 3) how *profound* the analytic scheme is in helping readers to make sense of discourse (Phillips & Hardy 2002 referring to Wood & Kroger 2000), 4) how well *historical and contextual understandings* are incorporated in the study (Phillips & Hardy 2002 referring to Alvesson & Deetz 2000), and 5) how well *reflexivity* is enacted in the study (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2000).

The question of *plausibility* is related to a notion of the credibility of the research findings. An important means to increase the plausibility of the findings is to describe the research process as transparently as possible in the manuscript. In discourse analysis the transparency of the research process and data analysis are extremely important, since there are no ‘ready-made’ recipes for conducting the research process. Researchers have to find their own way of designing the research and analyzing the data that is suitable for the particular study. In this study, I have tried to describe as well as possible the choices and steps made concerning the building of a theoretical framework for the study, selection of site, production of data, and data analysis in order to make my reasoning transparent to the readers.

The data used in this study were texts of different kinds, which can be considered mostly as ‘naturally occurring’ texts in an organization. In discourse analysis naturally occurring texts are considered a better source of data than those texts the production of which has been controlled by a researcher through, for example, a strict interview guideline. The reason for this is that naturally occurring texts are actual examples of the language in use in the organization constituting the phenomenon under investigation, and thus they are considered as more credible data in examining the social construction of reality.

One of the limitations of this study is the large number of texts sampled for the analysis. In discourse analysis ‘less is better’, since interesting interpretations can be made on the basis of a relatively small number of texts. The large corpus of texts that I sampled was challenging to manage during the research process and restricted the depth of the detailed textual analysis.

The second criterion is related to how transparently empirical *evidence* is presented in the study. This criterion is closely linked to the notion of the plausibility of the findings discussed above. Readers can better assess the credibility of the findings when they can make own interpretations of the empirical data by following researcher’s argumentation and reasoning.

I have used as many empirical quotes as possible in demonstrating the empirical findings in this study. Since the findings of constructivist research are always based on interpretation of texts, the reader is also invited to make his or her own reading of the empirical material. I have also increased the transparency of the evidence by providing the original quotes in Finnish in Appendix 4 so that readers familiar with the Finnish language can check the accuracy of my translations. Translated quotes have also been checked by a translator familiar with both Finnish and English in order to ensure that the “original meanings” of the texts have not been lost in the process of translation from Finnish to English. In discourse analytic research even one word can be an important cue for interpretations that constitute the research findings, and therefore it is important to present the original quotes as accurately as possible in the manuscript.

A limitation concerning the presentation of evidence in this study is that there are different types of data from different periods of the change process. For example, the

interview data are only available from the pre-acquisition and post-acquisition periods, not from the acquisition period. This makes the comparison between the findings from different periods less accurate than in a situation when the same type and number of data is available from all “units of analysis”.

The third criterion concerns the *profoundness* of the analytic scheme used in the study in helping readers to make sense of discourse. I have built frameworks, categories, and models to support the analysis and to help myself and readers to follow the line of argumentation in the manuscript. I hope that readers not familiar with discourse analysis will also find the arguments presented in this study understandable so that the study makes sense not only to ‘discourse analysts’, but also to the wider research community.

The notion of profoundness of analytic scheme is related to fruitfulness of the results, that is, whether the analytic scheme enables to make sense of new kinds of discourse and to generate novel explanations (Potter & Wetherell 1987). In this study, theoretical argument was built in close evaluation of earlier research in order to offer something novel, fresh, and unconventional for the research community. The discourse analytical perspective to organizational identity in general and organizational identity change in particular was proposed to give insights on issues such as complexity, contextuality, and political nature of identity construction processes that easily pass unnoticed with more traditional research methodologies.

A related issue is also the degree to which a researcher offers interesting and insightful interpretations in the study (Phillips & Hardy 2002). Whether the study is regarded as interesting and relevant is difficult to answer without hearing the voices of the audience. The dialogue between a researcher and the audience is ensured in this study by building the theoretical framework and by discussing the contribution of the study in the light of the relevant literature. By presenting my interpretations in the light of the earlier understandings, I have thus tried to answer the questions of what makes this study interesting and to whom it might be interesting.

The ability with which a researcher incorporates *historical and contextual understandings* to his or her study is considered a further important value in discourse analytical study. Both local-situational context and macro-level context were incorpo-

rated in this study. I conducted a detailed study of language use in specific micro-contexts, such as different social arenas, but I was also interested in how cultural and societal categories and resources were drawn upon and mobilized in texts. Even though it has been argued that it is difficult to take both levels into account within a single study (see e.g. Alvesson & Kärreman 2000b), the benefits of combining them have been seen more important than the potential sensitivity that might be lost (see Hardy 2001; Alvesson & Kärreman 2000b).

I have also incorporated a historical and contextual understanding in this study by describing when, where, and by whom the data were produced. Indeed, the basis for data sampling in this study was to get a variety of texts produced in different contexts and periods in order to examine the contextual variation in the language use. That is why contextual and historical understanding of the texts was crucial for the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

The fifth criterion is related to researcher *reflexivity*, which was discussed in detail in chapter 3.1.2. Reflexivity is related to a notion of how sensitive the researcher is to the constructive nature of language, especially in relation to his or her own findings and interpretations. Since language constructs rather than reveals social reality, the research findings should also be considered as outcomes of interpretation and social construction. In this study, I have tried to reflect on the underpinnings of constructivist epistemology as transparently as possible throughout the manuscript. In order to emphasize my own interpretation instead of presenting reified categorizations, I have, for example, written this dissertation by using 'I' instead of the passive, "objective" voice.

A related issue is also the extent to which the researcher is aware of the political nature of the empirical material (Phillips & Hardy 2002 referring to Alvesson & Deetz 2000). This notion has been a central part of the analysis of this study, which has taken a critical theory as its meta-theory. All language use is political by nature and this guiding assumption of critical theory has been reflected throughout the manuscript.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has provided only some tentative views on the myriad of discursive elements involved in the construction of organizational identity change during acquisition. Hence, it leaves many paths and open questions for future research endeavours.

This study has highlighted the importance of studying organizational identity construction as a discursive process carried out in the interaction between different organizational stakeholders. I have approached identity construction as interplay between social structures that provide rules and resources for social actors and discursive action by individuals through which social actors (re)create and shape social structures. Hence, this study has been an effort to integrate both agency and structure within the same study, which has been seen an important value for discourse analytical research (see e.g. Hardy 2001). Furthermore, I have stressed the need to explore identity construction in longitudinal research settings in order to understand its processual nature and emphasized the role of context in the identity construction. This study has provided support for calls to take both text and context into account in discourse analytical research (e.g. Fairclough 1992; O'Connor 2000, Hardy 2001) and to address temporality adequately in the analysis (e.g. Heracleous & Hendry 2000; Chreim 2006). These aspects need, however, to be further developed in future research endeavours in more varied research settings.

In addition, this study leaves a number of open questions for future research in the field of mergers and acquisitions. Even though earlier research has already explored various discursive elements involved in the discussion of mergers and acquisitions, for example, legitimation strategies used in the media texts (Vaara et al. 2006; Kuronen et al. 2005; Tienari et al. 2003; Vaara & Tienari 2002), discursive structures drawn upon in the construction of success and failure of mergers and acquisitions in managerial texts (Vaara 2002), and metaphors used in the social identity building in cross-border mergers (Vaara et al. 2003), studies examining the discursive construction of organizational identities in the context of mergers and acquisitions are still scarce. This study suggests two paths for future research within this field.

Firstly, this study was conducted in the domestic acquisition context from the point of view of an acquired organization, and one could expect that other settings and con-

texts would produce different kind of discourse types and discursive strategies. For example, *the voice of the acquiring company* was restricted in this study. Hence, further research endeavours could also involve the parent organization's voice in the study and examine, for instance, the attempts to apply the single shared corporate identity in language use during the post-acquisition integration period. Also, it would be interesting to explore the organizational identity construction and discursive elements involved in it in *the context of cross-border acquisitions*. National cultures constitute an important element in the identity construction processes, and one could assume that in these contexts types of discourse other than the ones identified in this study are mobilized in the identity construction processes.

Secondly, even though I have explored a great variety of texts as different arenas of organizational identity building in this study, other textual genres still remain for further research. For example, *communication material targeted to investors, clients, and other 'external' stakeholders* was excluded from the sample in this study. These are, however, important arenas of identity building in an organization, and further research endeavours could explore the use of discursive strategies and discourse types in such texts.

Methodologically, it would be fruitful to examine in more detail the micro functions of single texts in the identity construction process. Through a detailed linguistic analysis of texts, one could find a more varied spectrum of rhetorical strategies that are used in the legitimation and resistance of management practices and ideas in the identity construction process. For example, metaphoric expressions often carry with them certain ideologies and particular worldviews, and by analyzing them we could increase our understanding of the political nature of language use.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview outlines for one-on-one interviews

Appendix 2: Interview outline for the interview with the new managing director

Appendix 3: Interview outline for group interviews

Appendix 4: Quotations from the data in Finnish

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW OUTLINES FOR ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

Interviews with senior managers

Questions concerning the interviewee

What is your job title?

How long have you worked in AffCo?

How long have you worked in this work task?

Questions concerning the company

1. How do you perceive the future of AffCo?

Questions concerning the strategy process

2. What do you understand by the term 'strategy'? (What things do you associate with it?)

3. What do you understand by the term 'strategy implementation'? (What things do you associate with it?)

4. How much time is used in strategy implementation? (e.g. working days / year)

5. How do you participate in strategy process? (with reference to strategy process diagram)

6. How do you communicate strategies?

7. Are there problems in strategy implementation? (Questionnaire 1)

Questions concerning the improvement of customer service processes

8. What is the improvement of customer service processes in your opinion?

9. Why is the improvement of customer service processes important for AffCo?

10. In what ways have you promoted the improvement of customer service processes? (Questionnaire 2)

11. Who have participated in the use of these methods? (In what ways?)

12. In what other situations and with whom have you discussed the improvement of customer service processes?
13. How has the understanding of the improvement of customer service processes been supported?
14. How do you know that personnel have adopted the improvement of customer service processes?
15. How do you take into account that everyone interprets the improvement of customer service processes in own manner?
16. How is the improvement of customer service processes present in AffCo's (your department's) objectives?
17. In what way is the improvement of customer service processes present in AffCo's (your department's) work practices at the present?
18. In what way should the improvement of customer service processes be present in AffCo's (your department's) work practices?
19. What have you communicated as the most central content regarding the improvement of customer service processes to AffCo's personnel (the personnel of your department)?
20. How is the improvement of customer service processes present in your personal objectives?
21. How is the improvement of customer service processes present in your work? Please provide an example.
22. In your opinion, do you feel that you have been given a sufficient opportunity to influence goal setting associated with the improvement of customer service processes? (If not: how would you have wanted to influence them?)

Questions? Comments?

Thank you!

Interviews with middle managers

Questions concerning the interviewee

What is your job title?

What is your job description?

How long have you worked in AffCo?

How long have you worked in this work task?

Have there been changes in your work lately? What kind of changes?

Questions concerning the company

1. How do you perceive the future of AffCo?

Questions concerning the strategy process

2. What do you understand by the term 'strategy'? (What things do you associate with it?)

3. What do you understand by the term 'strategy implementation'? (What things do you associate with it?)

4. How do you participate in strategy process? (with reference to strategy process diagram)

5. How do you communicate strategies?

6. Are there problems in strategy implementation? (Questionnaire 1)

Questions concerning the improvement of customer service processes

7. What is the improvement of customer service processes in your opinion?

8. Why is the improvement of customer service processes important for AffCo?

9. Are there unclear issues associated with the improvement of customer service processes? What kind of issues?

10. Where and when have you become aware of the improvement of customer service processes?

11. In what other situations and with whom have you discussed the improvement of customer service processes?
12. How is the improvement of customer service processes present in your group's objectives?
13. In what way is the improvement of customer service processes present in your group's work practices at the present?
14. In what way should the improvement of customer service processes be present in your group's work practices?
15. In what ways have you promoted the improvement of customer service processes? (Questionnaire 2)
16. Who has participated in the use of these methods? (In what ways?)
17. What have you communicated as the most central content regarding the improvement of customer service processes to your group?
18. How is the improvement of customer service processes present in your personal objectives?
19. How is the improvement of customer service processes present in your work? Please provide an example.
20. What motivates you to improve the customer service processes?
21. In your opinion, do you feel that you have been given a sufficient opportunity to influence goal setting associated with the improvement of customer service processes? (If not: how would you have wanted to influence them?)

Questions? Comments?

Thank you!

Interviews with operative employees

Questions concerning the interviewee

What is your job title?

What is your job description?

What is your typical workday like?

How long have you worked in AffCo?

How long have you worked in this work task?

Have there been changes in your work lately? What kind of changes?

Questions concerning the strategy process

1. How well do you know AffCo's strategy process?

2. How do you participate in strategy process? (with reference to strategy process diagram)

Questions concerning the improvement of customer service processes

3. What is the improvement of customer service processes in your opinion?

4. Why is the improvement of customer service processes important for AffCo?

5. Are there unclear issues associated with the improvement of customer service processes? What kind of issues?

6. How have you become aware of improvement of customer service processes? (Questionnaire 3)

7. In what other situations and with whom have you discussed the improvement of customer service processes?

8. What has, according to your perception, been done to improve customer service processes? (How do they work in your opinion?)

9. How is the improvement of customer service processes present in your group's objectives?

10. How is the improvement of customer service processes present in your personal objectives?

11. How is the improvement of customer service processes present in your work? Please provide an example.

12. What motivates you to improve the customer service processes?

13. In your opinion, do you feel that you have been given a sufficient opportunity to influence goal setting associated with the improvement of customer service processes? (If not: how would you have wanted to influence them?)

Questions concerning the company

14. How do you perceive the future of AffCo?

Questions? Comments?

Thank you!

Questionnaire 1. Problems in strategy implementation

The problems presented in the list below are typical of many companies. Please assess the weight of these problems in AffCo's strategy implementation with the scale 1-4 (1=not a problem, 2=a small problem, 3=a relatively big problem, 4=a big problem).

	I don't know	Not a problem	A small problem	A relatively big problem	A big problem
Feasibility of strategy					
Strategy is not applicable in every part of the organization	0	1	2	3	4
Different areas/issues in the strategy are in conflict with each other	0	1	2	3	4
The organization's environment hinders strategy implementation	0	1	2	3	4
Awareness of strategy					
Strategy is being deliberately kept secret	0	1	2	3	4
It is assumed that strategy is already known	0	1	2	3	4
Strategy has been communicated insufficiently	0	1	2	3	4
The communication of strategy to different organizational levels is not perceived as necessary	0	1	2	3	4
The flow of information is disrupted at some point	0	1	2	3	4
Strategy is not correctly understood	0	1	2	3	4
Organizational systems					
There are not enough resources for strategy implementation	0	1	2	3	4
Working procedures conflict with strategy	0	1	2	3	4
Organizational structure conflicts with strategy	0	1	2	3	4
The connection between strategy and rewarding system(s) is insufficient	0	1	2	3	4
Different personnel roles have not been adequately defined	0	1	2	3	4
The concretization of strategy has not succeeded	0	1	2	3	4
Commitment to strategy					
The management does not sufficiently commit itself to implementation	0	1	2	3	4
The middle management does not sufficiently commit itself to implementation	0	1	2	3	4
The operational personnel does not sufficiently commit itself to implementation	0	1	2	3	4
There is not enough faith for the realization of strategy (resistance to change)	0	1	2	3	4

Appendices

Strategy implementation conflicts with organizational culture	0	1	2	3	4
Strategy implementation conflicts with certain personal goals or interests	0	1	2	3	4
Other activities and events divert attention from strategy implementation	0	1	2	3	4
Monitoring and development of implementation					
The implementation is not evaluated	0	1	2	3	4
The old direction of activities is soon regained after any change	0	1	2	3	4
There is no reaction to perceived problems in implementation	0	1	2	3	4

Questionnaire 2. In what ways have you contributed to the improvement of customer service processes in AffCo?

	I have used	Works well	Works quite well	Works relatively badly	Works badly
Communication					
Meetings					
Briefings					
Letters and bulletins					
Notice boards					
Internal magazines					
Intranet					
Mailing lists (e-mail)					
Unofficial discussions					
With superior(s)					
With subordinates					
With co-workers					
Cultural phenomena					
Stories					
Symbols					
Slogans					
Personnel development					
Training					
Goal-setting and appraisal discussions					
Socialization					
Personnel choices					
Rewarding					
Planning and finance					
Budget monitoring and control (reporting)					
Business plans					
Operative and performance objectives					
Operation / processes					
Project management systems					
Quality systems					
Changes in organizational structure					
Networks and partnerships					

Questionnaire 3. How have you become aware of the improvement of customer service processes?

	Check
Communication	
Meetings	
Briefings	
Letters and bulletins	
Notice boards	
Internal magazines	
Intranet	
Mailing lists (e-mail)	
Unofficial discussions	
With superior(s)	
With subordinates	
With co-workers	
Cultural phenomena	
Stories	
Symbols	
Slogans	
Personnel development	
Training	
Goal-setting and appraisal discussions	
Socialization	
Personnel choices	
Rewarding	
Planning and finance	
Budget monitoring and control (reporting)	
Business plans	
Operative and performance objectives	
Operation / processes	
Project management systems	
Quality systems	
Changes in organizational structure	
Networks and partnerships	

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW OUTLINE FOR THE INTERVIEW WITH THE NEW MANAGING DIRECTOR

Questions concerning the strategy process

- What do you understand by the term 'strategy'? (What things do you associate with it?)
- What do you understand by the term 'strategy implementation'? (What things do you associate with it?)
- How have you communicated strategy in AffCo?

Questions concerning the intranet discussion forum as a strategic arena

- In your opinion, what kind of role does the intranet discussion forum have in AffCo? For what purpose does it exist?
- What kind of topics have been under discussion in the forum recently?
- How has the management team reacted to these discussions?
- Has the forum provided feedback or information for the management team's strategy work?

Questions concerning AffCo's change process

- What kind of critical events have happened in AffCo during the past five years?
- In your opinion, what is / are the most critical of these events affecting what kind of organization AffCo is today? Why?²¹
 - When did the event happen?
 - In your opinion, what led that event to happen?

²¹ Following questions were repeated for each critical event that came up in the interview.

- How did the event unfold?
 - What incidents were related to the event?
 - What was the atmosphere in the company at that time?
 - Who were involved in the event?
 - How did you inform others / how were you informed about the event?
- What is the situation concerning the event today?

Questions concerning the company

- How would you describe AffCo today?
- How would you describe AffCo's future in three years?

Questions? Comments?

Thank you!

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW OUTLINE FOR GROUP INTERVIEWS

Questions concerning AffCo's change process

- What kind of critical events have happened in AffCo during the past five years?
- In your opinion, what is / are the most critical of these events affecting what kind of organization AffCo is today? Why?²²
 - When did the event happen?
 - In your opinion, what led that event to happen?
 - How did the event unfold?
 - What incidents were related to the event?
 - What was the atmosphere in the company at that time?
 - Who were involved in the event?
 - How did you inform others / how were you informed about the event?
 - What is the situation concerning the event today?

Questions concerning the intranet discussion forum as a strategic arena

- In your opinion, what kind of role does the intranet discussion forum have in AffCo? For what purpose does it exist?
- What kind of topics have been under discussion in the forum recently?
- How has the management team reacted to these discussions? (senior managers)

²² Following questions were repeated for each critical event that came up in the interview.

- Has the forum provided feedback or information for the management team's strategy work? (senior managers)
- How important the forum has been in providing you information about the change process? (operative employees and middle managers)

Questions concerning the company

- How would you describe AffCo today?
- How would you describe AffCo's future in three years?

Individual work

- Please write down critical events that have happened in AffCo during the past five years. Each of the events is written down on a separate card.

Group work

- Please group the critical events written down on the cards on the flapchart according to their occurrence. The outcome of the group work is AffCo's change story from the past to the present. Think loud when you organize the events on the flapchart.
- Please name different phases of the change process with an illustrative title.

Questions? Comments?

Thank you!

APPENDIX 4: QUOTATIONS FROM THE DATA IN FINNISH

Economic-rationalistic discourse

- 1: ”Yhteistyössä MCorpin kanssa arvioimme saavuttavamme merkittäviä synergiaetuja valtakunnallisen liiketoiminnan ohjauksella ja yhtiöiden keskinäisellä työnjaolla.”
- 2: ”Tulemme etsimään yhteistyökumppaneita, joiden kanssa pystymme tarjoamaan tietoliikenteen kokonaisratkaisuja alueellisesti, valtakunnallisesti sekä myös kansainvälisesti.”
- 3: ”Äänekäs, mutta rahaton Pro Z²³ -liike ei pystynyt AffCon itsenäisyyttä pelastamaan. Jäljelle jäi MCorp, jolla oli rahaa ja asiantuntemusta.”
- 4: ”Yhteistyö MCorpin kanssa merkitsee AffCo-joukkueelle mahdollisuutta vastata entistä paremmin siihen haasteeseen, jonka peruslupauksessamme olemme antaneet omistajillemme ja asiakkaillemme.”
- 5: ”AffCo on tämmönen ehkä hieman sanotaanko vanhanaikainen norsu ja virastoai-kaan jäänyt tietyssä mielessä (...) ajan hermolla pysyminen edellyttää sitä, että toimintaa tehostetaan tietyissä asioissa pois sieltä kivikautiselta tasolta. Se on ihan suoranainen pakko. Muuten meidän tekeminen on niin kallista, että tässä ei ole mitään järkeä.”
- 6: ”(...) mä olen voinut sitten katsoa asioita konsernin kannalta ja koittanut tietenkin yhdistää niitä paikallisia etuja ja konsernietuja, jotka tietenkin aina ovat samat (...)”
- 7: ”Vääntö [puhelin-yhtiöiden allianssin] valtakunnallisten yhtiöiden keskittämiseksi yhdeksi kokonaisuudeksi ei johtanut tulokseen, joka olisi tyydyttänyt kaikkia osapuo- lia riittävästi. Hankkeesta luovuttiin alkuvuodesta. Sittemmin kehitys tällä rintamalla on ottanut toisen suunnan, jossa ei enää rakenneta talkoohengessä suurta yhteistä konsernia, vaan edetään enemmän yhtiökohtaisten intressien pohjalta, jolloin yhteistoimintaa syntyy silloin, kun molemmat / kaikki osapuolet kokevat siitä hyötyvänsä. Tämäkin on siis tavallaan siirtymistä ”kollektivismista” normaaliin päiväjärjestykseen.”
- 8: ”Helsingin pörssi saa vajaan vuoden sisään listoillensa jo [n:n] teleyhtiön, kun noteeraus AffCon osakkeilla huhtikuun alussa alkaa. Puhelin-yhtiöiden pörssi-invaasio ei pääty kuitenkaan tähän.”
- 9: ”Vaikka ajan henki onkin nyt otollinen keskittämislle ja fuusioille, ensimmäiset [paikalliset] reaktiot MCorpin tulosta AffCon omistajaksi olivat aika tyrmäviä, negatiivisia ja hyvin tunteenomaisia purkauksia.”

²³ 'Z' refers to the city where AffCo operates.

Power discourse

- 10:** ”Ei mielletty ylipäätään sitä, että voi tulla tämmönen vihamielinen valtaus (...)”
- 11:** ”Kun tiistaina seurasi lähes viisi tuntia (...) AffCon yhtiökokousta, ei ole vaikea kuvitella miltä Don Quijotesta tuntui taistellessaan ylivoimaista tuulimyllyä vastaan.”
- 12:** ”(...) hinnat ja tuotteet tulee ihan selkeesti ja yksinkertaisesti piste. Mä en edes tiedä välttämättä nettohintoja. Et mulla ei ole niin kuin harmainta hajuakaan, että teenkö mä katteellista kauppaa vai katteetonta kauppaa ja se on musta niin kuin aika toivotonta jo myynissä.”
- 13:** ”(...) se oli semmonen itsenäisyystaistelu siinä, että sitä ei haluttu tavallaan tunnustaa vielä. Me tehtiin sit myös semmosia tietoisia ratkaisuja, joilla pyrittiin niin kuin kasvamaan ulos siitä MCorpista.”
- 14:** ”(...) aika hyvin ne päälliköt onnistu aivopeseen, ettei se [MCorp] nyt niin uhakuva taida ollakaan.”
- 15:** ”AffCossa homma toimii kuten eduskunnassa, päätökset tehdään esiripun takana. Jos et ole valtaapitävien kaveri niin ura ei etene tai ura voi jopa loppua.”
- 16:** ”Tiedottaminen on todella heikossa ja olematonta. Ehkä ajatuksena on se, että kun ”me” tiedämme asian niin turha sitä on työntekijöille kertoa.”
- 17:** ”(...) korostin koko ajan henkilöstölle, että mä en tullut MCorpilta panemaan teitä kuriin, vaan (...)”
- 18:** ”Kuuluminen MCorp-konserniin ei kuitenkaan tarkoita sitä, että AffCo kaikessa mukautuisi MCorpin tahtoon. Päinvastoin, sen on tehtävä omia ratkaisuja ja omaehtoisesti muokattava omaa rooliaan MCorp-konsernissa. (...) Ellei täällä olisi omaa päätäntävaltaa, ei olisi omaa toimitusjohtajaakaan (...)”

Cultural discourse

- 19:** ”Ne ajattelee, että nyt täällä kun tehdään semmosta valtakunnallista koneistoa, niin kaikki menee valtakunnallisiin prosesseihin ja varmaan kaikki mukautuu niihin, kun me taas Power Pointilla näytetään, että näin ne sitten menee käymättä ikinä oikeesti siellä kentällä kattomassa, että millai se sit oikeesti menee. Ja sitten taas kun ne tulee tänne kentälle kattomaan, niin ne ymmärtää, että eihän itse asiassa valtakunnallisesti prosessit voikaan toimia, kun kaikki on erilaisia yhtiöitä.”
- 20:** ”(...) heti kun muututtiin niin kuin AffCoksi ja tytäryhtiöksi MCorpiin (...), niin ensimmäisen kerran meidän koko satavuotisessa historiassa tuli irtisanomisia. [Aff-Con entinen toimitusjohtaja] on tehnyt kaikki työt aina sillai, että niitä ei tullut silloin lamavuosinakaan.”
- 21:** ”Toisaalta se mikä näissä, hommat siirtyy eri yhtiöille –kuvioissa on ollut mun mielestä hienoo, on se, että tällä hetkellä kun nyt juttelee näitten toisen yrityksen palvelukseen siirtyvien henkilöitten kanssa, niin kyllä ne edelleen, kun ne puhuu meistä niin ne puhuu AffCosta. Et tietyllä tavalla ne on meidän ihmisiä, mut sen toisen yrityksen sisällä.”

22: ”Kyllä siinä oli yhtenäinen rintama, että kaikki oli asiaa [fuusio] vastaan ja koki tulleensa huijatuks.”

23: ”Kysymys: Mites toi... te nostitte esille ton nimenmuutoksen kun Z-Phone muutti nimen AffCoksi, niin miten te näkisitte sen ajan, että mitä silloin organisaatiossa, minkälainen tunnelma tai ilmapiiri oli, kun tuo muutos tapahtui?”

Vastaus: Kyllä aika paljon tuli negatiivista palautetta. Kyllä oltiin Z-Phonelaisia pitkään. Sitä ei niin kuin oikein sisäistetty sitä AffCoa kuitenkaan.

Kysymys: Mikä siinä herätti negatiivisuutta eniten? Mikä siinä sai sen vastarinnan?

Vastaus: Kai siinä oli se, että kun 100 vuotta oltiin Z-Phone, yli 100 vuotta, niin kaipa se pikkusen painaa vaakakupissa, että miks sitä nyt mentiin muutetaan, kun kaikki tuntee meidät Z-Phonelaisina (...)

24: ”En kuitenkaan usko, että jos MCorp tulisi [kaupunkiin, jossa AffCo toimii], se laittaisi MCorpin kyltit tuonne katolle. Jos minä olisin MCorpin johtaja, minä en tekisi niin. AffColla on vahva [alueellinen ja paikallinen] leima ja se on myös asiakassuhteiden peruste suurelta osin.”

Destruction

25: ”Maaliskuussa allekirjoitetun AffCo-MCorp-sopimuksen seurauksena on AffCosta nyt tullut MCorpin tytäryhtiö.”

26: ”Firmasta tuli kioski

lähettäjä: Vai mitä?

Taas nähtiin, kuinka nopeasti pystytään menestyvä ja rikas yritys ajamaan alas.”

27: ”Nykyisin on ainainen kiire, että ennen vanhaan jotenkin tuntu, että sai vähän helpommalla sen työpäivän (...)

Transformation

28: ”AffCo on tämmönen ehkä hieman sanotaanko vanhanaikainen norsu ja virastoaikaan jäänyt tiettyssä mielessä (...) ajan hermolla pysyminen edellyttää sitä, että toimintaa tehostetaan tietyissä asioissa pois sieltä kivikautiselta tasolta.”

29: ”(...) meitä pidetään paikallisena ja kuitenkin toimitaan valtakunnallisesti (...)

30: ”Tavoitetila (...) on olla johtava tietoliikenteen ratkaisujen toimittaja [alueella, jolla AffCo toimii].”

31: ”Tulemme etsimään yhteistyökumppaneita, joiden kanssa pystymme tarjoamaan tietoliikenteen kokonaisratkaisuja alueellisesti, valtakunnallisesti sekä myös kansainväliselle tasolle.”

32: ”Kysymys: No sitten jos kattoo tästä eteenpäin tulevaisuuteen, niin minkälaisena te näkisitte sanotaan kolmen vuoden aikajänteellä AffCon tästä eteenpäin?”

(...)

Vastaus: Me myydään ja asennetaan. Mitään muuta me ei sitten tehdäkään.

Vastaus: Niin, todennäköisesti MCorpin nimen alla.

Vastaus: Niin todennäköisesti joo.

Vastaus: Me ei olla täällä paikan päällä AffCon nyrkki, vaan me ollaan MCorpin sormi.

Perpetuation

33: ”Tämä taitaa olla vielä jäänteitä siitä (surullisen?) kuuluisasta OSUUSKUNTA-hengestä, joka tuntuu yhä elävän voimakkaana organisaation hitaammin muuttuvissa osissa ...”

34: ”Mut kyllä asiakkaat vieläkin, ne tulee niin kuin Z-Phonelle ja puhelinosuuskuntaan ja vaikka nimi lukis mikä tuolla katolla, niin ei se mitään auta. Ne tulee puhelinosuuskuntaan.”

Construction

35: ”Emme me maksa vallasta vaan järkevästä liiketoimintayhteistyöstä (...)”

36: ”Olemme itsenäinen yhtiö ja teemme itsenäisiä päätöksiä (...)”

37: ”On miellyttävä todeta, että myös isovelji etelästä on todennut AffCon hyväksi ja houkuttelevaksi yhtiöksi.”

38: ”Paikallisuus jatkuu vahvana (...)”

39: ”AffCo-identiteetin merkeissä jatkamme eteenpäin (...)”

40: ”(...) en todellakaan halunnut muuttaa mitään vaan säilyttää asiat niin kuin ne on olleet (...)”

41: ”(...) [mun] pitää näyttää nimenomaan, et ei muututa, et kun ollaan osa valtakunnallista konsernia, niin siitäkin huolimatta pystytään oleen se perinteinen toimija, joka me ollaan oltu.”

Media texts during the pre-acquisition period

42: ”Listautuminen avaa mahdollisuuden hyödyntää pääomamarkkinoita. Rahaa tarvitaan mm. mahdollisiin yritysostoihin ja lankaverkon muuttamiseen multimediakäyttöön.”

43: ”Rahaa tarvitaan, sillä etsimme aktiivisesti strategiaamme tukevia ostokelpoisia yrityksiä.”

44: ”AffCo alkaa vähitellen muistuttaa oikeaa pörssiyhtiötä myös hallintoelimiltään.”

45: ”Emme me maksa vallasta, vaan järkevästä liiketoimintayhteistyöstä (...)”

46: ”Halutessaan MCorp voisi käyttää vahvaakin isännän ääntä AffCossa. Esimerkiksi kevään yhtiökokouksessa äänileikkuri takasi MCorpin yhtiöryppäälle yli puolet äänistä. AffCossa ei kuitenkaan myönnetä [yrityksen] olevan isoveljensä talutusnuorassa - Olemme itsenäinen yhtiö ja teemme itsenäisiä päätöksiä, painottaa hallintojohtaja [nimi]. Hän näkee MCorpin hyvänä yhteistyökumppanina mm. tuotekehityksessä ja suurasiakashankinnassa.”

47: ”On miellyttävä todeta, että myös isovelji etelästä on todennut AffCon hyväksi ja houkuttelevaksi yhtiöksi.”

48: ”Meidän perheessämme puhelinosake on siirtynyt minulle isältäni. Isäni puolestaan sai sen omalta isältään. Nyt olen tavallaan tekemässä ratkaisua perinnön kohtalosta (...)”

49: ”Uskoakseni kyse on myös eräänlaisesta [alueellisuudesta]. Ihmiset haluavat ainakin toistaiseksi pitää ”oman” puhelinyhtiönsä osakkeet itsellään (...)”

50: ”Pienomistajien katkeruus ja kapinahenki juontaa kahden vuoden takaa, kun AffCo muutettiin osuuskunnasta osakeyhtiöksi. MCorp liitti [alueellisen] ylpeyden nopeasti valtapiiriinsä.”

51: ”En kuitenkaan usko, että jos MCorp tulisi [kaupunkiin, jossa AffCo toimii], se laittaisi MCorpin kyltit tuonne katolle. Jos minä olisin MCorpin johtaja, minä en tekisi niin. AffColla on vahva [alueellinen ja paikallinen] leima ja se on myös asiakassuhteiden peruste suurelta osin.”

52: ”Yhtiö on jo enemmän kuin [kaupunki, jossa AffCo toimii] ja puhelin, tulevaisuudessa yhä enemmän myös valtakunnallinen ja kansainvälinen toimija (...)”

53: ”Haluamme olla [kaupungissa, jossa AffCo toimii] pääkonttoriaan pitävä yhtiö, joka lähtee [paikallisista] juurista.”

Internal managerial texts during the pre-acquisition period

54: ”(...) ei enää rakenneta talkoohengessä suurta yhteistä konsernia, vaan edetään enemmän yhtiökohtaisten intressien pohjalta, jolloin yhteistoimintaa syntyy silloin, kun molemmat / kaikki osapuolet kokevat siitä hyötyvänsä. Tämäkin on siis tavallaan siirtymistä ”kollektivismista” normaaliin päiväjärjestykseen.”

55: ”Tulemme etsimään yhteistyökumppaneita, joiden kanssa pystymme tarjoamaan tietoliikenteen kokonaisratkaisuja alueellisesti, valtakunnallisesti sekä myös kansainväliselle tasolle.”

56: ”AffCo on viime vuosiin saakka pitkäjänteisesti rakentanut ja vahvistanut asemaansa perinteisenä alueellisena puhelinyhtiönä. Tulevaisuudessa tuo rooli varmasti säilyy, mutta toinen kehityssuunta AffColla voi olla myös valtakunnallisten palvelujen tarjoajana.”

The interviews with senior managers during the pre-acquisition period

57: "(...) osuuskunnan aikana kaikki voi kertoa vaikka kuinka kauan etukäteen. Nyt pitää pitää turpa tukossa aika pitkään."

58: "(...) sijoittajaa pitää muistaa, joka on tietysti uusi aspekti sinne osuuskunta-aikaan. Että meillä oli vain jäseniä ja asiakkaita. Nyt on sitten sijoittajat ja omistajat, joiden rooli pitää muistaa."

59: "(...) kun sijoittajat kävi, kun meillä oli ne avajaiset puolitoista viikkoa sitten, niin ne totesi, että nyt alkaa vähän muistuttaa pörssiyrityötä. Ennen tää oli niin kuin tilaus-ten vastaanottokonttori."

60: "(...) meidän täytyy voimakkaammin erikoistua johonkin suuntaan. Ei voi olla kaikessa hyvä enää tän maailman aikana."

61: "Nyt ei riitä enää, että se [visio] on [alueen] johtava tietoliikennetoimittaja. Meidän täytyy laajentaa sitä kokonaisuutta."

62: "Me ollaan selkeästi ilmoitettu, että me lähdetään laajentumaan myös yritysostoihin."

63: "(...) meillä on tietysti yksi suuri pääomistaja, jonka kanssa on varsin hyvin se tahtotila tähän asti ollut yhdenmukainen, että heilläkään ei ole viimeisen ilmoituksensa mukaan kuitenkaan intressiä sitten lisätä täällä omistustaan."

The interviews with middle managers during the pre-acquisition period

64: "(...) meillä on menneisyys osuuskunnassa ja silloin myöskin asiakas hyvin herkästi [ajattelee], että eihän nyt sieltä osuuskunnasta tässä kuussa sitä [palvelua] saa."

65: "AffCo on tämmönen ehkä hieman sanotaanko vanhanaikainen norsu ja virastoai-kaan jäänyt tiettyssä mielessä (...) ajan hermolla pysyminen edellyttää sitä, että toimintaa tehostetaan tietyissä asioissa pois sieltä kivikautiselta tasolta. Se on ihan suoranainen pakko. Muuten meidän tekeminen on niin kallista, että tässä ei ole mitään järkeä."

66: "(...) AffCo on tämmönen paikallinen yhtiö, paikallisesti toiminut aika pitkälle. Joitakin tiettyjä juttuja on tehty valtakunnallisesti, mut kyl se suuntaus pitäis olla se, että pitäis pyrkiä tavalla tahi toisella laajentamaan sitä omaa tonttia. Mikä ei tietenkään tarkoita sitä, että sitten innoissamme unohdamme sitten nää paikalliset asiat, missä me ollaan oltu kauheen hyviä."

67: "(...) tää osakeyhtiökuvioikin varmaan teki hyvää kyllä AffColle, elikkä me ollaan päästy tästä tämmösestä laitosmaisuudesta eroon. Musta tää on kohtuullisen dynaaminen yritys."

68: "(...) näen niin kuin ajan selvenemisenä sinä aikana, kun olen täällä ollut, koska silloin oltiin laitos ja nyt ollaan selkeästi liikelaitos."

69: "Kysymys: Miten jos nyt ajatellaan AffCoa nyt ihan yleisesti kokonaisuutena ja yrityksenä, niin miten itse näet, minkälaisena näet AffCon tulevaisuuden?"

Vastaus: Valoisana, hyvinkin valoisana. Se on löytänyt liittolaisensa ja varmasti uskon, että jonkinikäinen yhteinen strategiakin on muodostumassa tarkoittaen sitä, että kuka tekee, missä tekee, mitä tekee ja kenenkä tuella.”

The interviews with operative employees during the pre-acquisition period

70: ”(...) täällä on perusteellisesti muuttunut tää koko arvomaailma sen jälkeen kun menttiin pörssiin. Nyt vaan raha ratkaisee kaikissa paikoissa.”

71: ”(...) tän talon tyyli on muutenkin muuttunut. Vaikka johtaja puhuu yhteen hiileen puhaltamisesta, niin kyllä minusta täällä puhallellaan jo aika moneen hiileen.”

72: ”No se [tavoitekuva] mikä nyt tällä hetkellä on, että siis se on niin kuin yhteyksien luoja ja alansa huippu. (...) mutta mitenkä sen sais sitten tuonne asiakkaan päähän, että se kiinnostus enemmän näistä osa-alueista, mitkä mahdollista on, ettei se ole vain tää puhelinasia.”

73: ”Kyllä tää varmasti on sellainen yhtiö, joka kehittyy ja kehitetään, koska onhan toi isoveli tossa vahtimassa.”

74: ”Toi isoveli MCorp tuolla vähän vaikuttaa (...) Tää AffCo on liian iso ollakseen pikku laitos tai (...) yhtiö, mutta kuitenkin liian pieni ollakseen tällainen valtakunnallinen (...) vaikuttaja. MCorpin kautta mahdollisesti voi jotain tulla. Joko sulaututaan siihen tai pysytään AffCona. Kyllä itsellä on sellainen mielipide, että viiden vuoden tähtämellä taidetaan olla samaa firmaa MCorpin kanssa. Ei se välttämättä paha asia ole.”

75: ”(...) se [AffCon tulevaisuus] on meille kaikille täysi arvoitus ja hyvin mahdollisena pidetään, että yhtenä kauniina päivänä AffCo on yhtä kuin MCorp. Että siis jotenkin kaikilla on sellainen sanonko jotenkin pelonsekainen odotus, että mitä tää meidän tulevaisuus on, että kuinka vahvasti MCorp (...)”

76: ”(...) ainakin niin kauan kun [AffCon toimitusjohtaja] on vielä, mitä se on sanonut olevansa 65:seen, neljä-viisi vuotta, niin mä uskon, että sen ajan ainakin AffCo on AffCo.”

Media texts during the acquisition period

77: ”Yritysten välisellä työnjaolla saavutetaan vuositason arviolta kymmenien miljoonien markkojen synergiaedut.”

78: ”MCorpin näkemyksen mukaan vain riittävän suuri teleyhtiö voi rakentaa kaikkia, myös paikallisia asiakkaita tyydyttävän palveluverkoston. Samalla avautuu mahdollisuus ainakin rajoitettuun kansainväliseen toimintaan.”

79: ”AffCon toimitusjohtaja [nimi] puolestaan arvioi, että syventynyt yhteistyö saattaa tuoda runsaastikin uusia työpaikkoja [kaupunkialueelle, jolla AffCo toimii].”

80: ”Henkilökuntaa ei ole tarkoitus vähentää, vaan mahdollisesti lisätä.”

81: ”Tässä [yhtiö]kokouksessa huomio kohdistui luonnollisesti omistusasioihin. Keskeinen tavoitteemme on kuitenkin tiivistää liiketoimintayhteistyötä, olemme partnereita.”

82: ”[AffCo Servicen toimitusjohtaja] vakuuttaakin, ettei [kaupunkiin, jossa AffCo toimii,] synnytetä pikku-MCorpia. – Toimintaa ei ole ehkä järkevää jatkaa konserni-muodossa, mutta ei ole myöskään järkevää tehdä tänne MCorpia. AffCon vahva asema on arvo, jota ei voi hukata. Se on juuri sitä mitä MCorp haki (...)”

83: ”Asiakassuhde AffCoon säilyy, samoin paikalliset palvelut ja hinnoitteluratkaisut. MCorp-ryhmän ideana ei ole tasapäästä aluetoimintaa vaan vahvistaa alueellista toimintaa.”

84: ”MCorpin säästökuuri uhkaa ulottua [kaupunkiin, jossa AffCo toimii] ja vähentää työpaikkoja AffCosta.”

Internal managerial texts during the acquisition period

85: ”AffCo-identiteetin merkeissä jatkamme eteenpäin tukeutuen tarvittaessa emomCorpin osaamiseen ja voimavaroihin. Menestyksemme on kuitenkin pääasiassa kiinni omasta osaamisestamme.”

86: ”Tavallaan ymmärrän AffColaista, joka ajattelee, että me ollaan hoidettu meidän asiat hyvin ja noi luulee, että ne voi tulla tänne kukkoilemaan eikä niistä ole kuin haittaa...On inhimillistä ajatella, että AffCo on sentään ollut itsenäinen pörssi-yhtiö, joka on ikään kuin ajautunut MCorpin syliin, osittain jopa ilman omaa haluaan. Kuuluminen MCorp-konserniin ei kuitenkaan tarkoita sitä, että AffCo kaikessa mukautuisi MCorpin tahtoon. Päinvastoin, sen on tehtävä omia ratkaisuja ja omaehtoisesti muokattava omaa rooliaan MCorp-konsernissa. (...) Ellei täällä olisi omaa päätäntävaltaa, ei olisi omaa toimitusjohtajaakaan (...)”

87: ”Viimeisten vuosien aikana AffCo on käynyt eräänlaista itsenäistymistäistelua, halunnut kehittyä omana itsenään ja pörssi-yhtiönä. Tietoliikennealalta on odotettu kasvunäkymiä ja tämä on vienyt AffConkin etsimään uutta liiketoimintaa. Nyt kun markkina on toisenlaisessa vaiheessa, toimintaa on pakko sopeuttaa. Ei tarvitse luopua kaikesta uudesta, mutta on oltava valmis tunnustamaan, että perusliiketoiminta on melko perinteistä ja paikallista. Kovaa ’draivia’ uuteen pitää hyt hillitä.”

88: ”Tällä hetkellä olemme joutuneet osaksi maailmanlaajuista henkistä epävarmuutta ja taloudellista taantumaa. (...) MCorp-konsernin osana meidän on nyt liiketoiminnollisesti tarkasteltava mahdollisia päällekkäisyyksiä ja etsittävä yhteistyön synergioita. (...) Joudumme keskittymään ydinosaamiseemme ja samalla vääjäämättä sopeuttamaan ensi vuoden puolella henkilöstöresurssejamme.”

Anonymous discussions during the acquisition period

89: ”No niin - logo vaihtuu !!!!

lähettäjä: Sihtailija

Mikähän meistä nyt tulee, Orange vai joku muu hetelmä..

Re: No niin - logo vaihtuu !!!!

lähettäjä: erik

[MCorpin logon symboli]

Re: No niin - logo vaihtuu !!!!

lähettäjä: Frank

...toivottavasti se [MCorpin logon symboli]. päästään tästä turhasta "strategisesta" kumppanuudesta. tietotaito MCorpille ja jälleenmyyjän rooli AffColle."

90: "Joulusatu

lähettäjä: Sarkastinen joulupossu

Olipa kerran kolme pientä possua: Veli [erään alueellisen puhelinyhtiön nimi], Veli AffCo ja Veli [erään toisen alueellisen puhelinyhtiön nimi]. He kaikki pelkäsivät julmaa naarassutta, jonka nimi oli MCorp."

91: "Re: Kiitos

lähettäjä: JS

"Kyllähän totuus on se, että on melkoinen pettymys jos hanke jostain syystä kariutuu. Nyt tehty päätös onnistuessaan on mielestäni oikean suuntainen ja me AffColaiset voimme siirtää rauhassa kaiken osaamisemme ja voimavaramme meille oleellisiin painopistealueisiin. Kaikkea ei kannata tehdä itse tässä maailmassa, koska resurssimme ovat rajalliset, muuten touhu menee 'harrastelijoiden puuhasteluksi'.

Re: Kiitos

lähettäjä: Blääh

":D (hauska)"

92: "Re: Fair play

lähettäjä: %

[Palveluketjun kehittämishankkeen nimi] suorastaan räjäyttää li(i)an pois =)"

93: "kysymyksiä (AffCon irtisanomiset)

lähettäjä: pieni

Kuinka voimme tätä tekstiä lukiessa väittää että olemme aidosti itsenäisiä, MCorphan meitä ohjaa.

94: "MCorpin uusi tarjous

lähettäjä: Kehittäjä

Voisiko joku taas valoittaa missä mennään? Mitä tarkoittaa se, että MCorp haluaa AffCon kokonaan itselleen. Huhut ja spekulatiot kulkevat. Mikä on AffCon rooli jatkossa? (...)

(...)

Re: MCorpin uusi tarjous

lähettäjä: [AffCon hallintojohtaja]

MCorpin jatkotarjouksen syy oli arvopaperi-markkinalaista johtuva. Lain mukaan osakkeenomistajan, jonka osuus kasvaa yli kahden kolmasosan yhtiön osakkeiden äänimäärästä, on tarjouduttava lunastamaan loputkin yhtiön osakkeista. Jos rajan ylitykseen johtaneet osakkeet on hankittu julkisella ostotarjouksella, ei lunastusvelvollisuutta kuitenkaan synny ennen tarjouksen voimassaoloajan päättymistä. MCorpin oli siis järkevää jatkaa tarjousaikaa, muussa tapauksessa sen olisi pitänyt lunastaa AffCon osakkeet rahalla, mikä tietenkin olisi rasittanut MCorpin maksuvalmiutta. Muuta taustaa jatkotarjouksella ei ole.

Media texts during the post-acquisition period

95: "Äänekäs, mutta rahaton Pro Z²⁴ -liike ei pystynyt AffCon itsenäisyyttä pelastamaan. Jäljelle jäi MCorp, jolla oli rahaa ja asiantuntemusta. (...) MCorp oli ainoa järkevä vaihtoehto sen jälkeen, kun tavoiteltu [puhelin-yhtiöiden allianssi] hajosi (...)"

96: " Meillä on selkeä linjaus, tehtävämme on palvella [sen alueen asukkaita, jolla AffCo toimii] niin kuin olemme tehneet jo 120 vuoden ajan. (...) Uusia kasvoja on tullut, mutta jatkamme entisellä linjalla. Kovin paljon muutoksia ei toimiimme olostossa (...)"

Internal managerial texts during the post-acquisition period

97: "Vaikka AffColla olikin vankka kannatus [kaupungissa, jossa AffCo toimii], alueellinen suojaus ei olisi täällä onnistunut. Ilmassa oli pro-Z henkeä, mutta tarvittavaa rahamäärää ei olisi täältä löytynyt eikä tällainen omistuksen "betonointi" välttämättä olisi ollut järkevääkään."

98: " Vaikka ajan henki onkin nyt otollinen keskittämislle ja fuusioille, ensimmäiset [paikalliset] reaktiot MCorpin tulosta AffCon omistajaksi olivat aika tyrmäviä, negatiivisia ja hyvin tunteenomaisia purkauksia. (...) Päätökset vuosien varrella ovat olleet perusteltuja ja harkittuja (...)"

99: "Valtakunnan mittaisessa MCorp-konserniyhteistyössä toteutuu konkreettisesti suuruuden ekonomia ja samalla säilytetään kosketus asiakkaisiin. (...) Tehokkuutta konsernin sisällä haetaan optimoimalla palvelutuotantoa, karsimalla päällekkäisyyksiä ja keskittämällä osaamista sopivalla tavalla."

²⁴ 'Z' refers to the city where AffCo operates.

100: ” Me puolestamme voimme löytää MCorp-yhteistyöstä monia mahdollisuuksia.”

101: “”AffCo-nimi” halutaan säilyttää korostamaan tietoisesti toiminnan ja päätöksenteon paikallisuutta. Saamme jatkossakin palvelua asiakkaitamme ”paikallisella murteella” eikä asioita tarvitse kierrättää [kaupungin, jossa MCorp toimii] kautta. MCorpilla ei siis ole takataskussa mitään salaisia suunnitelmia meidän varallemme.”

102: ”(...) MCorp-konsernin alueelliset yhtiöt tekevät jatkossakin itsenäisiä päätöksiä jokapäiväisessä toiminnassaan.”

103: ”Se, millaiseksi AffCon tulevaisuus muodostuu, on paljolti kiinni AffColaisista itsestään.”

Anonymous discussions during the post-acquisition period

104: ”Firmasta tuli kioski

lähettäjä: Vai mitä?

Taas nähtiin, kuinka nopeasti pystytään menestyvä ja rikas yritys ajamaan alas. Aikaisemmin saattoi olla ylpeä työskennellessään tässä talossa, mutta ei enää.”

105: ”hakumenettely

lähettäjä: mullin vai mallin

Asioista sovitaan "takahuoneessa" eikä paikkaa laiteta avoimeen hakuun.

Re: hakumenettely

lähettäjä: Höm

AffCossa homma toimii kuten eduskunnassa, päätökset tehdään esiripun takana.”

The interviews with senior managers during the post-acquisition period

106: ”(...) se oli semmonen itsenäisyystaistelu siinä, että sitä ei haluttu tavallaan tunnustaa vielä. Me tehtiin sit myös semmosia tietoisia ratkaisuja, joilla pyrittiin niin kuin kasvamaan ulos siitä MCorpista.”

107: ”(...) meillä oli tämmönen tietyn oman riippumattomuuden puolustusvaihe. Näin kai sen vois sanoa, että näin sitä vielä kuviteltiin, että tässä niin kuin tietyllä tavalla itsenäisenä ja riippumattomana yhtiönä voidaan toimia pidempään.”

108: ”Sellaisen ei pitänyt olla mahdollista, mut niin se mahdollistettiin. Ei mielletty ylipäätään sitä, että voi tulla tämmönen vihamielinen valtaus, jos sen niin sanoo ja ei ylipäätään mielletty sitä, et kun se menee pörssiin, niin saman tien sulla ei ole enää mitään kontrollia siihen sun omistukseen.”

109: ”(...) paljon MCorpin painostuksesta sitten hallitus pääty siihen, että ei tässä oikeastaan muuta vaihtoehtoa ole.”

110: "(...) kun me ollaan oltu itsenäinen yhtiö, tehty kaikki itse, et me ollaan fokusoitu, et me ollaan asiakasyhtiö ja hoidetaan myyntiä, markkinointia, asennusta, laskutusta, kaikkea, mikä näkyy asiakkaalle ja kaikkea mikä ei näy asiakkaalle tai jos tukeudutaan muualle, (...) niin jotkut on sanoneet, että se tarkoittaa sitä, että me surkastutaan vaan asiakasyhtiöks, koska sehän on ihan väärä näkemys, vaan hei, me voidaan keskittyä ihan oikeesti siihen mikä meille on tärkeätä, mikä on tietenkintotta. Mut siinä on ihmisillä jostain syystä semmonen, et sulla on ikään kuin kaikki tukitoiminnotkin itselläsi niin se tekee vasta tästä oikean yhtiön. Muuten sä olet vaan tämmösen jonkun satelliitti ikään kuin, joka on hassua. Mutta näin sitä usein ajatellaan."

111: "(...) se on vähän sama kuin mikä tahansa konserni, jolla on vahva paikallinen yhtiö. (...) sä et koskaan tiedä, että missä määrin sen alueellisen toiminnan, missä määrin se on ihan oikeesti viisasta vahvistaa paikallisesti ja missä määrin se kannattaa niin kuin streemlainata valtakunnallisesti. Ja se, että sitä ei oikeesti tiedä, johtaa siihen jännitteeseen, et pääosin paikallinen yhtiö oman historiansa kautta uskoo, että tekeilläsi asiat itse niin paikallisesti se on tehokkaampaa."

112: "Ne ajattelee, että nyt täällä kun tehdään semmosta valtakunnallista koneistoa, niin kaikki menee valtakunnallisiin prosesseihin ja varmaan kaikki mukautuu niihin, kun me taas Power Pointilla näytetään, että näin ne sitten menee käymättä ikinä oikeesti siellä kentällä kattomassa, että millai se sit oikeesti menee. Ja sitten taas kun ne tulee tänne kentälle kattomaan, niin ne ymmärtää, että eihän itse asiassa valtakunnallisesti prosessit voikaan toimia, kun kaikki on erilaisia yhtiöitä."

113: "(...) entistä enemmän kärjistyy niin kuin se ristiriita, et MCorpin johdon tasolla nähdään, että tää paikallinen vahva toimija on sitä niin kuin pysyvästi paikallinen yhtiö, että yhtiörakenteessa on paikallinen brändi ja muuta, mut samaan aikaan se toiminnallinen yhtenäistäminen, niin ne lyö toisiaan jaloille ja se on varmaan se tietty ristiriita, että kun on hyvin mahdollista, et me ollaan vain MCorpin [kaupungin, jossa AffCo toimii] osasto vuonna xxxx, jos asiat pelataan huonosti."

114: " (...) ollaan ehkä joko itsenäinen yhtiö tai sitten ei. Sitähän ei tiedä tässä vaiheessa, mutta meidän tää polku varsinkin on sellainen, että yhä enemmän me ollaan tän palveluntarjoaja MCorp Servicen ohjauksessa ja niin kauan kuin meillä on halua ja sitä arvoa omana yhtiönä, niin sitä ei voi siinä vaiheessa... kun sitä ei enää ole, niin me todennäköisesti jollain tavalla sulaututaan alueorganisaatioksi."

The interview with middle managers during the post-acquisition period

115: "Esimies 1: Kyllä siinä nyt semmonen, mitä tuolla käytävillä puheltiin, niin kyllä siinä semmonen katkeruus oli alkuun, että nyt me ollaan MCorplaisia kaikki. Mitähän tästä tulee."

Esimies 2: Ei sitä kukaan varmaan positiivisesti ottanut. Kyllä siinä on yhtenäinen rintama, että kaikki oli asiaa [fusio] vastaan ja koki tullessa huijatuks."

116: "(...) oltiin paikallinen vahva vaikuttaja ja nyt sitten tän uuden omistajan myötä niin on tää valtakunnallisuus tässä kaikella lailla täällä ja kyllä se niin kuin tuntuu, että jaaha, taas etelärannikolta tuli jotakin."

117: ”Jopa sanotaan näin meille, että ei teidän kannata sinne ottaa alueelle yhteyttä niihin asiakkaisiin, ne hoidetaan täältä [kaupungista, jossa MCorp toimii] keskitetysti. Se tietysti vähän lievästi sanottuna harmittaa, että eikö nyt me muka osattaisi jotakin täällä tehdä.”

118: ”Toi sitoo käsiäkin vähän se, että ei pysty... aikaisemmin pysty niin kuin aika hyvin ottaan jonkun tuotteen täällä paikallisesti käyttöön. Nyt jonkun tietyn tuotteen käyttöönotto on periaatteessa mahdotonta, koska siihen on konsernitasolla jo olemassa ratkaisu, vaikka me saatas täällä tehtyä parempi tai otettua käyttöön parempi, niin se ei ole suotavaa, koska se ei ole niin kuin virallinen linja.”

119: ”Tekniikkapäässä tuli tämmönen, sitähan kutsutaan yhteistoimintasopimukseksi, mutta kyllähän se nyt lähinnä yhteistoiminta on enempi kuin MCorpista tännepäin. Vähemmän meillä keissejä sinnepäin on (...)

120: ”(...) hinnat ja tuotteet tulee ihan selkeesti ja yksinkertaisesti piste. Mä en edes tiedä välttämättä nettohintoja. Et mulla ei ole niin kuin harmainta hajuakaan, että teenkö mä katteellista kauppaa vai katteetonta kauppaa ja se on musta niin kuin aika toivotonta jo myynissä.”

121: ”No enemmän ehkä joutuu perusteleen näitä asioita ja siinä täytyy niin kuin tietyllä tapaa olla hyvin MCorplainen tietysti, ettei... koska viedä sitä asiaa sillai positiivisesti eteenpäin ja ne on monta kertaa aika ristiriitaisia tilanteita, kun ite on taistellut jostakin asiasta tukka pystyssä ja sitten täytyy taas niin kuin ottaa semmonen, että ’tää on ihan just miten se pitää tehdä ja tää on hyvä näin’. Että se täytys viedä eteenpäin se asia niin, että se saatas myös toimii. Siinä on vähän joskus semmosessa ristiriitaisessa tilanteessa, ainakin minä koen olevani.”

122: ”(...) ajatellaan esimerkkiä, että asiakas ottaa ihan tavallisen analogisen liittymän ja internetin, niin sinnehän myydään AffCon liittymä ja MCorp-internetti-yhteys. Ja tässä on pakko alkaa ruveta puhua molemmista yhtiöistä, koska asiakkaalle se näkyy jatkossa niin, että AffCo laskuttaa sen analogisen liittymän ja siitä tulleet puhelumatkukset ja MCorp laskuttaa sitten sen internetti-yhteyden kuukausimaksun. Että kun ei edes tämmösiä asioita saada yhdistettyä, niin siinä on väkisin kerrottava siitä roolista. (...) Et se on aika vaikea olla siinä yhden firman edustajana.”

123: ”(...) tällä hetkellä kun nyt juttelee näitten toisen yrityksen palvelukseen siirtyvien henkilöitten kanssa, niin kyllä ne edelleen, kun ne puhuu meistä niin ne puhuu AffCosta. Et tietyllä tavalla ne on meidän ihmisiä, mut sen toisen yrityksen sisällä. (...)”

124: ”Kysymys: No sitten jos katoo tästä eteenpäin tulevaisuuteen, niin minkälaisena te näkisitte sanotaan kolmen vuoden aikajänteellä AffCon tästä eteenpäin?

(...)

Vastaus: Me ei olla täällä paikan päällä AffCon nyrkki, vaan me ollaan MCorpin sormi.

(...)

Vastaus: Se on toisaalta sitten, että yrittää suhtautua kuitenkin niin, että toi on se worse skenario, mihin uhkaavasti näyttää, että ollaan menossa, mut kuitenkin yrittää pitää sitä, että ei se voi mennä näin. Ei me voida olla niin idiootti, että me hukataan kaikki se hyvä, mikä on siinä, että me ollaan AffCon nyrkki eikä MCorpin sormi.”

The interview with operative employees during the post-acquisition period

125: ”(...) tää koko prosessi tuntu semmoselta, nää [AffCon entisen toimitusjohtajan] viimeiset ajat täällä, että vaikka koitettiin sinnitelläkin, ettei niitä [irtisanomisia] tulisi, mutta se oli ne YT:t siinä vaiheessa kun nää yhtiöt tehtiin, niin [AffCon entinen toimitusjohtajan] oli silloin vielä remmissä ja se kyllä saneltiin [kaupungista, jossa MCorp toimii] ihan selkeesti, että 10 % pitää väkee vähentää ja piste.”

126: ”(...) palkkapuolet ja nämä (...) täällä ei tehdä enää itsenäisiä ratkaisuja, että kun me jossain vaiheessa oltiin niin kuin rahallisesti aika hyvässä maineessa, mutta eihän me nyt olla. Me ollaan nyt ihan siinä missä konsernin muutkin on.”

127: ”(...) aika hyvin ne päälliköt onnistu aivopeseen, ettei se [MCorp] nyt niin uhakuva taida ollakaan.”

128: ”Työntekijä 1: Ei asiakkaat ymmärrä tätä, et hetkinen, et myytte mulle palveluja, (...) osa vastaa sieltä [kaupungin, jossa MCorp toimii] päästä siitä ja osa täältä. Mihin hän soittaa, kun tulee ongelmaa. Asiakkaita pallotellaan ihan ympäriinsä. Ja laskutus, sen vielä hoitaa joku muu. (...)

Työntekijä 2: Kaikki on palasteltu niin eri puolille, että asiakaskin joutuu tavallaan asioimaan monessa eri paikassa.

Työntekijä 1: Ennen se oli vaan tää paikka ja täällä hoidettiin se kaikki.”

129: ” Kysymys: Mitäs sitten tulevaisuus, jos saatte arvioida tai pohdiskella minkälainen talo tää olis viis vuotta tästä eteenpäin (...) Millaisena te näette AffCo Servicen tulevaisuuden?

Vastaus: Jos tätä vauhtia mennään niin...

Vastaus: AffColla ei ole tulevaisuutta. Se on MCorp.

Vastaus: Niin.

Vastaus: Niin, mehän ollaan MCorp jo.

Vastaus: Niin, mutta että MCorp lukee myöskin katolla ja kaikissa muissa yhteyksissä.”