

The Multidisciplinary Nature of Business Strategy: Suggesting a Rhizome Paradigm

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Abstract: Though business strategy has long been the subject of academic interest, neither the question of the unified philosophical paradigm that govern it, nor the scientific disciplines that guide it has not yet been resolved (Mintzberg et al.1998). We argue that by adopting the rhizome paradigm to explain business strategy we can set the ground for understanding the intellectual foundation of business strategy and resolve the diverse, inconsistent or one may say complementary, definitions of business strategy. The article starts by presenting the various concepts of business strategy. It then portrays the many scientific disciplines that impinge on strategy, showing how none of them may be considered as a base for a unified paradigm. Turning to philosophy for a solution, we try first to look into the traditional western arborescent philosophies but find that they do not give the needed framework for business strategy. The next step is to look at the rhizome philosophy as a possible paradigm. We follow with a brief description of the six principals of the rhizome, demonstrating how it does offer the necessary way to blend the influences of the various scientific disciplines on business strategy. We then explain how the rhizome paradigm serves to establish an intellectual foundation for business strategy that provides us with a rationalization for the coexistence of its many definitions. We conclude by describing the contribution of this article to the emerging discipline of business strategy as well as suggest directions for further research.

Keywords: business strategy, rhizome paradigm, strategy schools, network organisation

1. Introduction

Though business strategy has long been the subject of academic interest, neither the question of the unified philosophical paradigm that govern it, nor the scientific disciplines that guide it has not yet been resolved (Mintzberg et al.1998). We argue that by adopting the rhizome paradigm to explain business strategy we can set the ground for understanding the intellectual foundation of business strategy and resolve the diverse, inconsistent or one may say complementary, definitions of business strategy.

We start by presenting the various concepts of business strategy. We then portray the many scientific disciplines that impinge on strategy, showing how none of them may be considered as a base for a unified paradigm. Turning to philosophy for a solution, we try first to look into the traditional western arborescent philosophies but find that they do not give the needed framework for business strategy. The next step is to look at the rhizome philosophy as a possible paradigm. We follow with a brief description of the six principals of the rhizome, demonstrating how it does offer the necessary way to blend the influences of the various scientific disciplines on business strategy. We then explain how the rhizome paradigm serves to establish an intellectual foundation for business strategy that provides us also with a rationalization for the coexistence of its many definitions.

2. The components of business strategy

Long after the emergence of the concept of business strategy, we find this surprising statement, published in 2001: "After more than 30 years of hard thinking about strategy, consultants and scholars have provided an abundance of frameworks for analyzing strategic situations. Missing, however, has been any guidance as to what the product of these tools should be – or what actually constitutes a strategy" (Hambrick and Fredrickson 2001). Markides (2004) makes much the same argument, while Dudik (2000) stirs up the debate with the following rather provocative and controversial pronouncement on the present state of strategy: "It might seem shocking that today, in this high-tech age, I should be calling for an end to the Middle Ages in corporate strategy".

De Wit and Meyer (1999) open their book *Strategy Synthesis* with the argument that the differing opinions on the nature of strategy are so wide in range that even a common definition of the term "strategy" is elusive. Andrews (1987) suggests a very elaborate definition. In his view strategy in a company is the pattern of decisions that determines its goals, the principal policies to achieve those

goals, the range of business to pursue, the kind of organization it intends to be and finally, the contribution it intends to bring to its stakeholders.

Hambrick and Fredrickson (2001) define strategy as “the central integrated, externally oriented concept of how we will achieve our objectives.” Dudik (2000), as ever unconventional and pragmatic, describes strategy as a hypothesis of the “if-then statement” type. A much broader definition of strategy is “the pattern in the stream of decisions” (Mintzberg and Waters 1985).

Beside the diverse views on content of business strategy we can find assorted concepts in the way business strategy is developed while ignoring the various definitions of business strategy itself (Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Hart and Banbury 1994; Bailey et al. 2000).

Some scholars have tried to suggest a more specific definition of strategy. Noy (1998), for instance, proposes five elements of “total strategy”, Hambrick and Fredrickson (2001) present another five, Markides (2004) defines three and Collis and Rukstad (2008) – three, as presented in Table 1. Several of the definitions share some common ground. None of them is accepted as the dominant one.

Table 1: Strategy components

	Andrews 1980	Noy 1998	Hambrick and Fredrickson 2001	Abell 2006	Collis and Rukstad 2008
Markets	Markets to be served		Arena – the domain of the firm’s activities	Definition of customers, function or technology	Define the scope, or domain, of the business
Products	Products/ services to be served	Customers’ needs to be satisfied		Needs to satisfy customers	
Channels	Channels to reach the markets		Vehicles – the way to pursue the strategic objectives		
Financing	Means of financing				
Quantitative objectives	Profit objectives	Long range quantitative goals of profit and growth	Economic logic and the way the firm obtains the returns on its investments	The goal structure – long or short range investments	The goals that strategy is designed to achieve
Risk	Risk return objectives	Risk strategy			
Competitive advantage		Cost leader or differentiator	Differentiators	Perceived value/price positioning. Segmentation to focus on	A clear sense of advantage
Leadership		Leader, fast follower or follower	Staging – the firm’ speed and sequence of moves		

3. The scientific paradigm of business strategy

If there is no agreement on the definition of strategy we should go back to the more general question – what is the paradigm from which business strategy draws its legitimacy as a subject of academic debate? We find a hint to the answer to this question in Hafsi and Thomas (2005), who argue that there is an academic field of strategy, but it is still underdeveloped, despite the incredible surge of research in the last twenty years.

Another argument (Calori 1998, quoting Martinet 1996) claims that strategic management has all the formal attributes of a self-sufficient discipline – professors, journals, and associations, but has not yet reached the status of a science as it has not produced a unifying paradigm. In a more recent research, Nag et al. (2007) argue that the successful development of the strategic management field

of research has contributed to the fact that its intellectual content consists of numerous conceptual elements, thus allowing exploration of a wide array of theoretical and practical issues.

Though having no leading paradigm is, on one hand, preventing us from understanding the intellectual foundation of business strategy, on the other hand, researchers are beginning to recognize that strategy is an experiential arena where philosophy matters (Powell 2002). In the last few years there has been an upsurge of philosophy articles dealing with organization studies in general and with strategic management in particular. The most comprehensive article, encompassing a large number of references to philosophy, organization studies and strategy is "Philosophizing on strategic management models" (Calori 1998). The main purpose of this "essai" (as the author defines it) was to offer an epistemological critique of orthodox prescriptive models of strategic management – Planning, Design and Positioning. Although his arguments are deep and well referenced, they touched on only three out of ten strategic schools of thoughts.

There are some more focused philosophy articles relevant to strategy. For example, Bronn (1998) deals with applying epistemic logic and evidential theory to strategic arguments. Mir and Watson (2000), followed by a commentary by Kwan and Tsang (2001), deal with constructivism as opposed to the realist paradigm. Powell (2001) presents his argument for "Competitive advantage: Logical and philosophical considerations" and, responding to comments by Durand (2002) with his views on "The Philosophy of Strategy", concludes that "strategy's philosophical foundations are worthy of further exploration" (Powell 2002).

None of these scholars has addressed the question of how to place business strategy in its proper position among the many scientific disciplines that influence it. This situation may be the reason for the rising concern about the need for a philosophical framework for strategy, notwithstanding that philosophy has been slow to enter strategy research even when it is clearly relevant, as argue by Powell (2002):

"The recent increase in philosophy of science articles in strategic management reflects researchers' rising concerns with understanding and securing the field's intellectual foundations. This paper argues for a proactive approach to the philosophy of strategy, and for the rejection of conventional, off-the-shelf philosophies that neither contemplated, nor can assimilate, the epistemological messiness and action-connectedness of strategic management."

In our search for an encompassing paradigm for business strategy we run through the gamut of the common western philosophical theories, which are mostly vertically arborescent developments branching from a centre stem connected to the roots of historical philosophical thoughts with a well defined reference between any new idea and the various previous arguments (Edwards 1967). However, as the interrelations between the many scientific disciplines and business strategy are neither hierarchical nor arborescent, we have to look elsewhere for a paradigm and came out with the horizontal philosophical concept of the "rhizome" (Deleuze and Guattari 1988. Published originally in French in 1975). This concept origins in Deleuze's philosophy of *transcendental empiricism* and is considered by the philosophical circles as part of the post-structuralism and postmodernism movements.

In the history of philosophy, at the last quarter of the 20th century, we find a number of philosophers that support the horizontal philosophical concept of Deleuze and Guattari. Foucault (2002), in his book *Archaeology of Knowledge*, demonstrates the limitation of the positive arborescent model for understanding the behaviour of the history of philosophy. Lyotard (1988) attacks the meta-narratives of science, culture and philosophy and argues that the horizontal model, that supports the Deleuzeien model and that of Foucault's model of Discourse, is the one most adapt to our time. Another French philosopher (Derrida 1978, 1982) analyzes with his methods the deconstructivist concepts that criticize the positive historical approach and conclude by supporting the horizontal and critical concepts of Deleuze.

The "rhizome" (A rhizome is, in botany, a root like subterranean stem, commonly horizontal in position that usually produces roots below and sends up shoots progressively from the upper surface) with its multiple horizontal roots best represents the nature of the relation between business strategy and the many scientific disciplines to which it is connected, (Mintzberg et al. 1998) though the rhizome may be an appropriate paradigm covering the implications of such multi-root connections as presented in Figure 1.

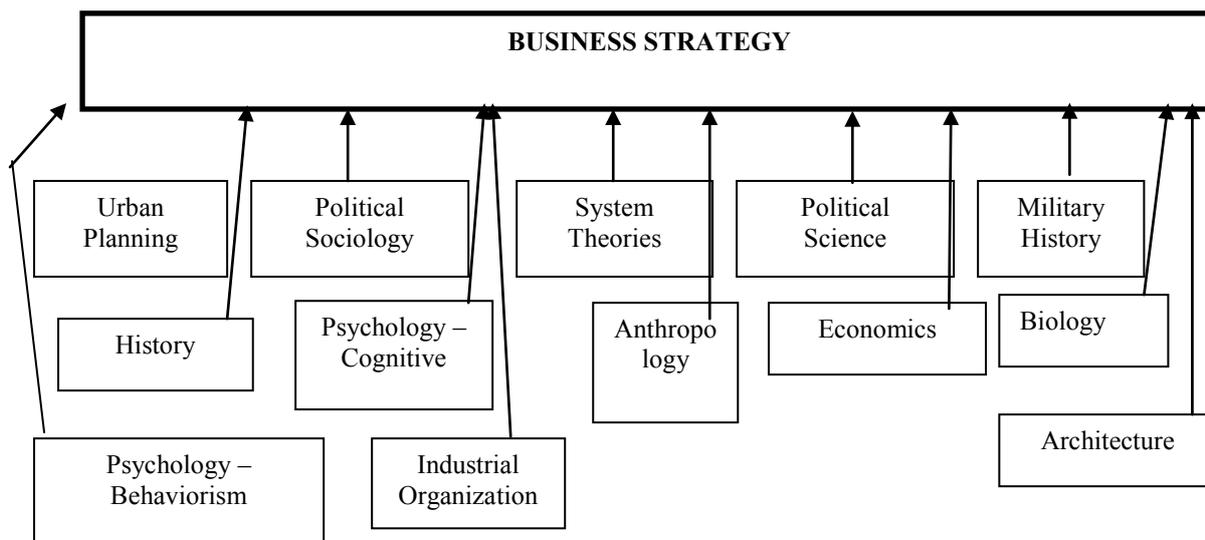


Figure 1: Business strategy and the scientific disciplines

We argue that applying the rhizome paradigm to business strategy (based on rhizome philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari 1988) leads to a unifying philosophical paradigm for business strategy

4. Rhizome philosophy

The rhizome concept has been adopted by certain post-modern schools in western philosophy (Foucault, 2002; Lyotard, 1988; Derrida, 1978, 1982). To give the reader a sense of the whole theory, we first briefly present the principles of rhizome philosophy, mostly in the form of adaptations from Deleuze and Guattari (1988), Boundas (1993) and Luski (2001), before embarking on the task of applying each principle to business strategy.

The central ideas of rhizome are: first, “conjunction” which means a departure from the “either/or” and accepting “and, and, and...”; second, connection to multiple roots and as such connection from any root to any other root; third, accepting that everything is in the process of “continuous change”. These ideas are embodied in its six principals.

Connection and heterogeneity, the first two principles, requires that any part of a rhizome system can be connected to any other part. In other words, the rhizome is not hierarchical (arborescent) in structure. It is anti-hierarchical, but all its parts are and must be connected.

The third principle of the rhizome is that of *multiplicity*. There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines. In contrast to centred (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and pre-established paths, a rhizome is made up of plateaus. A plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end.

The fourth principle is *asignifying rupture*, according to which, the rhizome may be shattered at a given spot, but will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines. Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed etc.

The fifth and sixth principles of the rhizome are *cartography and decalcomania*. These principles state that the rhizome is not a tracing mechanism, but rather a map with multiple entry ways. The map is open and connectable in all dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, and subject to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, and reworked by an individual, group or social formation.

To summarize the key aspects of Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome, it is an acentered, non-hierarchical, nonsignifying system without a general and without an organizing memory or central automation, defined solely by a circulation of states.

5. Business strategy and the rhizome paradigm

It is our proposition that business strategy, in its broadest definition like “the pattern in the stream of decisions” (Mintzberg and Waters 1985) conforms to the concepts and the six principles of the rhizome paradigm, and that this view explains the concurrent influence of the many scientific disciplines as well as the coexistence of many definitions of business strategy.

The rhizome concept of “conjunction” is the answer to the question raised by Mintzberg et al. (1998):

“.. we have to get beyond the narrowness of each school: we need to know how this beast called strategy formation, which combines all of these schools and more, really lives its life”.

On the other hand, the idea that strategies are in a permanent process of learning and change, defined as “emerging strategies” (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985), is the result of strategy conforming with the “continuous change” concept of rhizome paradigm.

The fit of business strategy to the rhizome can be demonstrated in each of its six principles:

1 and 2: Principles of connection and heterogeneity

The connection of business strategy to many scientific disciplines has been elaborated by Mintzberg et al. (1998) as demonstrated in table 2.

Table 2: The strategy schools as per *Strategy Safari* (Mintzberg et al. 1998)

	School	Discipline	Reference – initiators	Contribution to business strategy
1	Design School	Architecture	Selznick (1957) Andrews (1971)	Strategy formation as a process of conception of fit
2	Planning School	Urban planning, system theories.	Ansoff (1965) Steiner (1969)	Strategy formation as a formal process
3	Positioning School	Economics –industrial organization, military history	Sun Tzu (2001) Porter (1980, 1985)	Strategy formation as an analytical process
4	Entrepreneurial School	Economics	Schumpeter (1950) Cole (1959)	Strategy formation as a visionary process
5	Cognitive School	Psychology -cognitive	Simon (1947, 1957), March & Simon (1958).	Strategy formation as a mental process
6	Learning School	Psychology - behaviourism	Lindblom (1959, 1968) Cyert & March (1963) Weick (1969) Quinn (1980)	Strategy formation as an emergent process
7	Power School	Political science	Allison (1971) Pfeffer & Salancik (1978) Astley (1984)	Strategy formation as a process of negotiation
8	Cultural School	Anthropology	Rhenman (1973) Lorsch (1985)	Strategy formation as a collective process
9	Environmental School	Biology, political sociology	Hannan & Freeman (1977) Pugh et al. (1968)	Strategy formation as a reactive process
10	Configuration School	History	Chandler (1962) Miles et al. (1978) Miller (1986,7)	Strategy formation as a process of transformation

Moreover, the scientific disciplines themselves become interwoven, as can be well demonstrated by what is happening in economics, the discipline that claims the strongest connection to business strategy (Porter 1991). Thus, also Chapter 17 of Besanko et al.’s (2004) *Economics of Strategy* is titled “Environment, Power and Culture”, and out of the eight Nobel Laureates in Economics of the last four years, D. Kahneman is a psychologist and, as stated by the Nobel Prize Committee, he was awarded the prize:

“...for having integrated insights from psychological research into economic science, especially concerning human judgment and decision-making under uncertainty” (Royal Swedish Academy of Science 2002).

Two other Nobel Laureates are mathematicians (C.W.J. Granger and R.J. Aumann), one is a mathematician and economist (E.C. Prescott), one is a physicist and economist (R.F. Engel) and only three are plain economists (V.L. Smith, T.S. Schelling and F.E. Kydland).

At the same time, the three main scientific disciplines affecting business strategy, namely economics, sociology and psychology (Baum and Rau 1998), although interconnected are directly connected to business strategy horizontally and not hierarchically. For example “markets” and “products” (see Table 1) are a result of consumer behaviour that derives from a combination of non-hierarchical economic, social and psychological considerations (Schiffman and Kanuk 2007).

Risk taking, once considered by economists to be the result of pure rational economic consideration, was later proven to be guided by both economics and psychology (Caplin and Leahy 2001).

Thus the inter-connection among the scientific disciplines and their direct independent connection to business strategy conforms to the rhizome principles of connection and heterogeneity.

3: Principle of multiplicity

The approach to business strategy can start at any discipline or at the concept of strategy itself. But, whatever the starting point, it will lead us to another, say from the planning school to the economic school, the cultural school, etc. We cannot disregard any of the disciplines, though the magnitude of their influence might vary from one firm to another. In any event there is no mandatory entry point to the process of formulating business strategy, nor is there any obligatory hierarchical sequence. Strategy formulation and planning started with the market-based strategy, with markets and customers as the entry point (Andrews 1980), and developing resources to fit the market was only the second step. Just few years later, Wernerfelt (1984) introduced the concept of “resource-based strategy” that changed the starting point of strategy formulation to the firm’s resources, with assessing the market and customers as the second step.

4: Principle of asignifying rupture

Hamel and Prahalad (1994) came forward with the revolutionary idea of proactive strategy, introducing concepts such as “rewriting industry rules and creating new competitive space”, “exploratory and open-ended strategic planning”, “strategy as stretch” and above all “shaping the market”, contrary to the conventional “fit into the market”. These ideas shattered the traditional concepts of market-based strategy and gave a major twist to resource-based strategy. The proactive strategy concept is a good example of how strategy follows the first part of the asignifying rupture principle of the rhizome. The next step of the proactive strategy is resuming strategic planning procedures by reconnecting to old lines of the strategic rhizome grid, though not necessarily accepting an established definition of strategy. Business strategy is always open to new ruptures of existing concepts in the future.

5 and 6: Principles of cartography and decalcomania

The turbulence of the environment in which businesses have been operating in the last decade or so has turned the topic of change management into a dominant feature of the business literature: “Organizations have to change to stay alive”, claims Abrahamson (2000). Two of the suggested ways to cope with the need for change are “tinkering and kludging”, which means reshuffling the present components, products and markets to construct a new competitive map. Beer and Nohria (2000) claim that “Not since the Industrial Revolution has the stakes of dealing with change been so high.” They suggest “planning for spontaneity” and “explicitly embracing the paradox between economic value and organizational capability”.

There are no boundaries to the concept of business strategy and new scientific developments, such as those that appear in Carroll and Hannan’s (2000) *The Demography of Corporations and Industries*, whose influence has still to be fully evaluated, or the Red Queen concept of competition (Barnett 2008), which claims that competition has a positive influence on the firm’s viability.

These principles of “cartography and decalcomania” are well demonstrated in the many ways proposed to cope with strategic change. They vary from the operational – “selectively use the past to jump-start new opportunities” (Brown and Eisenhardt 1998), to the behavioural (Kotter 1996) – “developing a new vision and defining a new strategy”, to the proactive (Hamel 2000) – “elastic business definition with unreasonable expectations” and to combinations of all three, but they all surrender to the concept of cartography and decalcomania – the present business strategy and systems are detachable, reversible, and amenable to constant modification. They can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting without any boundaries, and this is the new strategy.

6. Discussion

Some concepts of rhizome paradigm with its central ideas of “conjunction” which means a departure from the “either/or” and accepting “and, and, and...”, as expressed by Deleuze and Guattari (1988), have been subliminally infiltrating business strategy for a number of years in the realm of one of the most important fundamentals of business strategy, namely competition. Insofar as competition is the governing force of business strategy, one could not be faulted for saying that “Business is War.” A company has to capture the market, beat the competition, make a killing, and bury the competition, implying only winners and losers, either/or and zero-sum games in the relationships among competing firms, between suppliers and firms and between the firm and its customers. At the same time, when we consider the importance of partnership, alliances, working together, listening to the customer, and working with suppliers, a more appropriate metaphor might be “Business is Peace”. But that cannot be right either, because we know there is conflict with rivals over market share, conflict with customers over prices, and conflict with suppliers over costs (Lado, Boyd and Hanlon 1997).

It was Novell founder Ray Noorda who coined the term “co-opetition” (cooperation combined with competition) in the 1980s to define the idea of competitors working together to open new markets, develop new products, or improve the market position of all parties involved; he was followed by Brandenburger and Nalebuff (1996) who introduced the concept into the business world. Using the pie analogy to explain co-opetition, they argue that everyone (organizations/businesses within a market) wants a piece of it, but there are those who want bigger pieces or all of the pie. Co-opetition, they claim, allows for a bigger pie so that everyone can have a nice share. Partners in co-opetition contribute their skills, knowledge, and resources to creating the service and providing the quality that the market demands (Le Tourneau 2004). Co-opetition introduced a new value net, composed of four types of competitors, namely – direct competitors, complementors, customers and suppliers, showing that each player in this net can be at any one of a variety of different positions at any given instance. This development, evolving from the rhizome paradigm of “principles of connection and heterogeneity”, may well be demonstrated in the new relation between buyers, sellers and competitors as presented in Figure 2.

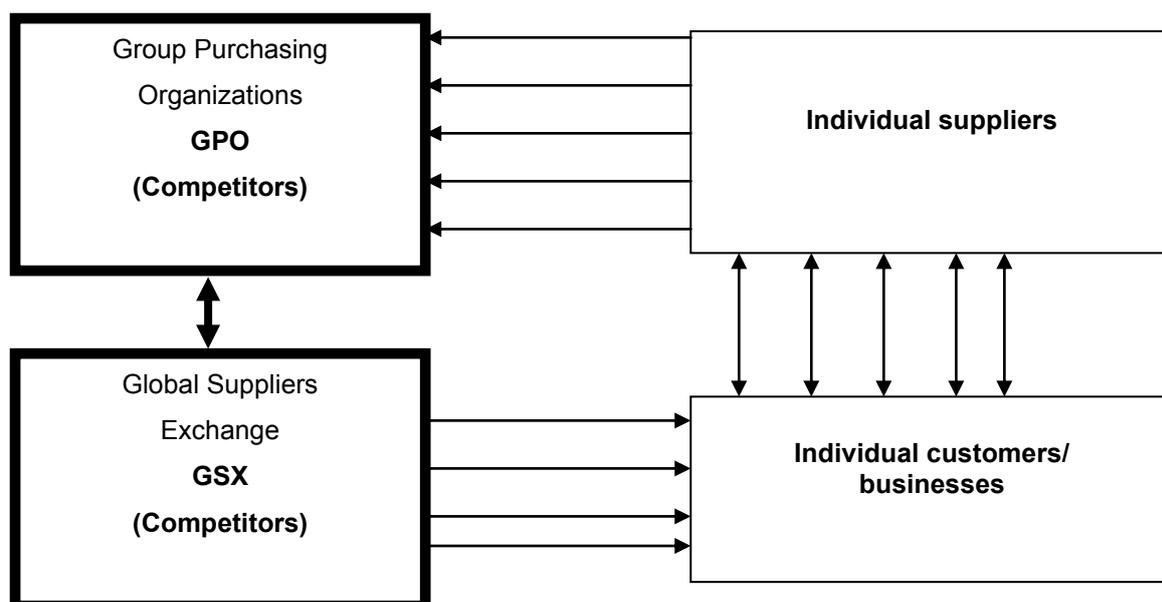


Figure 2: The rhizome competitors-suppliers-customers relations

Accepting this proposition encourages them to cooperate for the benefit of all players. Although co-competition might have started as a way to maximize the company's short-range profit, it has become a new concept for doing business – not looking to immediate profits but to the long range. Co-opetition is demonstrating a rhizome approach to doing business that abandons the ferocity of either/or competition on the one hand and the non-business orientation of full cooperation on the other hand, to accept the “and, and” of combining competition and cooperation for the benefit of all parties – customers, suppliers, complementors and direct competitors.

Chia (1999) explicitly applied the rhizome paradigm in his metaphysical perspective of organizational change, offering an inherently dynamic, complex, and indeterminacy-based mode of organizational transformation that is replacing the prevailing static and equilibrium-based concepts of change as follows:

“Change is essentially ‘rhizomatic’ in nature. Evolutionary emergence does not occur in a linear stage-like manner. Rather creative evolution is what best describes the outcome of the creative tension between ‘organization’ and ‘change’.”

This concept of “creative evolution” together with the rhizome's principle of “asignifying rupture” has created amongst certain authors the notion of strategy as a revolution rather than an evolution (Hamel 2000, Hamel and Prahalad 1994). These authors argue that the goal of the firm is not to predict what is going to happen and fit its strategy accordingly but to make it happen by its visionary unreasonable expectation strategy, which does not have to be connected to its present strategy.

Accepting the ideas of the rhizome paradigm in business strategy might prevent situations in which research on an issue develops independently in two parallel scientific disciplines without referring to one another and with disconnected conclusions, such as happened with “niche strategy”. The concept of the “niche” was introduced on the basis of economic theory as market segmentation and niche generic strategy (Smith, 1956; Claycamp and Massy, 1968; Porter, 1980). In parallel with the research of economists and industrial organization scholars, a separate strand of work on the emergence and disappearances of niches has developed in the area of population ecology and demography of corporations (Hannan and Freeman, 1977; Freeman and Hannan, 1983; Carroll and Hannan, 2000). Adopting a different approach, the researchers in the areas of population ecology and demography of corporations disregard the strategic, economic and cost-benefit aspects of niches and attribute the birth and death of niche firms to the concentration and the competitive structure of the markets, rather than the actions of the single firm.

Only by accepting the rhizome paradigm of “and, and” instead of “either/or” was a fully fledged comprehensive theory of niche strategy developed, with roots in economics, game theory, population ecology and corporate demography (Noy 2009).

The need to break the disciplinary boundaries in strategy and acknowledge the “and, and” concept of the rhizome paradigm has, albeit unwittingly, been recognized for a long time. Wilson (1994) found in his research on the changes in strategic planning that there is a growing recognition that motivation, behaviour and company culture are critical elements in determining the success or failure of strategy planning and implementation, dominated as they were by the prescriptive schools of strategy.

Another striking example of the late revelation of the need to look for various disciplinary origins for any strategic concept can be found in the development of the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm. In the first article on this concept (Wernerfelt 1984) the resources mentioned were “brand name, in-house knowledge of technology, employment of skilled personnel, trade contracts, machinery, efficient procedures and capital”. Ten years later the same author, who is an economist, professed that in the span of the ten years the theoretical aspect of RBV had arrived at a better understanding of “culture” as an important resource of the firm (Wernerfelt 1995).

The rhizome principal of “connection and heterogeneity” in business strategy is demonstrated in the development of the network organization structure (see Figure 3)

In this new structure any single employee, group or manager can be connected to anyone. It is a structure that has become the back-bone of transnational global strategies. Contrary to the traditional sedentary corporate headquarters, there is no longer a single spot but a shifting, headless rhizome type of connections between the firm's executives and its employees (Cubitt. 2001). Does the

Rhizome paradigm of business strategy overshadow any claim of a specific scientific discipline to govern business strategy? A good source in seeking an answer to the question of the disciplinary involvements in business strategy is Mintzberg et al. (1998), who argue that it can be approached from many schools of thought, representing a large variety of scientific disciplines, as detailed in Table 2 .

E = Employee

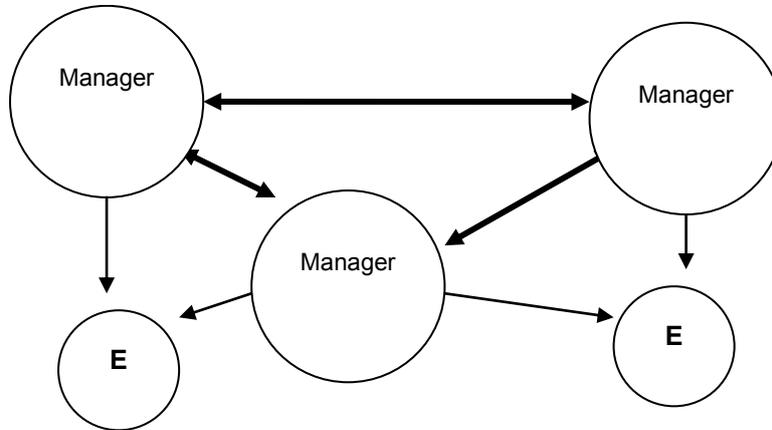


Figure 3: The network organization

The multi-disciplinary argument is supported by the research of Baum and Rao (1998). They analyzed the disciplinary source of articles in strategic management focusing on economics divided into “microeconomics” and “industrial organization”, sociology with two fields namely “imperative” and “realist” and psychology, also divided into two fields – “behaviourist” and “cognitive”. All in all they found 20 subfields in these three major scientific disciplines, as described in Table 3. However they missed the new field of “behavioural economics”, which combines economics and psychology (e.g. Kahneman, 2003) that was in its infancy at the time of their research.

Table 3: Strategic management disciplinary matrix

Root Discipline	Economics		Sociology		Psychology	
Field	Micro-economics	I/O economics	Interpretive	Realist	Behaviorist	Cognitive
Subfield	<i>Transaction cost economics</i>	<i>Structure-conduct-performance</i>	<i>Institutional sociology</i>	<i>Contingency theory</i>	<i>Behavioral theory of the firm</i>	<i>Managerial & organizational cognition</i>
	Agency theory	Strategic groups	Social networks	Resource dependence	Behavioral decision theory	Computational theory
	Institutional economics	Game theory	Social construction of technology and markets	Organizational ecology	Organizational learning	
	Evolutionary economics			Organizational evolution		
	Resource-based view					

From Baum J.A.C., Rao H. 1998. Strategic management as a fish-scale multiscience. In *Advances in Strategic Management* (Vol. 15, pp. 1-18). JAI Press Inc.

Summing up the academic disciplines involved in business strategy we find the following:

- Social sciences – economics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, political science.
- Humanities – military history, history.
- Exact sciences – mathematics (game theory), biology.
- Engineering – general engineering, architecture, urban planning.

Does any of the scientific disciplines claim to be the exclusive foundation of a paradigm of business strategy negating our argument for multidisciplinary and the need for a comprehensive paradigm? We find that scholars of one discipline question the validity of others (e.g. Mintzberg 1994, Hamel and Prahalad 1989) and one of the critiques on the prescriptive schools of strategy (planning, design and positioning schools) is that they fail to recognize feelings (cognition, cultural and learning schools) as a reason (Calori 1998). Dobbin and Baum, the editors of *Advances in Strategic Management*, titled their Vol. 17, published in 2000, "Economics Meets Sociology in Strategic Management". This work was the result of meetings that they arranged between strategic management scholars and sociology scholars, to conduct research on similar subjects from the point of view of the two scientific disciplines, for discussions on their different perspectives. The outcome was that both disciplines contribute to broadening the understanding of the subjects but neither of them has an exclusive solution.

We end this discussion by arguing that accepting the rhizome paradigm as an overall governing concept of business strategy we may not only remove disciplinary blinders but also resolve the present conflicts between the various scientific disciplines involved in strategy and direct all scholars to approach business strategy from a multidisciplinary perspective and not be deterred by reaching a new and even revolutionary definition of strategic business components. It might also invite scholars that researched various aspects of strategy from a single disciplinary lens to re-assess their findings from a multidisciplinary attitude similar to what is presented by Noy (2009).

7. Conclusion

The main direct contributions of applying the rhizome paradigm to business strategy are as follows:

- Developing a unifying philosophical paradigm for business strategy
- Introducing a paradigm that establishes the nature of the connections between the many scientific disciplines and business strategy.
- Helping to accept the diverse definitions and descriptions of business strategy as complementary rather than mutually exclusive.
- Contributing to the development of strategic management as a self-sufficient discipline.

In sum, this article is another step in the call for a much needed comprehensive paradigm for business strategy.

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