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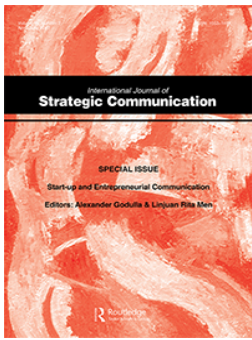
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# Analogies in Entrepreneurial Communication and Strategic Communication: Definition, Delimitation of Research Programs and Future Research

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## ABSTRACT

This article aims to build a better understanding of entrepreneurial communication and strategic communication. The term entrepreneurial is finding its way into the discussion of communication science in general and strategic communication in particular, for example, through the consideration of startups. So far, the term entrepreneurial communication remains vague, is hardly defined and is not systematically distinguished from strategic communication. By applying an analogies lens in the context of problematizing, differences between the terms *entrepreneurial* and *strategic* in entrepreneurial communication and strategic communication are explored based on selected given definitions. As a result, three unifying dimensions – development stage, mode, and logic – are developed to highlight fundamental differences between the two terms. To create potential for a future creation of entrepreneurial communication as research program, and to elaborate on future potential for strategic communication in relation to this, central theoretical approaches in entrepreneurship research and their potential to research entrepreneurial communication are explored.

## Introduction

Defining and delimiting key terms and research programs are major challenges for evolving research fields. For *strategic communication* well known is the definition of Hallahan et al. (2007), followed by recent discussions of the concept (e.g., Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015; Nothhaft et al., 2018; Thomas & Stephens, 2015; Van Ruler, 2018; Zerfass et al., 2018). In addition, another recent approach is discussed under the name *entrepreneurial communication* (Brender, 2005; Invernizzi et al., 2012; Invernizzi & Romenti, 2015; Mella & Gazzola, 2018). With the terms *strategic* and *entrepreneurial*, both strategic and entrepreneurial communication, draw on conceptual worlds that originate beyond communication science, namely in strategic management and entrepreneurship research. *Strategic* in strategic communication is strongly related to the concept of purposiveness, from beginnings of its definitions (Hallahan et al., 2007) until today: “The term ‘strategy’ is traditionally [...] a calculus of purpose, ends, and means” (Nothhaft et al., 2018, p. 360). *Entrepreneurial* in entrepreneurial communication is thus far reduced to a very narrowed view on the term, drawing exclusively on entrepreneurial organization theory and assuming *entrepreneurial* in terms of “entrepreneurial content [emphasis added] of strategic communication” (Invernizzi & Romenti, 2015, p. 224). In the heterogeneous and interdisciplinary field of entrepreneurship research, *strategic* and *entrepreneurial* can be assumed as potentially diametrically opposed (Sarasvathy, 2009). This fundamental difference in core assumptions *across* and *within* the originating disciplines has not yet been addressed in the discourse of communication science that addresses both terms in strategic and entrepreneurial communication.

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Therefore, this article focuses on the question: *Which analogies and unifying dimensions of the terms strategic and entrepreneurial can be identified to define and delimit research programs of strategic communication and entrepreneurial communication?*

To elaborate this question, this article follows a slightly unconventional structure. In a first step, it is argued why problematization (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011; Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013, 2020) enriches research in entrepreneurial and strategic communication. Next, problematization and the lens of analogies as heuristic are introduced as applied in this research. Along these heuristic, etymological roots, adoptions in entrepreneurial and strategic communication definitions and first traces of analogies are presented sequentially. As result, the analogies and unifying dimensions developed in this way are presented. Finally, potential for the creation of future research in entrepreneurial communication and strategic communication are discussed.

### **Why problematizing enriches theorizing in entrepreneurial and strategic communication**

A call for more and substantial theorizing can be observed in research related to entrepreneurial and strategic communication (e.g., Heide et al., 2018; Lock et al., 2020; Nothhaft et al., 2018; Plowman & Wilson, 2018; Van Ruler, 2018). Precisely, there is “lack of theoretical development” (Nothhaft et al., 2018, p. 364), and regarding this, researchers in the field are encouraged “to strive for more complexity and less simplification” (Heide et al., 2018, p. 465). Although undoubtedly, “[m]ethods are the key” (Nothhaft et al., 2018, p. 364), and clearly a high level of empirical research is being conducted in strategic communication to push the field forward, we suggest to enrich theorizing in entrepreneurial and strategic communication with the likewise less-known approach of problematizing (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, 2013, 2020).

Theory development does not start with empirical methods, but with developing relevant research questions. A prevalent approach to come up with research questions in many disciplines is to deduce them from a gap found in the current state of research. This gap is usually identified carefully and thoroughly with rigorous methods such as structured literature analysis. Examples in current entrepreneurial and strategic communication research are Lock et al. (2020), Sundermann and Raabe (2019), and Wiesenberg et al. (2020). This “gap-spotting” (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, p. 248) way to develop research questions has its limitations and was criticized a decade ago as “an increasingly disturbing problem in management studies” (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, p. 251). Precisely, “the scarcity of more interesting and influential theories is a serious problem” (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, p. 251) in management science and generally in social sciences, which unlikely can be overcome by further developing or refining gap-spotting research (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, p. 251). As an alternative, Alvesson and Sandberg (2011, 2013, 2020) introduced problematization methodology.

The aim of problematization is “generating novel research questions through a dialectical interrogation of one’s own familiar position, other stances, and the literature domain targeted for assumption challenging” (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, p. 260), that can be applied in various settings without any paradigmatic stance. The process is based on two key questions: “First, what *types* of assumptions are relevant to consider? Second, *how* can these assumptions be identified, articulated and challenged in a way that is likely to lead to the development of an interesting theory?” (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, p. 254, italics as in original). Based on a typology of five different forms of assumptions, Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) suggested six principles to identify and challenge assumptions, which they narrowed down to four in a recent publication (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2020). This approach “enables researchers to imagine how to rethink existing literature in ways that generate new and ‘better’ ways of thinking about specific phenomena” (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2020, p. 1290).

In management and organization science, problematization is an increasingly common approach. Its application is not only recommended in conceptual (Dubois & Salmi, 2016; Jaakkola, 2020; Patriotta, 2020) or methodological articles (e.g., Brslin & Gartrell, 2020), but has already been successful applied in management (e.g., Touboulie et al., 2020), marketing (Holmlund et al., 2020;

Jabbarra et al., 2020; Kowalkowski et al., 2015), information systems research (Hafermalz et al., 2020; Schuetz & Venkatesh, 2020), economics and finance (Prabhu KP et al., 2019), and entrepreneurship (Hasenzagl et al., 2018). Compared to this, in entrepreneurial and strategic communication, problematization was mentioned recently (e.g., Simonsson & Heide, 2021; Willis, 2019), but not yet applied. However, when Goyanes (2020) asked—in a study with editorial board members of international communication science journals—what is interesting in communication research, counterintuitive research was that one most considered to be relevant, which follows, according to Goyanes (2020), the principles of problematization.

If theorizing with more complexity is required in the field (Heide et al., 2018), and if problematization as introduced here can be seen as likewise new but promising approach, it is assumed to be supporting for the major aim of this article, which is to open up new research questions for theory development in entrepreneurial and strategic communication.

### Unfolding underlying assumptions with problematizing review

Because problematization review is a novel approach, only a few research examples exist that applied problematizing. It is applied in the beginning of a qualitative research process to create a strong relevance of research (e.g., Holmlund et al., 2020; Willis, 2019). Other examples follow Alvesson & Sandberg (2011), but provide own adaptations with just two steps (Schuetz & Venkatesh, 2020), three steps (Deng et al., 2020), or six steps (Hasenzagl et al., 2018; Kowalkowski et al., 2015). Here we focus on the most recent four-principles approach (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2020).

(1) Reflexivity: Hereby, “the author is guided by a constant consideration and occasional questioning of assumptions, perspectives and vocabularies in order to come up with, test and possibly suggest alternative ideas and ways of thinking about a phenomenon or domain” (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2020, p. 1297). (2) Reading broad but selectively: This principle “rejects the full store inventory approach [...] and suggests a more limited and careful set of readings” (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2020, p. 1298). Hereby, a three-level approach is suggested (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2020, p. 1298) (3) Problematizing instead of accumulating: This principle “is to question rather than trying to identify missing pieces in the accumulating domain jigsaw puzzle” (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2020, p. 1299). This principle was implemented with the help of the idea of questioning for analogies as underlying assumptions in theory development. Analogies (or metaphors) are an extensively researched area in the field of organization theory (Cornelissen et al., 2005; Morgan, 2006; Tsoukas, 1991). This perspective is applied because analogies are assumed to be “useful account of the progress of research programs” (Ketokivi et al., 2017, p. 638). (4) Stay minimal: The final principle of “less is more” [] emphasizes fewer readings of a large number of studies, and more concentration on coming up with new and unexpected insights” (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2020, p. 1300). This principle was complemented by the idea of the epistemic script of bricolage (Boxenbaum & Rouleau, 2011). This approach is providing general principles, but not a step-by-step guidance. Based on careful readings of existing examples (e.g., Deng et al., 2020; Hasenzagl et al., 2018), a six-step approach was applied. Each process step was guided by one core question. With the help of this one question, different logics of different literature were encountered. These process steps orient in different intensity on the principles of problematization (Table 1).

The selection routine in process step (2) followed the examples of Deng et al. (2020), Hasenzagl et al. (2018), and Hafermalz et al. (2020), who focus on a selection of most influencing articles that were identified similar to Deng et al. (2020) with help of Google Scholar Citation Index, knowing that this evaluation criterion has strengths and weaknesses (Harzing & Van der Wal, 2008). As it was already pointed out, researchers are challenged to find a way to question underlying assumptions from an outside perspective (Touboulc et al., 2020, p. 44), which is relevant in steps (5)–(6), in this context the example of Hasenzagl et al. (2018) was guiding to select particular theories—in this case from entrepreneurship research—for developing novel research questions.

**Table 1.** Procedure of problematization in orientation to the four principles according to Alvesson and Sandberg (2020).

Process step	Core question	Domain of literature	Elaboration logic	Problematization principle
(1) clarifying ety-mological roots	What is the etymological core of the terms entrepreneurial and strategic?	handbooks, encyclopedias, descriptions of subject development	describing, summarizing	reflexivity, reading broad but selectively
(2) detecting scientific adoptions	In which definitions of entrepreneurial and strategic communication were these terms in which way adopted?	published journal papers, handbooks in strategic and entrepreneurial communication, that included definitions	selecting	reflexivity, reading broad but selectively (first level), stay minimal
(3) finding traces of analogies/underlying assumptions	Which traces of analogies can be observed in definitions of entrepreneurial and strategic communication?	detected and selected definitions of strategic and entrepreneurial communication	analysing	reflexivity, reading broad but selectively (first level)
(4) defining analogies and unifying dimensions	How can different analogies and unifying dimensions be described?	additional literature from strategic and entrepreneurial communication and neighbourhood domains (entrepreneurship, organization, strategy) supporting the clarifying of analogies and unifying dimensions	narrowing, clarifying	reflexivity, reading broad but selectively (second level), stay minimal
(5) challenging assumptions	From which perspective can identified analogies be challenged?	additional theories from entrepreneurship research with challenging potential for the respective analogies	opening	reflexivity, reading broad but selectively (third level), problematizing instead of accumulating, stay minimal
(6) developing research questions	Which promising research questions can be deduced?	no additional literature	creating	problematizing instead of accumulating, stay minimal

## Etymological roots of the terms strategic and entrepreneurial

An introduction of etymological roots can be brief. As is known, the term *strategy* has its roots in the Greek language: “[T]he word *strategy* ultimately derives from the classical Greek word στρατηγός, denoting a military commander and being in use in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC” (Nothhaft & Schölzel, 2015, p. 18). Based on this, the term is strongly connected to military theory, which was already explored (e.g., Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015; Nothhaft & Schölzel, 2015). Prominent are attributions to strategy in strategic management (Chandler, 1962 | 1990; Mintzberg, 1987, 1989; Porter, 1997; overview, see Cummings, 2008). Chandler (1962), the “founder of strategy” (Whittington, 2008, p. 267) defined strategy “as the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals” (Chandler, 1962|1990, p. 13). Famous are Mintzbergs five Ps (plan, pattern position, perspective, ploy) for strategy (Mintzberg, 1987). And, of course, Porter assumed strategy as “the organization’s distinctive approach to competing and the competitive advantages on which it will be based” (Porter, 2012, p. 3). These roots of strategic management were mainly observed from strategic communications (e.g., Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 11; Zerfass et al., 2018, p. 293).

Less known from the perspective of communication science are the foundations of the term “entrepreneurship.” The term *entrepreneur* has its roots in Old French *entreprendre* or “undertake.” “The word first crossed the Chanel late 15 c (Middle English *entrepreunenour*) but did not stay” (Harper, 2021). The meaning of *entreprendre* can be characterized by the following impressions: “go ahead, take in hand, undertake, contract for work, take up work, get into a project, take a hold of” (Crookall, 1994, p. 333). Fallgatter (2002) describes the history of the term entrepreneur, beginning in France in the 16th century as a soldier of fortune, who hired mercenaries to offer their services for various purposes. In the 17th century, an entrepreneur was more a project maker, who made contracts with the public sector and introduced new agricultural techniques and a century later, an entrepreneur as a buying-and-selling person is assumed as a risk taker. In the 19th century, still the roles of managers and entrepreneurs were not separated, even though companies were growing. Starting with the 20th century, a view of entrepreneurs as inventors and innovators came to the fore (Fallgatter, 2002, pp. 12–13). In academia, the term was mostly influenced by the academic field of

**Table 2.** Definitions of strategic communication.

Reference	Definition
Hallahan et al.; (2007)	“Although their specific activities can be conceptualized in various ways – from coordinating administrative functions to product promotion and relationship building – all of these disciplines involve the organization, defined in its broadest sense, communicating purposefully to advance its mission. This is the essence of <i>strategic</i> communication. It further implies that people will be engaged in deliberate communication practice on behalf of organizations, causes, and social movements.” (p. 4)
Zerfass et al.; (2018)	“Strategic communication encompasses all communication that is substantial for the survival and sustained success of an entity. Specifically, strategic communication is the purposeful use of communication by an organization or other entity to engage in conversations of strategic significance to its goals.” (p. 493)
Heide et al.; (2018)	“Strategic communication has been defined as the study of how organizations use communication purposefully to fulfil their overall missions (e.g., Frandsen & Johansen, 2017; Hallahan et al., 2007).” (p. 452)
Van Ruler (2018)	“As a research field, strategic communication is said to examine how organizations use communication purposefully to fulfill their mission (Hallahan et al., 2007; Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015).” (p. 367)
Winkler and Etter (2018)	“Ultimately, with a central focus on emergence, we close with a programmatic proposition to rethink the academic definition of strategic communication, which is still rooted in a purpose driven and goal oriented understanding (Hallahan et al., 2007; Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2013, 2015, p. 205). An extension of this definition that integrates emergence, as constitutive for both practice and product of strategic communication [. . .].” (p. 395)
Falkenheimer & Mats (2014)	“We define strategic communication as an organization’s conscious communication efforts to reach its goals. In the broadest possible sense of the term, organization in this context refers to private companies, public authorities and organizations, associations and interest groups.” (p. 132)
Argenti et al.; (2005)	“We define strategic communication as communication aligned with the company’s overall strategy, to enhance its strategic positioning.” (p. 61)



entrepreneurship research that evolved since the late 1970s (Aldrich, 2012; Landström et al., 2012; Shane, 2012; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Zahra & Dess, 2001). The most prominent definition is entrepreneurship as “the examination of how, by whom, and with what effects opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated, and exploited” (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000, p. 2018).

### Adoptions in research of strategic and entrepreneurial communication

Based on these origins, the question arises how these terms enter into strategic and entrepreneurial communication. By the following, adoptions of this described roots of both terms are elaborated more in detail. In this process, both terms acquire a central change: they become adjectives describing and characterizing communication. The starting base of existing definitions and those taken up in the scientific discourse is unbalanced, which is not surprising given the novelty of the term “entrepreneurial communication.”

For strategic communication, Nothhaft and Schölzel (2015) point out that a reflection of the term in communication science started late, when the term was already in praxis. They point out to what extent the term remained vague and was used in a rather sloughy way (Nothhaft & Schölzel, 2015, p. 18). Moreover, it has to be noted that the term *strategic* in strategic communication enforces confusion in several extents, being assumed as “a synonym for good, well-executed, and state-of-the-art [or] synonymous with ‘successful’” (Zerfass et al., 2018, p. 492). To capture adoptions of *strategic* in research of strategic communication, definitions of the field of research were collected (Table 2).

Reflecting these definitions, some first traces for the exploration of analogies as underlying assumptions can be mentioned. A first trace can be observed, where *strategic* is assumed to be in relation to **purposefulness** of communication. This comes to the fore in the very early definitions (e.g., Hallahan et al., 2007), as well as in younger perspectives (e.g., Heide et al., 2018; Van Ruler, 2018). This orients to the intention of communication – including speaking and listening—but always with a purpose and is mainly in the assumption of influence and persuasion (e.g., Torp, 2015, p. 44). Another trace is, where *strategic* is assumed as related to **survival of success of an entity**, and thus communicative activity in relation to this ambition (e.g., Zerfass et al., 2018). – A next perspective is, where *strategic* equals the idea of **goal-directed** (e.g., Zerfass et al., 2018). Strategic communication in its broadest sense can be seen “as an umbrella concept embracing various goal-directed communication activities” (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015, p. 3). In some cases, it is not defined as goal, but in form of a mission that has to be fulfilled (e.g., Van Ruler, 2018). Finally, *strategic* equals the idea of **being**

**Table 3.** Attempts or traces of definitions of entrepreneurial communication.

Reference	Definition
Gossel (2011)	“On basis of these theoretical approaches we suggest the following definitions as basis for our work: (1) According to Gartner (1985) we define entrepreneurship as “creation of new organizations”; (2) According to Theis-Berglmair (2008) we describe communication “as the Core Element of Organizations.” (3) According to Luhmann (1995, 2000) we describe communication as the selection of information, utterance and understanding.” (p. 4)
Roy and Acharya (2018)	“It means the communication between farmers and different line departments about getting various types of entrepreneurial information, marketing information, auction, weather, new upcoming enterprise, etc.” (p. 71)
Iacob and Hristache (2017)	“Entrepreneurial communication becomes important, to the extent that it is called to ‘explore’ the dynamics of its business environment, to find and manage, as far as possible, the business opportunities that have arisen. Entrepreneurial communication can be seen in its dynamics as the ‘bridge between’ theory (the idea of a business) and practice (implementing the idea of a business and focusing on proactive actions). [...] Therefore, entrepreneurial communication is more about the attitude, structure and strategies approached by the entrepreneur.” (p. 227)
Haris et al. (2019)	“Therefore, entrepreneurial communication skills are actions designed to reach a connection to influence, maintain interest functions, attitudes and other changes in activity, because they are never done without intention or desire to influence qualitatively and not quantitatively.” (p. 181 in orientation to Modrea, 2012)

**communication/ being practice** (e.g., Heide et al., 2018). This comes to the fore in research built on the assumptions of strategy as practice or communication constitutes organization perspective (e.g., Heide et al., 2018; Torp, 2015; Winkler & Etter, 2018). “Strategy is thus a *communicative practice* that is conducted at different levels in an organization as the organization is continuously created and reproduced” (Heide et al., 2018, p. 457).

For entrepreneurial communication, the literature has to be described as more or less scanty. Compared to strategic communication, the issue of entrepreneurial communication remains rather vague in literature and is often just mentioned but not defined (e.g., Brender, 2005; Haris et al., 2019; Hill & Levenhagen, 1995; Invernizzi & Romenti, 2015; Lucas et al., 2016; Sinai & Kent, 2019; Rozaq et al., 2020; Soegoto, 2018; Wisniewski & Hirshfield, 2016). To capture adoptions of *entrepreneurial* in research of entrepreneurial communication, attempts or rather traces of definitions found in the literature are presented (Table 3).

To identify traces of analogies and underlying assumptions of *entrepreneurial* in entrepreneurial communication, a detailed look beyond the above described attempts at definitions is required. A first trace is a stream of literature that assumes entrepreneurial communication as being a **skill of the person of the entrepreneur**. Hill and Levenhagen (1995) explored mental model development for entrepreneurs. Within this context, entrepreneurial communication is assumed as part of the individual process of entrepreneurs coping with ambiguity and uncertainty. Therefore, “the entrepreneur must develop a ‘vision’ or mental model of how the environment works (sensemaking) and then be able to communicate to others and gain their support (sensegiving)” (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995, p. 1057). Haris et al. (2019) explore explicitly entrepreneurial communication skills in teams. In addition, Soegoto (2018) assumes entrepreneurial communication as skills such as verbal/ nonverbal communication in direct communication with customers. Jacob and Hristache (2017) assume entrepreneurial communication in a direct relation to business communication (Jacob & Hristache, 2017, p. 226). Thus, it is seen in terms of a skill: “entrepreneurial communication is more about the attitude, structure and strategies approached by the entrepreneur” (Jacob & Hristache, 2017, p. 227). Connecting these assumptions to broader concepts, entrepreneurial communication in this sense is observed more or less as business communication (Shelby, 1993), executed by entrepreneurs. Moreover, entrepreneurial communication is assumed as an issue in higher educational settings (e.g., Modrea, 2012; Wisniewski & Hirshfield, 2016).

Another trace is literature that assumes entrepreneurial communication in the context of **entrepreneurial marketing**. Freiling and Kollmann (2008) assume entrepreneurial communication as an instrument of entrepreneurial marketing (Freiling & Kollmann, 2008, p. 12). Hereby, entrepreneurial communication is used in the context of communication policy of startups (Bruhn, 2008, pp. 483–502). In this context, communication is just entrepreneurial by being strategically planned by startups and influenced by their financial, personal, and professional specialties (Bruhn, 2008, p. 484). In the newer edition, the assignment to marketing instruments is no longer made (Freiling & Kollmann, 2015, p. 12), and the term itself plays a subordinate role and still lacks a clear definition (Bruhn, 2015, p. 544). A third trace can be observed in the concrete context of communication science, where entrepreneurial communication is mentioned in **public relations, corporate communication, and strategic communication research** (e.g., Brender, 2005; Saniei & Kent, 2019). Brender (2005) mentions entrepreneurial communication in the context of researching communication between entrepreneurial nurses and their business consultants. Saniei and Kent (2019) mention the term (p. 3) in the context of researching communicative practices of crowdfunding, without giving a clear definition. They researched how entrepreneurs communicate with their stakeholders and publics in crowdfunding campaigns (Saniei & Kent, 2019, p. 7). These examples give a notion of understanding entrepreneurial communication as corporate/ strategic/ PR/ business communications executed by entrepreneurs with their publics/ stakeholders. Finally, Invernizzi et al. (2012) as well as Invernizzi and Romenti (2015) bring in an entrepreneurial perspective to strategic communication by developing an entrepreneurial communication paradigm: “The Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm attempts to integrate suggestions from Entrepreneurial Organisation Theories in a unifying

framework that identifies the components of strategic communication, or in other words the leverage that communication officers can manage to support the attainment of organizational objectives” (Invernizzi et al., 2012, p. 151). Hereby, *entrepreneurial* is thus reduced to a very narrowed view on the term, drawing exclusively on entrepreneurial organization theory and assuming *entrepreneurial* in terms of “entrepreneurial *content* [emphasis added] of strategic communication” (Invernizzi & Romenti, 2015, p. 224).

## Dimensions and analogies to delimit research programs

Based on the preceding introduced traces of analogies, here we present three analogies of *entrepreneurial* and *strategic* in entrepreneurial and strategic communication. These analogies were worked out as opposites, for each of which a unifying *dimension* is named. Because these dimensions and related analogies in their terminology and meaning partly require literature-based explanations, these elaborations will precede the actual consideration of underlying assumptions in analogies. Reflecting the literature in entrepreneurial and strategic communication, it must be said, the traces of these analogies are not equally given for both programs. But it is precisely through the juxtaposition and the resulting potentials that a contribution is to be made.

### Development stage – formation and existence

A first dimension of delimiting entrepreneurial and strategic communication is *development stage* of the communicating entity, which is mainly along the time axis before (formation) and after (existence) an entity came into existence. This differentiation can be observed in entrepreneurship research as focusing the issue of entrepreneurial venture creation amongst others (e.g., Bhawe, 1994; Gartner, 1985) and in organization research as focusing on researching existing organizations (e.g., Hatch, 2018). Hereby, it is suggested, based on the underlying assumption of *strategic as existence*, to assume strategic communication as one that is enforced by an already existing entity to ensure its existence. In contrast, entrepreneurial communication, based on the underlying assumption of *entrepreneurial as formation*, can be assumed as communication that is enforced in the process of the formation of an entity (e.g., startups formation process).

Traces for the analogy of *strategic as existence* are likewise easy to unfold. In strategic communication, it is not discussed to what extent an entity is becoming into existence. It is simply a given assumption: the entity (an organization, a corporation etc.) exists. This comes to the fore in the above-introduced most prominent definitions of the discipline. Starting with Hallahan et al. (2007), who define strategic communication in relation to the organization “defined in its broadest sense” (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 4), elaborate on this definition in a footnote, that this means “corporations, for-profit and nonprofit organizations, activist groups, nongovernmental organizations, organizations promoting various forms of social change, political parties or movements, and government organizations” (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 4). All these examples orient to given organizations, not to the phase of new organizational creation. Zerfass et al. (2018) define that strategic communication is “substantial for the survival and sustained success of an entity” (Zerfass et al., 2018, p. 493) – but not for the creation of the respective entity. In addition, it is described as “use of communication by an organization or other entity” (Zerfass et al., 2018, p. 493) – but not communication of an emerging entity. Defining this “entity” more precisely as “corporations, governments, nonprofits, social movements, and known individuals in the public sphere, e.g., celebrities, politicians” (Zerfass et al., 2018, p. 493), the underlying assumption of entity as *given* entity. Strategic communication then is defined as relevant process for existence of this given entity, which is characterized as “*substantial or significant* for an organization’s or other entity’s development, growth, identity, or survival” (Zerfass et al., 2018, p. 493).

Traces for a notion of entrepreneurial communication in terms of an underlying assumption of *entrepreneurial as formation* cannot be found in profound definitions of entrepreneurial communication as discipline or field of research, since those could not be identified yet. But these traces can be observed in several examples of entrepreneurial communication. The previously introduced trace of communication as skill of an entrepreneur orients towards this assumption (e.g., Haris et al., 2009; Hill & Levenhagen, 1995; Iacob & Hristache, 2017; Soegoto, 2018). Even though the skills approach can be questioned, “[e]ntrepreneurship is the creation of new organizations” (Gartner, 1988, p. 62) and this person of the entrepreneur is related to this process. Another argument is the rising body of literature on startup communication (e.g., González-Cruz et al., 2020; Men et al., 2018; Simon & Leker, 2016; Wiesenberg et al., 2020). These orient partly on internal communication perspectives of startups, e.g., leadership communication (Men et al., 2018) or team communication (González-Cruz et al., 2020), partly on external communication (Wiesenberg et al., 2020). Even though startups can be assumed partly as already existing entities, the term “startup” includes for example, the so-called preseed phase, where the startup itself as a company is not yet found (Kollmann et al., 2020). In line with this is the previously sketched trace of entrepreneurial marketing, where e.g., Freiling and Kollmann (2015) and Bruhn (2015) elaborate on entrepreneurial communication as strategically planned startup communication.

### **Mode – creative or maintenance**

Introducing here *mode as dimension* requires a definition of the term beyond common assumptions in communication science. A mode of communication usually is often described in relation to technical types of communication channels (e.g., Tang et al., 2015), which originates somehow in media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986), but is as well used in different ways, e.g., as inbound (listening) and outbound (messaging) dimensions of corporate communications (e.g., Borner & Zerfass, 2018, p. 14). Leaving these (mass) communication-related assumptions behind, in organization theory mode describes something different. Organizations are assumed as operating parallel in at least two different modes: “Organizations may be seen to evolve from the small, intimate and localized mode of operating to becoming larger formalized systems with different modes of operating. But when we take a closer look at them, we see both modes taking place continuously; there is always an emergent, nascent, ‘here-and-now’ world alongside a more formalized world governed by metaphors and models of organization” (Hernes, 2007, p. 5). Thinking now in a process philosophy, these modes of operation have a particular notion of being communicative (e.g., Helin et al., 2014; Hjorth et al., 2015; Putnam & Nicotera, 2009; Schoeneborn, 2011).

Within this particular context, entrepreneuring is described as organization creating activity (Hjorth et al., 2015) that is beyond the previously described dimension of (formal) development stage, a fruitful dimension on a higher level of theoretical abstraction. When suggesting *mode* as a unifying dimension of analogies of the terms *entrepreneurial* and *strategic*, this particularly relates to the definition of *entrepreneurial as creative mode* of becoming “that directs the world’s nextness, the already more that spills over (what comes next) into particular arrangements and orders” (Hjorth et al., 2015, p. 605) and *strategic as maintenance mode* of organizing: “when this order is established—institutionalized, crystallized into patterns, settled in routines—this local world leaves the creative mode of becoming and instead enters a maintenance mode of becoming, ceasing to be entrepreneurial” (Hjorth et al., 2015, p. 605). The idea of *mode as dimension* in these terms is not bound to the simple dichotomy of entrepreneurial equals not existing vs. strategic equals entity existence. Instead, it is about two modes that both exist in parallel and can both be observed in not yet existing as well as existing entities.

This notion of *strategic as maintenance mode* in strategic communication can be observed in the traces of underlying assumptions relating to the survival or success of a given entity. Even though not explicitly mentioned, this is rooted in strategic management (Zerfass et al., 2018, p. 493) and orients directly to Porter’s (2012) assumptions on strategy. Zerfass et al. (2018) give a clear notion to this assumption, defining “[s]trategic communication encompasses all communication that is substantial for the survival and sustained success of an entity” (Zerfass et al., 2018, p. 493). This is observable more

precisely in research that is directly orienting to assumptions from strategic management. For example, Volk and Zerfass (2018) focus on alignment in strategic communication, where in elaborating the idea of external alignment: “The purpose of external alignment is generally described as maintaining organizational flexibility and the ability to respond to environmental uncertainty to secure organizational survival” (Volk & Zerfass, 2018, p. 441). This trace of the idea of implementing strategic communication for the survival of the entity can be observed as well in other theoretical strands, e.g., evolutionary approaches (e.g., Seiffert-Brockmann, 2018). Hereby, it is noted, that success or survival of the given entity is related to institutionalization: “The success of strategic communication is also determined by its institutionalization within an organization” (Löffelholz et al., 2014, p. 444). Research in this realm orients, among others, the institutionalization of communication management (Frandsen & Johansen, 2014, p. 235) or organizational practices (Werder, 2014; Werder & Holtzhausen, 2009). Finally, it has to be noted, that maintenance does not equal inflexibility or impossibility to change, it orients to the world of institutionalized settled routines (Hjorth et al., 2015, p. 605) of communication.

The idea of assuming *entrepreneurial as creative mode* in entrepreneurial communication can be noted specifically in those traces that relate to postmodern theoretical strands. It comes to the fore no matter whether the communicating entity is an individual or an organization. Traces for entrepreneurial communication in a creative mode by individuals can be found for example, with Iacob and Hristache (2017), which describe this process: “Entrepreneurial communication becomes important, to the extent that it is called to “explore” the dynamics of its business environment, to find and manage, as far as possible, the business opportunities that have arisen” (ibid., p. 227). In addition, Hill and Levenhagen (1995), who described entrepreneurial communication as sensegiving process, assume entrepreneurs according to Weick (1979) in an enacting mode that “seek to create new industries or segments wherein they can compete on a different basis than is done in the mainline industry” (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995, p. 1057). Another example would be Gossel (2021), who researches organizational environmental observation in the context of organizational communication. “Inspiring” is defined as one of six programs of organizational environmental observation, which guides how information is selected from or about the environment in the sense of a purpose-developing logic, where organizations apply entrepreneurial actions in communicating with their environments (Gossel, 2021, p. 347ff). But traces can additionally be found beyond postmodern theory. The concept of guerrilla communication, often used in the metaphor “as a catch-all concept to describe a wide variety of creative or innovative forms of communication” (Nothhaft & Schölzel, 2015, p. 28) could be assumed to be in this line additionally. As well, the assumption on cultural entrepreneurship as introduced by Lounsbury and Glynn (2001), show a trace of entrepreneurial communication with this underlying assumption. They describe the idea of storytelling as relevant communicative narrative in entrepreneurial organization creation processes as they assume “stories as legitimating accounts of entrepreneurial action” (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001, p. 548). All these examples illustrate that the underlying assumption of entrepreneurial is orienting towards the idea of communication as relevant (or constituting) process for entrepreneuring as “a social creation process that rigs action in fictional anticipation of actualized actionable value potential” (Hjorth, 2014, p. 50).

### **Logic – causal and effectual**

*Logic as dimension* is assumed here as superior heuristic of an entities’ processes, as it is for example, defined as “prevailing mindset” of an organization that among others “guides the strategies, systems, and behavior of the organization. In fact, managers will often consider only information and intelligence that is believed to be relevant to the firm’s prevailing dominant logic” (Kuratko & Audretsch, 2009, p. 5). Contrasting to the previously described *mode as dimension*, that—even though on a higher level of abstraction than the *mode of development stage*—oriented directly to the underlying assumptions of entrepreneurial and strategic communication processes as such, *logic as*

*dimension* orients to differing underlying assumptions regarding the context of entrepreneurial and strategic communication. When suggesting hereby *logic* as unifying dimension of analogies of the terms *entrepreneurial* and *strategic*, this particularly relates to the definition of *entrepreneurial as effectual logic*, defined as “a set of means as given and focus on selecting between possible effects that can be created with that set of means” (Sarasvathy, 2001, p. 245) and *strategic as causal logic*, defined as “a particular effect as given and focus on selecting between means to create than effect” (Sarasvathy, 2001, p. 245). This suggested differentiation of underlying assumptions relates to effectuation (Sarasvathy, 2001, 2009), which is a popular approach in entrepreneurship research, that is applied in research in different ways, e.g., “as an *approach*, a *model of decision-making*, a *series of heuristics*, a *set of principles*, a *form of reasoning*, or a *theoretical framework*” (Grégoire & Cherchem, 2020, p. 626). Beyond this general definitions, effectual and causal logics can be differentiated along several issues: (1) The view of future is in a causal logic predictive (future can be predicted) and in effectual logic creational (future is created). (2) The basis for taking-action is goal-oriented in a causal logic (goals determine actions) and means-oriented in effectual logic (actions follow means). (3) Regarding planning, in a causal logic, paths are selected regarding existing goals, while in an effectual logic path the open more possible options are chosen. (4) Predisposition towards risk is expected return in a causal logic and affordable loss in an effectual logic. (5) The attitude towards the environment is competition in a causal logic and partnership in an effectual logic (Read & Sarasvathy, 2005). It has to be noted, that the idea of effectuation is not a theory. Sarasvathy (2009) herself explicitly assumes “effectuation as pragmatist logic for acting upon the world rather than as a positivist theory to be tested and proved true or false” (Sarasvathy, 2009, p. 62). But it “undoubtedly has the potential and ability to make timely and important contributions” (Grégoire & Cherchem, 2020, p. 633) for theory development and thus for the establishment of research programs. Finally, the introduced assumption of entrepreneurial and strategic as opposing logics has already been introduced elsewhere (Venkataraman & Sarasvathy, 2001), but was not yet applied for analogical reasoning in entrepreneurial and strategic communication.

Even though other issues can be explored in terms of their potential for underlying assumptions, the idea of *strategic as causal logic* in strategic communication is mostly visible in terms of its clear goal-oriented logic. In the recent definition of strategic communication as research field, the underlying logic is described as “[h]ow can communication serve to define and reach goals?” (Zerfass et al., 2018, p. 489). It is assumed that various types of organizations “use strategic communication to reach their goals” (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 4). These assumptions of a primarily goal-oriented logic can be traced as well in conceptual (e.g., Borner & Zerfass, 2018; Dulek & Campbell, 2015) as well as empirical studies (e.g., Heide et al., 2018). Traces that orient directly to the causation terminology can be found in addition. Rudeloff et al. (2021) explore for example, the interplay between decision logics, social media engagement and communication strategies in startups, where causation is explored as one type of decision logic. Engel et al. (2017) explore networking of startups and orient among others on a causal logic of networking.

Caused by the absence of clear definitions of entrepreneurial communication, it is challenging to explore the idea of *entrepreneurial as effectual logic* in entrepreneurial communication. Although traces of entrepreneurial communication as means-oriented effectual logic can be found in the given literature, these are only scarce. One trace can be observed regarding a means-orientation. For example, Hill and Levenhagen (1995) not only notion development of entrepreneurs’ mental models through a sensemaking and sensegiving process, but explicitly describe these mental models as “a means for individuals and, ultimately, organizations to create and share understanding” (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995, p. 1059), which contributes to a means-oriented logic of communication. In addition, Gossel (2021) applies effectual logic in defining “inspiring” as one of six programs of organizational environmental observation (Gossel, 2021, p. 349). A similar idea can be observed with the concept of an aligning component of entrepreneurial communication (Invernizzi & Romenti, 2015, p. 225). Even though not clearly connected to effectuation, Invernizzi and Romenti (2015) point out several aspects of entrepreneurial communication, namely “the energizing

of internal collaborative networks to drive innovation through the processes of new combinations of existing resources” (Invernizzi & Romenti, 2015, p. 224). Rudeloff et al. (2021) not only explore the interplay between decision logics, social media engagement, and communication strategies in startups in terms of a causal, but as well of an effectual logic, as well as Engel et al. (2017) do when exploring startups networking. In a broader sense, and not directly connected to strategic communication, Fischer and Reuber (2011) explore effectual behavior of entrepreneurs in relation to social interaction via Twitter.

The previously presented reasoning aims to unfold core analogies of both, entrepreneurial and strategic communication. Based on this, it is hereby suggested, that entrepreneurial and strategic communication as research programs can be defined and delimited along three different assumption unifying dimensions: *development stage*, *mode* and *logic*. Those dimensions are proposed as axis, where in the given and observed literature entrepreneurial and strategic communication differ substantially related to their underlying assumptions (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Analogies of the terms “entrepreneurial” and “strategic” in entrepreneurial and strategic communication research in relation to uniting dimensions.

Analogies		
Dimensions	<i>Entrepreneurial as</i>	<i>Strategic as</i>
Development stage	formation	existence
Mode	creation	maintenance
Logic	effectual (means-oriented)	causal (goal-oriented)

## Creating potentials for future research

To create potentials for future research with problematization means to challenge identified assumptions in order to generate novel research questions with regard to produce novel theories (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). We take the suggested analogies and its three unifying dimensions as starting point to elaborate options for future research orienting to the creation of research programs. The three lenses of suggested analogies and unifying dimensions open and structure a view on theories on different levels of abstraction. Although the simple binary before-after founding a venture/organization cut orients to middle-range theories, the assumption of different modes orients to theories of higher abstraction and the assumption of different logics invites to construct an orthogonal view through the respective theoretical lenses.

### *Entrepreneurial communication through the lens of formation*

Through the lens of formation, the underlying assumption identified assumes entrepreneurial communication either as skill of an entrepreneur (e.g., Iacob & Hristache, 2017) or as communication in/ from/with startups (e.g., Men et al., 2018; Wiesenberg et al., 2020) including entrepreneurial marketing perspective (e.g., Bruhn, 2015; Freiling & Kollmann, 2015). To challenge this assumption, theoretical approaches of entrepreneurship research might support theory development and creation of a research program in entrepreneurial communication in relation to the as-formation metaphora. One of the most influencing theoretical perspective in the entrepreneurship as process framework is the nascent entrepreneur approach (Dimov, 2010). The nascent entrepreneur, assumed as an individual or team, is seen as the business venture establishing entity, that pursues an opportunity and turns it or not to a new venture (Dimov, 2010, p. 1126). Tuazon et al. (2018) provide a systematic review of the last 20 years of nascent entrepreneurship research, conceptualizing antecedents, activities and outcomes as integrative theoretical model to identify options for future research. We take this integrative theoretical model as framework to open potential perspectives in researching entrepreneurial communication as formation.

*Antecedents* are defined as factors leading “to consider starting entrepreneurial activities aimed at venture creation” (Tuazon et al., 2018, p. 8). If motivational factors, individual-level resources and institutional factors are assumed as categories of antecedents (Tuazon et al., 2018, p. 8), primarily social capital opens perspectives to research entrepreneurial communication. Since the more classic publications in the field (e.g., Cope et al., 2007; Davidsson & Honig, 2003; Kim & Aldrich, 2005; Westlund & Bolton, 2003), social capital has been variously interpreted and methodologically conceptualized at both individual and organizational levels. Aspects of entrepreneurial communication as social capital were recently researched as being influenced by social competence including communication-related skills as self-promotion or expressiveness (Lans et al., 2015, p. 462), in terms of entrepreneurial team communication frequency (Weisz et al., 2010), and in terms relational social capital including embeddedness to networks (e.g., De Carolis et al., 2009; Leyden & Link, 2015; Leyden et al., 2014; Redondo & Camarero, 2019). Queried in single items, often binary, it seems that in the context of nascent entrepreneurship research the potential of communication as social capital or antecedent in other terms has not yet been exhausted. *Activities* performed by nascent entrepreneurs are seen in relation to business planning and execution (Tuazon et al., 2018, p. 15). Processes of business planning, “defined as both the process and formative output that establishes the validity of one’s business model” (Tuazon et al., 2018, p. 15) including clarification of goals, identifying technical or operational issues, value proposition, human resources planning, environmental scanning and identification of key stakeholders (Tuazon et al., 2018, p. 15), show relations for researching internal and external entrepreneurial communication activity. Examples of entrepreneurial communication activity are research on face-to-face vs. electronic communication (Lee & Jones, 2008) or on the amount of internal and external communicative activity of entrepreneurial teams, which is a large proportion (64% of startup entrepreneurs working time, 82% of growth stage entrepreneurs working time) of everyday activities (Mueller et al., 2012). Business execution as process of transforming business planning into activities includes the elements of implementation of project and operational capabilities, promotion of product and services, bootstrapping, acquiring resources and experimentation (Tuazon et al., 2018, p. 17). Examples of researching entrepreneurial communication can be observed in terms of communicative activities in entrepreneurial pitches (e.g., Lucas et al., 2016; Pollack et al., 2012; Spinuzzi et al., 2015, 2014; De Villiers Scheepers et al., 2021), storytelling (e.g., Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007; O’Connor, 2002) or crowdfunding (e.g., Brüntje & Gajda, 2016; Xu, 2018). Literature in the context of these activities focusing on entrepreneurial communication seem to be less often related to strong theoretical concepts.

*Outcomes* of nascent entrepreneurship can be described regarding engagement and disengagement (Tuazon et al., 2018, p. 19). First, “engagement is an outcome that specifically continues gestational behaviors towards greater venture commitment and legitimization” (Tuazon et al., 2018, p. 19). Three identified reasons for engagement are commitment and purpose, resource attraction and performance orientation (Tuazon et al., 2018, p. 20). Second, disengagement is seen as “the nascent entrepreneur’s decision to abandon the journey toward venture creation” (Tuazon et al., 2018, p. 20). Four identified reasons for entrepreneurs to turn away from venture creation are resource deficiency, negative perception of new venture outcome and opportunity costs, leadership issues and technical difficulties (Tuazon et al., 2018, p. 21). Although entrepreneurial communication is not in focus of engagement of nascent entrepreneurship, which as such is an issue to research, deficits in communication as leadership issue are assumed as reason for nascent entrepreneurs to disengage (e.g., Pollack et al., 2012; Tuazon et al., 2018). Against this background, it would be a relevant step for future research to analyze to what extent entrepreneurial communication influences reasons for engagement or disengagement. Although through the lens of strategic communication, it was recently explored how startup leadership communication is linked to employees’ engagement (Men et al., 2021), a lens of entrepreneurial communication as formation would open this perspective to engagement or disengagement of venture creation.



By challenging entrepreneurial communication from the perspective of the nascent entrepreneur approach (Dimov, 2010) with antecedents, activities, and outcomes, new perspectives can be developed. In the observed literature, entrepreneurial communication was seen either as skill of an individual or as internal and external communicative activity of a startup as organizational entity, that has almost completed the formation process. This underlying assumption points simply on two corners of an entire process: the entrepreneur, who aims to form a new venture, and the startup, which aims to become a new venture/organization. The nascent entrepreneur approach opens the perspective to communicative prerequisites (antecedents) to form a new venture (social capital), the formation process between these two cornerpoints (activities) and engagement vs. disengagement (outcomes). Against this background, entrepreneurial communication research focusing on the development stage could ask for much more than individual skills or start-ups communications: Which antecedents in terms of communicative prerequisites are required to start an entrepreneurial formation process? Which communicative activities characterize the entrepreneurial formation process? And in which role does communication play regarding engagement and disengagement as outcome of the entrepreneurial formation process? Theoretical perspectives in the context of the nascent entrepreneur framework (Dimov, 2010) could provide a starting point to explore these questions.

### ***Entrepreneurial communication through the lens of mode***

The underlying assumptions identified here assume entrepreneurial communication on a higher level of theoretical abstraction and primarily in process-oriented views of postmodern theories, e.g., with Weick (1997) as sensegiving process (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995), with Luhmann (1995, 2000) as observational process (Gossel, 2021) or in a becoming mode as organization-creating process (e.g., Hjorth, 2014). If entrepreneurial communication describes communication of given or nascent entities, that orients to a becoming perspective, this can be challenged by the wide debate of contextualization (Baker & Welter, 2018, 2020; Welter, 2011) of entrepreneurship theories. Originating in anthropology and management sciences (Baker & Welter, 2020, p. 3), an influencing assumption is John's (2006) definition of "context as situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organizational behaviour as well as functional relationships between variables" (John, 2006, p. 386). Welter (2011) developed a context lens for entrepreneurship research, focusing on omnibus context (John, 2006, p. 391), a broad perspective of context, and drawing attention the dimensions of *who*, *where*, and *when* of context (Baker & Welter, 2018; Welter, 2011). Although development of this 20 years of debate is not a focus of this research (an overview provided in Baker & Welter, 2020), shows a substantial recent turn in the debate has potential to contribute to entrepreneurial communication. Context is not seen as given, but as entrepreneurs' "doing context," which is described as "how entrepreneurs interact with and enact contexts" (Baker & Welter, 2018, p. 12). Baker and Welter (2020) argue more precisely to "view entrepreneurs as "doing contexts"; that is, they construct the contexts in which they operate as agentic responses to the environments they confront" (Baker & Welter, 2020, p. 41). This "doing context" describe Baker and Welter (2020) through enacting, talking, and seeing. Here, enactment is broadly elaborated as "environments become contexts for entrepreneurship through founders' choices and actions" (Baker & Welter, 2020, p. 47), talking refers to how language and communication forms contexts in entrepreneurship. Baker and Welter (2020) draw connections on narrative, discourse, language, and communication and how these constructs are researched in entrepreneurship. Even though Baker and Welter (2020) give an overview on the recent debate, they invite further elaboration on exactly this dimension: "The many disciplines involved in language and communications studies are rich and diverse [...]. There is obviously vastly more interesting and useful work that can be done along these lines" (Baker & Welter, 2020, p. 53).

Another relevant current debate is the entrepreneurship as practice perspective (Gartner & Teague, 2020; Johannisson, 2011, 2018; Steyaert, 2007; Teague et al., 2021). Even though it is not agreed upon what constitutes a 'practice' (e.g., Thompson et al., 2020, p. 349; Teague et al., 2021),

entrepreneurship as practice opens a clear perspective for researching entrepreneurial communication, assuming practice as “doings’ and ‘sayings” (Thompson et al., 2020, p. 349). Researching entrepreneurship through a practice lens focuses on activities of entrepreneurship “as an unfolding process – ‘entrepreneurial’ – that emerges in and through the nexus of practices” (Thompson et al., 2020, p. 350) and as such on “practices through which opportunities are discovered, are created, are altered, are transformed, or are reproduced” (Thompson et al., 2020, p. 350). And these practices have first and foremost a communicative nature: “[c]onceiving of pitches, meetings, phone calls, interviews, blogging, writing, or advertising in terms of discursive-material connections and references to entanglements among practices in question” (Thompson et al., 2020, p. 251).

By challenging entrepreneurial communication from the perspectives of contextualizing theories in entrepreneurship (Baker & Welter, 2018, 2020; Welter, 2011) and entrepreneurship as practice perspective (e.g., Gardner & Teague, 2020; Teague et al., 2021), new perspectives can be developed. In the observed literature, entrepreneurial communication was seen simplistically broken down as unique (entrepreneurial) processes of speaking (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995), listening (Gossel, 2021) and thus becoming (Hjorth, 2014). These perspectives focus primarily on the creation of the becoming organization, not only, but especially through sensegiving and observation. In this assumption, entrepreneurial communication is seen from the process perspective with organizational becoming as starting point of thought. *Entrepreneurial* characterizes communication *in, of, by* or *as* the becoming organization. The communicative dimension of “doing context” (Baker & Welter, 2020) embeds this perspective into a larger whole and also sees this as communicatively shaped, i.e., entrepreneurial communication as enacting context (and not only the becoming organization). However, this is not about persuading or influencing this context, as in strategic communication, but about “constructing the context” (Baker & Welter, 2020, p. 41). Against this background, entrepreneurial communication through the lens of mode could pose questions beyond entrepreneurial becoming like: What characterizes such “doing context communication”? Which dimensions of context are in which way affected by “doing context communication”? How differs such “doing context communication” from other communicative activity, like strategic communication?

### ***Entrepreneurial communication through the lens of logic***

With respect to this perspective, previous research may well be described as almost non existing. So here, the idea of entrepreneurial communication as communication with effectual logic as such challenges the identified assumptions on entrepreneurial communication, where effectual logic is thus far overseen. A few examples may encourage researching entrepreneurial communication with view on effectual logic. That Günzel-Jensen and Robinson (2017) identify noviceness as barrier to entrepreneurial learning, arguing that the given poor networking capabilities of novice students hinder them to follow up their entrepreneurial projects, simply shows a trace of connectivity between effectual principles and communication. Regarding a logic of communication, it remains unclear, how an effectual logic is related to communication. On the one side, “effectuation seems to stand in the way of successful media communications” (Rudeloff et al., 2021), on the contrary, effectual logic dominates compared to causation and the absence of strategy the decision-making context of SMEs (Hauser et al., 2020). Researching decision making is closely connected to strategic communication research (e.g., Hallahan et al., 2007), and effectuation is seen – at least if not more – as a logic of decision making (Rudeloff et al., 2021; Hause et al., 2020). Against this background of researching the effectual logic in the context of entrepreneurial communication, and effectuation is one of the most prominent approaches under debate in entrepreneurship research, questions as follows could be of relevance in entrepreneurial communication: What characterizes means oriented and thus effectual communication? How

does means oriented communication affect success and failure of entrepreneurial endeavors? How are effectual and causal logic connected to both entrepreneurial and strategic communication?

If the focus here was on the development of future potentials for entrepreneurial communication, it was especially for the reason that it should be shown at all how a research program could be outlined. Structured by the analogies and their unifying dimensions; however, impulses can be derived in opposition to strategic communication in this distinction for future research potentials. For the dimension of formation stage, a strategy process can be seen as in opposition to the entrepreneurial process. Although it was argued that antecedents, activities, and outcomes in nascent entrepreneurship (Tuazon et al., 2018) open perspectives to research entrepreneurial communication, for strategic communication, the strategic communication process “as communication process that follows from an organization’s strategic plan and focuses on the role of communication in enabling the organization’s strategic goals and objectives” (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015, p. 4) is right in focus of strategic communication research. For the dimension of mode, a comparably perspective on the contextualization debate in entrepreneurship and its options for researching entrepreneurial communication was not yet observed in strategic communication research.

By scrutinizing the debate more closely, strategic communication could benefit from the impulses of entrepreneurship research. The situation is different for the elaborated as-practice perspective, which has a counterpart in the strategy-as-practice perspective, which is already being explored in initial steps in the field of strategic communication (e.g., Wenzel & Koch, 2018; Winkler & Etter, 2018). All in all, an examination of the effectuation logic is not observable in a deeper dimension, neither with regard to entrepreneurial nor strategic communication. Against the background that both logics are assumed to be processed in parallel and that there have been ambiguous research results regarding both logics in communicative processes so far, it seems to be an interesting connecting point to investigate this parallel processing of both logics, differentiated as strategic and entrepreneurial communication.

## Conclusion

This article explored the systematic definition and delimitation of research programs of entrepreneurial and strategic communication with the help of problematization (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013, 2020). By exploring etymological roots of the core terms *strategic* and *entrepreneurial* and its adoptions in entrepreneurial and strategic communication research, the first traces of analogies were identified. Those were systematically brought to the fore by suggesting three unifying dimensions. With the help of these dimensions of the *development stage* (*entrepreneurial as formation* | *strategic as existence*), *mode* (*entrepreneurial as creation* | *strategic as maintenance*), and *logic* (*entrepreneurial as effectual* | *strategic as causal*), it is not only possible to classify approaches to entrepreneurial and strategic communication systematically but given studies and approaches to entrepreneurial and strategic communication but to open potential for a research program in entrepreneurial communication and future research in both entrepreneurial and strategic communication.

This conceptual article is not without limitations. First, with regard to the existing definitions of strategic and entrepreneurial communication, it must be noted that the amount of currently available literature is not weighted equally: Definitions and explorations of phenomena of entrepreneurial communication are rarely observed. Second, regarding problematization (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013, 2020), it has to be pointed out that not all principles are included in this article. Consideration of these ideas in relation to audiences in communication and entrepreneurship research have to be seen as future debates based on this suggestion. Third, it has to be noted that in literature beyond communication science a connection of the terms *strategic* and *entrepreneurial* is existing, which was not considered here. For example, “[e]ntrepreneurial strategy’ is defined as a particular value creation and value capture hypothesis, and the associated set (or sequence) of partial-commitment choices these hypotheses entail” (Gans et al., 2019, p. 737). In this strategic management perspective (e.g., Dess et al., 1997; Gans et al., 2019; Murray, 1984), entrepreneurial strategy is seen as a

part of corporate strategy, that seeks competitive advantages based on innovation (Banerjee & Srivastava, 2012, p. 680). In strategic entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship is assumed as “style of management” (Wickham, 2006, p. xxiv), which can be elaborated in forms of business model reconstruction, sustained regeneration, organizational rejuvenation, strategic renewal and domain redefinition (Kuratko & Audretsch, 2009, p. 8). Potentially with help of the hereby suggested definition and delimitation of research programs, it could be explored, to what extent this rich body of literature is fruitfully supporting the future development research programs of entrepreneurial and strategic communication.

Concluding, this article does not aim just to inform the debate on entrepreneurial and strategic communication with analytical “this is it” results. Instead, this work aims to bring in prospective “this could be” results, inspired by Weick (1989): “[T]he contribution of social science does not lie in validated knowledge, but rather in the suggestion of relationships and connections that had previously not been suspected, relationships that change actions and perspectives” (Weick, 1989, p. 524). The introduced dimensions *development stage*, *mode* and *logic*, that were developed on the basis of identified analogies of *entrepreneurial* and *strategic* in entrepreneurial and strategic communication, are in that sense a suggestion of not yet seen relationships and, even more, separation options, that hopefully provide a substantial and relevant step for future debates in definitions and delimitations of entrepreneurial and strategic communication research programs.

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