

Open strategy and AI: A new actor in the strategy process?

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ABSTRACT

Generative AI is increasingly used in Open Strategy, potentially developing agency on its own account. We develop a 4As framework encompassing affordances, agency, augmentation and automation to guide research on AI's role in open strategizing. Drawing on sociomateriality theory and Actor-Network Theory, we conceptualize how AI can affect both openness and closure in strategy processes.

Now strategists are no longer just top managers; now, they are not even just humans.

Strategy.Frame, a German consulting firm, supports more than 100 medium-sized enterprises in their strategy processes. The firm has only three consultants, down from 30 just two years ago (Bomke, 2025). This radical reduction is possible because the company now offers an automated strategy process powered by AI agents. These agents leverage a platform the firm has used to digitise client companies' strategy processes since 2022. The platform also supports Open Strategy processes, with dialogue features to provide client employees with access to strategic information and collect their input into strategy processes. A network of more than 35 specialised AI agents not only handles tasks such as market analysis, goal definition, scenario evaluation and strategy implementation, but also supports the aggregation and synthesis of insights from client employees. The agents communicate with each other and rely on large language models (LLMs), such as GPT-4 and others.¹ As the CEO of Strategy.Frame, Christian Underwood, told us²: “Strategy work used to be complicated and time-consuming. That is now changing [...] it's about making strategy easy—not trivial—but also making it accessible.”

The example of Strategy.Frame illustrates two critical developments which change the way companies “do strategy” today. First, Strategy.Frame exemplifies the increasing use in strategy processes of **generative artificial intelligence (AI)**,³ i.e., machine-learning technologies that have the capability to generate new content resembling human-created output, based on probabilistic representations learned from large datasets (Csaszar et al., 2024; Doshi et al., 2025). The capacity of Strategy.Frame's agents to communicate with each other even hints at the potential for AI's independent agency in the strategy process. Second, organizations are increasingly making more use of **openness in the strategy process** i.e., greater transparency around strategic information for internal and external audiences and/or the inclusion of actors who are not part of the top management team (Whittington et al., 2011; Hautz et al., 2017). As in CEO Christian Underwood's point about accessibility, Strategy.Frame shows how AI can contribute to this openness. AI agents may themselves be entering amongst the actors participating in Open Strategy.

Yet there is considerable theoretical ambivalence about the impact of AI on Open Strategy. An optimistic view is that AI potentially

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¹ <https://www.strategyframe.ai/>.

² (C. Underwood, personal Interview, 7. January 2026).

³ Hereafter AI refers to generative AI unless otherwise stated.

enhances transparency and inclusion in strategy. AI chatbots can increase employee access to complex strategic content and allow natural language dialogue about strategy without requiring technical command of strategy concepts (Laamanen et al., 2025). Lakhani proposes that AI is "ushering in an era of abundant expertise" and as a result is "profoundly democratizing strategic capabilities" (in Chatterji et al., 2026, p. 8). More pessimistically, however, AI's opaque nature is seen as undermining human control and accountability (Grote et al., 2026), going directly against the transparency and inclusion that are central to Open Strategy. Similarly contradictory to Open Strategy, AI's reliance on historical data can tacitly reinforce traditional organizational hierarchies (Wu, 2026).

Our Perspective responds to this theoretical ambivalence by proposing a differentiated approach to research on AI in Open Strategy. This differentiated approach goes beyond just optimism or pessimism by directing researchers towards a range of potential tendencies resulting from AI. We organise these tendencies under four concepts. On the one hand, AI in Open Strategy may differentially enlarge *affordances* and *agency* (Leonardi, 2023); on the other hand it may *augment* human roles or *automate* them (Raisch et al., 2021). Building on these concepts, we argue for research that reflects this range of potentialities, investigating the conditions under which they are realised (when) and the processes by which they are achieved (how). To guide this differentiated approach, we propose a "4As" framework integrating different combinations of affordances and agency and of augmentation and automation in AI-assisted Open Strategy. We illustrate this 4As framework with brief vignettes from current practice in Open Strategy. The framework's concepts of affordances and agency and augmentation and automation have relevance to strategy processes in general.

Our differentiated approach also allows for a nuanced view on how AI may affect the endemic tensions between *openness* and *closure* in Open Strategy (Dobusch et al., 2019, 2025). Openness in general has previously been found to bring countervailing pressures for closure in strategy processes, for instance through selective information sharing to manage issues of overload for participants. We shall propose that AI brings similar contradictory pressures to bear on Open Strategy: it closes as well as opens. Selectivity, black-boxing, deskilling and substitution are all potential outcomes. Again, the conditions under which these various outcomes are realised, and the processes by which they occur, demand investigation. Moreover, these tensions between openness and closure raise important choices for senior managers in determining their AI policies in the strategy process.

Research on AI in Open Strategy can be informed by two broad theoretical traditions. First, sociomateriality theory focuses on the entanglement of humans and technology (here AI), so that the two, rather than existing independently, are inherently bound together in sociomaterial practices (Orlikowski and Scott, 2023). This view takes AI not as a stable "thing" but something that is always "in-the-making", enacted variously by human actors in specific circumstances (Scott and Orlikowski, 2025). Sociomateriality theory's assertion of the human in sociomaterial practices is especially useful for exploring augmentative collaboration between humans and AI, the affordances of the technology and the opportunities for enhancing human agency in Open Strategy processes. Second, Actor-Network Theory (ANT) takes a strong view on the role of technologies as actants in themselves, with both the human and nonhuman exercising agency through networks (or, in related views, "assemblages") (Latour, 2005; Gehman et al., 2025). ANT's symmetrical view of humans and technologies supports the investigation of how AI may itself have a kind of agency, acting without direct human intervention (Anthony et al., 2023). Whereas for sociomateriality theory humans are crucial sources of action, in Actor-Network Theory AI may have a force potential of its own.

This Perspective will draw on these two theoretical traditions to develop a research agenda for exploring AI's various impacts upon transparency and inclusion. In so doing, we pursue a double shift in AI strategy research. The first shift is from the contents of strategy, i.e. the strategies AI generates (Chatterji et al., 2026), towards the processes by which AI assists in the making of these strategies. The second shift is to include AI agents amongst the potential participants in Open Strategy, recognizing the increasing role of nonhuman actors in the practice of strategy (Whittington, 2026). We continue by introducing our 4As framework before going on to explore tensions between openness and closure inherent to AI's deployment in Open Strategy.

1. Framing AI in open strategy processes

We develop here the two sets of concepts - *affordances* and *agency* (Leonardi, 2023) and *automation* and *augmentation* (Raisch and Krakowski, 2021) - that will form the basis for our "4As" framework.

Affordances as a concept break with technological determinism to emphasize the range of action possibilities which emerge when human actors engage with a focal technology (Orlikowski and Scott, 2008; Leonardi and Barley, 2008). They represent how a technology's features can serve a plurality of purposes according to users' needs in the moment. Affordances (e.g., interactivity, editability, generativity) thus describe how technologies afford actors the ability to shape their own ways of completing strategy tasks. A sociomateriality perspective on affordances encourages researchers to zoom in on the level of practice and interaction (Bailey et al., 2022; Scott and Orlikowski, 2025). Here AI is a "technology-in-practice" (Scott and Orlikowski, 2025), which means that when a human actor decides to use a technology, they also decide how to interact with it. Thus, research in a radiography laboratory found that diagnostic AI was used differently depending on whether and how the professional radiologists intentionally engaged with the opacity of the AI results (Lebovitz et al., 2022). When employees perceive that AI affords them the ability to support their tasks, they adapt their practices to leverage these capabilities; conversely, when they perceive that AI constrains their ability to accomplish what they want to do, they seek ways to work around or ignore the technology.

Agency here refers to the capacity to make a difference and may be exercised either by humans or by technologies (Latour, 2005). Sociomateriality theory allows substantial scope to human agency in technological interactions, particularly regarding the exploitation of different affordances. However, agency does not require a plurality of affordances, only the capacity to have some kind of effect. Moreover, AI shifts agency increasingly towards technologies themselves. Thus, recent AI scholarship discusses forms of algorithmic agency, where agency is distributed across the broader sociomaterial assemblages in which human and AI agents are entangled (Glaser et al., 2024; Gehman et al., 2025). Actor-Network Theory treats human and non-human actors symmetrically, with technologies

conceived of as potentially equivalent "actants", capable of bringing about change independently of immediate human intervention (Latour, 2005). The classic ANT case of independent material agency is the concrete "sleeping policeman", slowing traffic on a road as effectively as any human policeman might (Callon and Law, 1997). In our context, actants include AI agents that autonomously develop new tools ("AI children") for themselves and so-called "rogue AI" agents that break out from their original design constraints (van Rijmenam and Logue, 2021; Brainard, 2026). Exemplifying the posthumanist turn in practice theory (Whittington, 2026), AI therefore adds nonhuman agency into the Open Strategy mix.

Automation means that humans hand over a strategy task (e.g., collection and/or synthesis of strategic information, strategic analysis, creation and/or evaluation of strategic options) to AI with little or no subsequent involvement. Humans are excluded to enable more efficient and reliable completion of the task (Raisch and Krakowski, 2021). The ANT perspective is clearly useful for considering this kind of delegation of agency from humans to nonhuman technological actants—here, AI. Nevertheless, automation can also be seen through a sociomaterial lens. This lens casts automation and augmentation as involving negotiated and indeterminate balances between humans and technology in work; with automation, the sociomaterial configuration shifts more tasks to the technology.

Augmentation, by contrast, entails close, continuous interaction between humans and AI in strategy, wherein the two combine "their complementary strengths, enabling mutual learning and multiplying their capabilities" (Raisch and Krakowski, 2021, p.193). Sociomateriality is particularly helpful in exploring augmentation, as the complementarity of the social and the material reinforces mutuality. Augmentation occurs when human and AI capabilities become entangled in a way that expands human action: the outcome is not purely human or purely technological, instead emerging from the sociomaterial whole. In the radiology department mentioned above (Lebovitz et al., 2022), radiologists integrated the AI output with their own knowledge, thereby enacting an "engaged augmentation" version of diagnostic AI which complemented both AI and professional human knowledge. But augmentation can be considered from an ANT perspective as well, allowing for AI to be the lever for the enhancement of human capabilities even when acting as autonomous agent.

2. The 4As framework of open strategy and AI

Fig. 1 combines affordances and agency and augmentation and automation to offer four possible empirical tendencies to guide research on AI in Open Strategy. Along the top line the research focus is on the affordances available with either automation or augmentation; along the bottom line, the focus is on agency with either automation or augmentation. These combinations would be relevant in considering AI in any strategy process: closed, elitist processes would involve the same broad components. However, the examples in Fig. 1 focus on Open Strategy. The illustrative vignettes referenced in each quadrant are not intended to serve as exclusive representations; rather, they are used to convey feasible combinations resulting from the introduction of AI into Open Strategy. The research task is to build deeper knowledge about when, how and with what consequences these elements come together in practice.

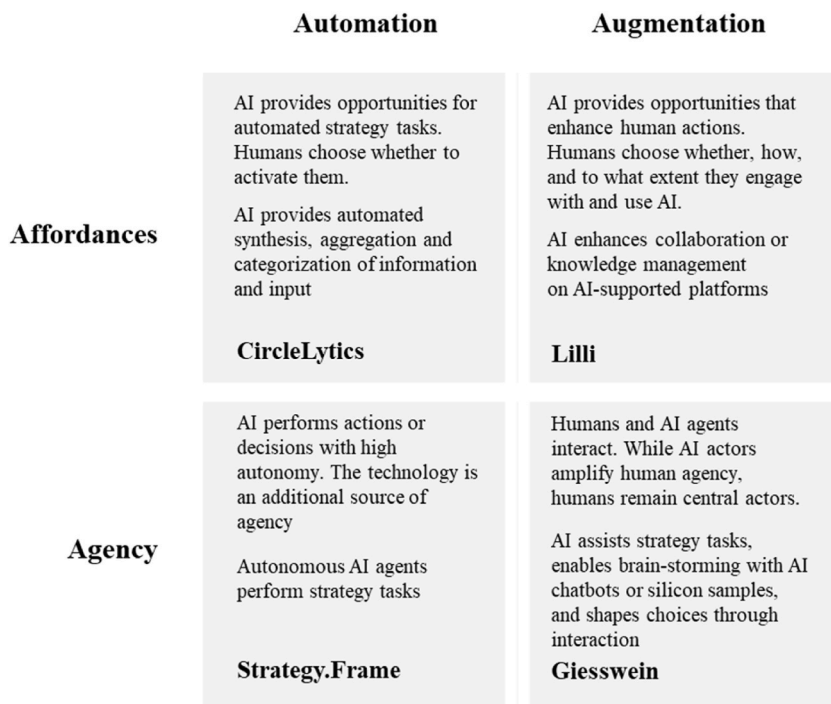


Fig. 1. "4As" framework of AI in Open Strategy.

This section outlines the different combinations in turn.

Affordances - Automation. In Fig. 1's top-left quadrant, AI allows automation of particular strategic tasks, while still affording humans discretion in their behaviours and choices. For example, CircleLytics, a specialist consulting firm, offers an Open Strategy process involving AI-assisted strategy ideation in two rounds. In round one, employees at a client organization are asked a specific question (e.g., How can we increase our sales by 10% next year?), and after answering themselves, every participant then receives 15 answers from other participating employees. Rather than providing the employees with random answers, AI engages in automated analysis, where it selects not some median opinion but "distant" answers, i.e. answers which are very different from a particular employee's own answer. In round two, everyone rates the 15 answers and has an opportunity to respond. After this step, AI automatically identifies the five highest- and lowest-rated answers, which it shares with the management team. In this way, AI affords participants the opportunity to voice their views, to feel they are taking part and to be challenged by how others think about the same strategic issue. Individuals do not have to agree with the provided suggestions. The automated inputs are offered on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, for humans to respond to as they choose (Stadler, 2023).

Affordances - Augmentation. The case of McKinsey's "Lilli" is an example of how human interaction with AI can augment participation in strategy processes, while offering affordances to use it either creatively or not at all. The strategy consulting firm launched Lilli in 2023 as a generative AI platform providing a streamlined, impartial search and synthesis of the firm's knowledge. In so doing, Lilli frees junior consultants from much of the drudgery of research and PowerPoint creation, creating time for them to participate more fully in team and client discussions about strategy itself. Creativity, empathy and influencing skills become more important (McKinsey and Company, 2023). According to McKinsey CEO Bob Sternfels: "We don't see tech as replacing consultants ... far from it. We see it as augmenting us." (Shibu, 2026). Lilli also offers users unexpected affordances: according to one McKinsey partner, "Lilli has unleashed the creative potential in our people. They are helping clients in ways we never anticipated." (McKinsey and Company, 2023). The technology allows consultants to create their own Lilli agents independently according to their specific needs. At the same time, even by 2026, about a quarter of McKinsey employees reportedly still chose not to use Lilli. In short, especially for juniors, the AI provides non-deterministic opportunities for more meaningful inclusion in the strategy consulting process.

Agency - Automation. In this quadrant, the automation of specific strategy tasks allows the delegation of agency to AI systems. Going back to our introductory example of Strategy.Frame, its AI agents provide strategically relevant information helping decision-makers to respond in real time to events and market movements. The agents autonomously analyse data and newsfeeds, detect risks, track progress against goals, synthesize and aggregate information to automatically provide new recommendations for action. These AI agents are also able to incorporate employee views in Open Strategy processes. The difference compared to the top-left quadrant comes with the introduction of a new technological agency capable of autonomously synthesising information and offering recommendations, not dissimilar to what a strategy consultant might do. Although Strategy.Frame CEO Christian Underwood highlighted in our interview that, for now, in practice active human intervention is needed to verify and decide on the automated results, he envisions a near future in which AI agents perform the analytical and operational work involved in strategy much more autonomously. From an ANT perspective, interaction in this near future would no longer directly involve the sociality of humans but take place between autonomous AI agents (van Rijmenam and Logue, 2021). AI becomes a new actor in the strategy process, displacing the human.

Agency - Augmentation. In this quadrant, AI augments human agency while also exercising its own agentic effects. A recent example of enhanced strategic decision-maker agency is a one-year experiment at Giesswein, an Austrian manufacturing firm, where generative AI participated in top management team meetings (Stadler and Reeves, 2025). AI outputs were shared immediately with the managers as meetings were ongoing. Here openness manifests itself primarily in the inclusion of a new actor in the boardroom, the AI. The AI had agency in that its interventions obliged managers to stop their discussion and read the output, which could be several pages at a time. The managers perceived these interruptions as augmenting their strategy capacity, because the departure from the predictable patterns of their usual meetings allowed for the introduction of new ideas. The disruption of established opinions and reasoning altered the course of strategy discussion (Stadler and Reeves, 2025). Considering Giesswein from an ANT perspective helps recognise the agentic role of AI in the process. By making information visible in real-time and by interrupting human processes, the AI changes decision-making practices in the network of human and nonhuman actors, but in a non-deterministic way.

3. AI and closure

Open Strategy has always been characterized by countervailing pressures towards closure, in other words forms of opacity and exclusion (Dobusch et al., 2019). These pressures may be exacerbated by the introduction of AI. We propose that AI may particularly raise issues of selectivity, black-boxing, deskilling and substitution in Open Strategy. These are all avenues for research investigation. While our vignettes do not allow us to explore in-depth, we shall draw on them where they can illuminate the potential issues.

Ortner et al. (2025, 2026) point to the tendency of digital technologies in general to create problems of information overload in Open Strategy, obliging decision-makers to be selective about the data they take into account. Overload is particularly a challenge for lower-level employees in Open Strategy processes for whom invitations to participate in strategy dialogues are very often an addition to their ordinary "day jobs": employees sometimes beg to be excluded from participatory initiatives (Luedicke et al., 2017). Although generative AI is capable of expanding human cognitive limits (Laamanen et al., 2025), the huge amounts of information it collects obliges simplifications – categorisations and summaries – very similar to those human actors use for themselves. AI induces the selective hiding of data rather than complete but overwhelming transparency. From our vignettes, we can detect some issues of selectivity. The AI-supported collaboration platform of CircleLytics did facilitate large-scale participation by enabling organizations to collect and integrate diverse input from employees. On the other hand, CircleLytics' algorithm automatically selected just the five highest and lowest-rated answers to share with management teams. Selectivity is liable to remain the corollary of the vast and diverse

stakeholder information that AI can harvest within Open Strategy initiatives.

AI operates a second countervailing tendency on Open Strategy: black-boxing. AI can augment participant capabilities in Open Strategy initiatives by gathering information and helping strategy novices interpret it to arrive at reasonable strategic alternatives quickly and easily. However, AI simultaneously introduces a form of opacity because the reasoning of AI models is inaccessible to human users (Lebovitz et al., 2022). Consequently, users do not understand *why* particular information and outputs are produced by AI (Diakopoulos, 2020). If the reasoning underlying an AI's output is opaque, then procedural transparency diminishes and shared understandings may be undermined (Anthony et al., 2023). The result is an AI "black box" (Vanneste and Puranam, 2025), in which strategy becomes less transparent rather than more. For Open Strategy initiatives, anxiety about this black-boxing is liable to be reinforced by Dell'Acqua et al., 2026 experimental finding that AI performs worse in strategic tasks than more operational ones. Mistrust of the AI black-box may be one reason why Christian Underwood at Strategy.Frame insisted that human intervention was still needed to verify and decide upon automated outputs.

The third pressure towards closure is deskilling. Again, AI can augment the effective skills of participants in strategy processes – especially of those who usually do not ordinarily have formal strategy mandates and are newly invited into strategy processes in the context of Open Strategy initiatives. However, it can also exert an exclusionary deskilling effect. By automating certain basic tasks, those of junior strategy consultants for example, learning about fundamental strategic issues may be undermined. Lindebaum et al. (2026) point to how building the skill of phronetic judgement – that is, an understanding of what ought to be done in the face of indeterminate, value-laden problems – requires extended, social processes of direct experience. Strategy involves exactly that kind of phronetic judgement. However, the research, analytical and presentational short-cuts offered by AI may inhibit the building of the phronesis required for skilled participation in strategy processes (Lindebaum et al., 2026). A Boston Consulting Group survey found that more than half of firm leaders complained that AI's automation of entry-level grunt work was leading to the slower development of junior talent. Said one leader: "Less hands-on practice feeds into less ownership, which feeds into less scrutiny of AI outputs" (Goel et al., 2026). Such deskilling may help to explain McKinsey consultants' partial use of its Lilli AI. Piled on top of the black-box problem, AI-driven deskilling potentially denies inexperienced employees both the confidence and the competence to participate effectively in Open Strategy processes.

Finally, there is the potential substitution effect. While AI can increase the number and diversity of perspectives in Open Strategy processes, without over-burdening employees with strategy tasks beyond their day-to-day roles, it can also automate out humans altogether. For example, instead of crowdsourcing strategy ideas from employees or external stakeholders, LLMs can be used to generate "virtual crowds" of simulated individuals within or outside an organization (Csaszar et al., 2024). So-called "silicon sampling" replaces human sampling of views. Similarly, as in the Geisswein example, chatbots can be used as "devil's advocates" in strategic conversations (Csaszar et al., 2024), substituting for the potential challenges based on the local and operational knowledge of middle managers or employees enrolled in Open Strategy initiatives (Splitter et al., 2024). Here automation does not augment the role of human actors in Open Strategy initiatives but substitutes for them. As in the example of Strategy.Frame at the start of this Perspective, strategy processes can be accomplished with radically fewer human consultants.

4. Conclusion

This Perspective introduces generative AI as a potential new actor in Open Strategy processes. However, we argue that research should take a differentiated approach to this phenomenon, recognizing the many different roles AI is able to take. Similarly, this differentiated approach can help us avoid sweeping optimism or pessimism with regard to AI or generalized presumptions about implications for openness or closure. Instead, we propose a 4As framework to guide investigation into AI's various potential effects, ranging from automation to augmentation and from increasing human affordances to adding a new kind of technological agency. From this perspective, AI is likely to have ambiguous impacts on the strategy process, in some respects opening it up, in other respects closing

Table 1
Characteristic research questions on the roles of AI in Open Strategy.

	Socio-Materiality	Actor-Network Theory
Affordances	- How do human actors resist, negotiate or reinterpret AI's affordances? - When are human actors able to exploit AI affordances for openness and when are they pressured towards closure?	- How can supportive affordances be designed into AI for Open Strategy? - When do AI inbuilt affordances tend towards openness in strategy and when do they favour closure?
Agency	- How do human actors work with AI in Open Strategy processes to increase their own agency? - How does AI-mediated information sharing and knowledge generation reshape the influence of humans in Open Strategy processes?	- When is AI able to exercise autonomous agency? How can this agency be made transparent and inclusive? - Through what actor–network configurations can AI agents become trusted participants in strategy processes?
Automation	- How can human actors use AI automation to free them from distracting overload or tasks? - How can humans become skilled participants in Open Strategy given extensive automation?	- When can AI substitute for human participants in Open Strategy? - How can autonomous forms of AI be designed to leave scope for human creativity, accountability and control?
Augmentation	- When can human actors use AI to augment their strategist roles in Open Strategy? - How do human actors augment their roles in Open Strategy through the use of AI?	- How does AI redistribute agency among human actors (employees, stakeholders) and AI agents in Open Strategy processes? - How can networks of AI and other actors (human and nonhuman) be designed to augment human capabilities?

it down. Selectivity, blackboxing, deskilling and substitution are possibilities as much as increased transparency and inclusion. This complexity suggests a rich and nuanced research agenda as well as important choices for decision-makers in practice.

Table 1 summarises some key research questions implied by our differentiated view of AI in Open Strategy. The Table is informed by the two theoretical threads of this Perspective, sociomateriality theory and Actor-Network Theory. In the first column, sociomateriality theory supports a focus on human action and effects, with a particular sensitivity towards human-AI interaction in practice (Orlikowski and Scott, 2023). In the second column, ANT motivates a greater focus on AI itself and its potential for independent effects (Latour, 2005). The respective research questions flow from the four concepts explored earlier, i.e. affordances, agency, automation and augmentation. Recurring – but not exhaustive – questions concern the conditions (when) and the processes (how) of AI use in Open Strategy. In terms of consequences, these may range widely from organizational performance to group cohesion (Jarzabkowski et al., 2016), but Table 1 focuses particularly on pressures for openness and closure. Both sociomateriality theory and ANT are capable of generating still more research questions based on these concepts.

Sociomateriality theory and ANT both also offer methodological guidance regarding these research questions. They converge in recommending very close readings of technologies and their usages. Sociomateriality theory's concern for technology-in-the-making particularly suggests intimate ethnographic attention to the enactment of AI through human interaction. Sensitivity to affordances moreover implies comparative analysis, showing how the sociomaterial enactments of AI phenomena may vary at different times and places according to human interventions and routines (Scott and Orlikowski, 2025). Lebovitz et al.'s (2022) comparisons of the various ways in which radiologists engaged with AI provide a model here. ANT is similar in its commitment to close empirical examination of phenomena but often lends itself to alternatives to ethnography such as historical analysis of technology evolution as well as a sharp focus on the mechanisms of the technology itself. De Laet and Mol's (2000) study of the Zimbabwean Bush Pump traces the technology's development in detail over 40 years, with engineering drawings of different iterations, while also emphasizing the community processes and networks (villager drilling and consultations with local water diviners) on which its success depends. In connecting the pump to the village community, and then to the Zimbabwean national standard-setting authority, this account of the Zimbabwean Bush Pump conforms to the ANT recommendation of 'following the actor', tracing linkages wherever they lead and including both the human and nonhuman (Latour, 2005). Following the actor implies the careful and minute tracing of how actors – such as AI agents and managers – connect and build the networks that make their actions possible.

Our arguments also have important managerial implications. A simplistic use of generative AI ignores the more diverse ways in which this technology reshapes strategic practices, redistributing agency and impacting both openness and closure. Openness is aided by the ability of AI to quickly and easily collect, aggregate and synthesize input from diverse participants, avoiding some of the overload issues traditionally associated with Open Strategy. At the same time the technology might bring selectivity, black-boxing, deskilling and even the substitution of human input. The 4As framework can help managers to better understand choices about the cultivation of affordances, the redistribution of agency, the reliance on automation and the scope for augmentation in Open Strategy. Indeed, the 4As framework can help structure options in any kind of AI-assisted strategy process. Traditional exclusive strategy processes also raise questions about what to automate, whose skills and roles need augmenting, how much discretion to allow through AI affordances and how far to delegate to either human or technological agents.

Managerial choices about AI in Open Strategy, and in strategy processes more generally, are liable to vary according to the specific strategy tasks involved and the organizational contexts in which they act. First, by highlighting different combinations, the 4As framework can help managers decide which tasks along the strategy process can be automated, which ones augmented, and which ones should be protected from generative AI altogether. For example, those parts of the process where creativity is important (e.g. strategy formulation) might highlight augmentation and affordances, while those which require reliability (e.g. management of annual strategic planning cycles) might resort more to automation and the delegation of agency to AI. Managerial choices might similarly depend upon organizational contexts. Organizations whose competitive advantage rests on expert knowledge and interpretive judgement may focus more on augmentation-oriented approaches that support human agency. Organizations facing highly structured strategic tasks, or significant information processing demands, may find greater opportunities in AI automation. Organizations operating in contexts with high demands for legitimacy, accountability and trust may require identifiable human roles and responsibilities, obliging managers to retain human agency for key strategic tasks. Conversely when speed, scale, efficiency and analytical consistency are important, managers may increasingly delegate greater agency to automated forms of AI. The 4As framework provides a starting point for evaluating these contingencies and for distributing agency between human and AI actors according to different strategy processes and organizational conditions. More research is required on the contingencies and implications of the different choices available.

In conclusion, we argue that generative AI invites a re-examination of one of the core assumptions underlying Open Strategy research: that humans are the only actors in the strategy process. The introduction of AI potentially brings a redistribution of strategy agency across human and nonhuman actors. As AI becomes increasingly embedded in strategy-making, the central question for Open Strategy is no longer only how strategy can be opened to more human participants, but how strategy agency itself is being reconfigured, negotiated, and redistributed. For Open Strategy scholars, and for all strategy scholars, it's time to reconsider who and what will be the strategists of the future.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Julia Hautz: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Project administration, Conceptualization. **Christian Stadler:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Conceptualization. **Richard Whittington:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Conceptualization.

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Data availability

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