University of Antwerp

Faculty of Business and Economics

Integrating perspectives on organizational change:

Essays on transformation in organizing, managing and strategizing

**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Applied Economics
at the University of Antwerp to be defended by**

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Foreword

Writing a PhD dissertation, if anything, poses a daunting challenge. I see that now, quite clearly. Some four years ago, when embarking on this journey, I can hardly say that I did: as so many students have undoubtedly done before me, I just started out, rather unaware of what would actually follow. While I had some general notion of what I found interesting and what I did not, I was still a dazzling way from the vantage point that I needed to eventually reach – and boy, was I up for a climb. But besides making me recognize that obtaining a PhD represents a fierce challenge, these foursome years also made me appreciate the trajectory as one of the most intellectually stimulating I could have set out to undertake. Not that such intellectual stimulation always resulted straightforwardly in brilliant thought: in fact, I would be the first to acknowledge a more than fair amount of foolish ideas having crossed my mind over the years. Yet, despite the errors, mistakes, and blunders I undeniably found myself making, I came to believe that there is also profound beauty to be distinguished in this process of stumbling. We flounder and are thus unmistakably human: we aspire, struggle, and learn in the process of doing so.

While I had initially believed the research process to closely resemble the sculptor defining a statue – chipping away imperfections with the passing of each stroke, until the envisioned form rises majestically from the rock – I eventually came to understand it to be much more like the destructive iterations of artists such as Picasso. Just as Picasso would paint a full bird only to retain but its beak (painting over the rest with, say, elephant or giraffe), I gradually came to understand the process of crafting scholarly insight to be creative in destruction: one writes, dismantles, and in doing so, retains – an idea, a spark, or simply a clever way of phrasing. It is a process that I have come to recognize as at times inexpressibly satisfying and - at other times - unspeakably frustrating. It comes with euphoric highs just as it comes with depressing lows, and if I have reached the end of such trajectory without having transformed into a bipolar madman - an assessment I will leave to others to make - I can only be profoundly grateful to those who stood by me on the way. Although a large amount of people deserve a hearty 'thank you' in this matter – ranging from the random passer-by that shot a smile through my fixated thoughts, to the barista that offered me the necessary gallons of coffee to stay fresh - I consider the following people to deserve some specific words of appreciation.

First and foremost, I would like to explicitly reach out to my promotors, Koen and Alain, whose professional support as well as friendship I have come to cherish deeply. If ever a PhD student could consider himself lucky with his supervisors, it would be me. Whether in offering a practical

way into interesting business cases, in flagging stimulating conferences I hardly had any knowledge of, in dissecting pieces of text I had written, in allowing me the freedom to set out my own path of interest, or in putting received rejections into perspective – invariably, I found my supervisors to stand by me, and I cannot express sufficient gratitude to them for doing so. What I am even more grateful for than their professional support, however, is the level of friendship I have over time come to cultivate with both, often established in the most silly, fleeting, or mundane of moments: in jointly walking to the Antwerp diamond district; in having food which they know – and chuckle about – is way too spicy for my taste; in exchanging ideas about interesting television series (Lucifer! Grimm! Red Sparrow!), locations (Kerala! Moscow! Torremolinos!) or weekend plans (Yoga! Daughter's soccer match! Cycling!); in struggling to get one's pronunciation right before a particular presentation (SymBIosis)... In short, by bringing their full personalities to the table, I have found my supervisors to allow me to do the same – and for that, I am immensely grateful to both.

Next, I wish to explicitly thank my doctoral committee for their generous support along the road. Whenever I needed it, Sascha, Rudy and Ron were there for an exchange of thought, for advise on how to tackle a research case or a particular piece of writing, or simply for having a general chat. In the same vein, I would here like to extend my warmest appreciation to all the professors I have had the pleasure of assisting throughout the years, and who I have not yet addressed as either supervisor or committee member. Elvira, Liselore, Paul, Johanna, Peter and Toni: your teaching, writing, and practical involvement with the general world of business have been a major source of inspiration to me. Your open-minded and caring attitudes will hardly be matched at any other university, I am sure. A special word of appreciation is here in place for Lena, with whom I had the opportunity to enjoy some of the best Chinese getaways one could ever hope for. Our many laughs and engaging conversations will stay with me forever, Lena, and I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have you as a friend.

The next group of people I would like to address is the amazing bunch of peers I have over the years found myself surrounded with. Kim, Lode, Eline, Vicky, Zainab, Nele, Jolien, Nathalie, Lieze, Lise, Catherine, Cathrin, Amin, Farid, Annelies, Morane, Lauranne, Sofie, Joke - and many others I probably forget to mention here - thank you all for the funny times, the early lunches (as soon as the cafeteria opens, duh), the interesting bets on upcoming babies, and for being such great people in general. We all found ourselves freaking out at times: but lucky for us, we had excellent company whilst doing it. Special consideration, in this regard, is to be given to Tanya for keeping our department afloat in an administrative sense, as well as to all supportive staff at department,

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faculty or university level: your support made it possible to do a task in the best way one is able to, and as such allowed me to teach, research or write at the peak of my capabilities (wherever that was). My sincere thanks for that!

Moving on, I would like to extend my explicit gratitude to my friends, who never failed to ask me how things were working out, even when the stuff I uttered must have sounded like complete gibberish. To Ellen, Marie, Anke, Sander, Hannes, Robin, Stijn, Liesbet, Kirsten, Jeroen, Jeroen - you always succeeded in bringing me back to the real world after days of facing my computer screen. Should one pick any of my best memories of the past years, chances are astronomical that at least one of you is featured in it.

Next, to my dad and brother, a sincere word of gratitude for bearing with my griping, my grumbling, my moods, and all the other stuff only you would put up with without showing me the door. I guess almost half of the text in this dissertation has only achieved its final form on account of me being able to occasionally vent about it in my 'second home office', and I honestly cannot thank you enough for that. Last year has been very difficult for all of us, but I am grateful that we have each other to rely on.

To my mom. Words cannot express how it pains me to finalize this dissertation without you. You were one of my most ardent allies; my closest of friends; my sincerest of connections. You were the person I could call out of bed at night and still find smiling in the morning – simply because you were happy to see me and share my thoughts and feelings. Everywhere I will go in years to come, you will be with me. I love you, mom, and I hope the rest of my life will make you proud.

Finally, I would like to turn to my partner Marijn - without a doubt one of the strongest supporters I have had in writing this dissertation as well as in tackling so many other challenges in life. Marijn, it is actually hard to think of something that I should not thank you for. Over the past years, I have invariably found you to be my prime companion, with whom the greatest flunks in life seem surmountable, and without whom even the most majestic wonders come across as dull. If anyone is to be accredited for the coming together of this PhD dissertation, it is you: for you put up with all the various facets that is 'me' (the enjoyable and the – ahum - not so enjoyable) and in doing so, make me achieve that which otherwise would be beyond reach. You are without a doubt the better person of the both of us, and I honestly do not believe this dissertation would have been possible without you.

Abstract (English)

As the world of business becomes increasingly volatile, organizations need to become increasingly proficient at changing. With new developments in technology, socio-cultural beliefs and geopolitics having seemingly accelerated over the past few years, it has become critical for organizations not to excel at any given moment, but to instead work towards staying nimble at all times. Now, more than ever, the old proverb holds true: that the only constant, in fact, is change itself.

However, while this understanding seems to have rallied a large number of scholars and managers to explore the topic of organizational change in earnest, the acknowledgement and interaction between often diverging point of views has been marked limited at best. Eventually, this has come to result in people talking past each other, when dialogue between them could be beneficial; eventually, this has caused our body of knowledge on change to become dispersed and fragmented, with insights no longer stimulating our dealings with change in practice.

This PhD dissertation highlights how perspectives on organizational change, however different, may work to complement and enrich our understanding of transformation in an organizational setting. Drawing on reconceptualization as well as studies conducted in the industries of IT consulting, diamond trading, container handling and cooperative banking, this dissertation advances five dedicated essays on organizational change, ultimately constructing a scaffolding of different views on the topic as it is.

In doing so, this dissertation delivers three major contributions. First, it lays bare how those dealing with organizational change may advance our body of knowledge by occupying different theoretical positions. By unveiling how different core assumptions may inspire distinct understandings of change, this dissertation allows further work on change to become more interwoven while staying diverse. Second, this thesis showcases how change ultimately requires a complex array of competences from organizational leaders, hereby shedding light on the varied actions that leaders can practically advance in order to outperform their competition. Finally, this dissertation highlights the different onto-epistemological streams of thought that have over time been established with regard to organizational change, thus supporting those teaching change to instruct their students in the eclectic and varied way that the topic ultimately deserves.

Abstract (Nederlands)

Naarmate onze bedrijfswereld in toenemende mate volatiel wordt, moeten organisaties zich steeds diepgaander bekwamen in de kunst van verandering. Daar nieuwe ontwikkelingen in technologie, socio-culturele overtuigingen en geopolitiek aanhoudend lijken te versnellen, is het voor organisaties niet langer kritiek om te excelleren op enig gegeven moment, maar eerder om in te zetten op een doorgedreven en continue lenigheid. Nu, meer dan ooit, lijkt de oude uitdrukking stand te houden: dat de enige wezenlijke constante verandering zelf is.

Echter, hoewel deze vaststelling een groot aantal onderzoekers en managers heeft doen focussen op organisatieverandering als fenomeen, lijkt de erkenning en interactie tussen vaak uiteenlopende zienswijzen veeleer beperkt. Dit onderbouwt een gesprek waar mensen in hoofdzaak langs elkaar heen praten, wanneer een doorgedreven dialoog aangewezen is – resulterend in een geheel van veranderingskennis dat verspreid en gefragmenteerd is, met inzichten die onze praktische aanpak van organisatieverandering niet langer verrijken.

Deze doctoraatsthesis belicht hoe perspectieven op organisatieverandering, hoe verschillend ook, wezenlijk bijdragen aan ons begrip betreffende transformatie in een bedrijfscontext. Steunend op her-conceptualisering en empirische studies binnen de sectoren IT consulting, diamanthandel, containerverwerking en coöperatief bankieren, schuift deze thesis vijf toegepaste essays naar voor aangaande organisatieverandering, wat samenkomt in een stellage van verschillende inzichten.

Door dit te doen, levert dit proefschrift drie voorname contributies. Ten eerste legt deze thesis bloot hoe zij die zich verdiepen in organisatieverandering onze kennis wezenlijk kunnen verrijken door het bezetten van verschillende theoretische posities. Door te onthullen hoe verschillende kernassumpties uitgesproken andere begrippen van organisatieverandering kunnen inspireren, ondersteunt deze thesis de verdere uitbouw van een kennisapparaat dat verbonden blijft ondanks onderliggende contrasten. Ten tweede illustreert dit proefschrift hoe verandering wezenlijk teruggaat op een complexe set van competenties zoals betoond door organisatieleiders, op deze wijze licht werpend op de verschillende acties die leiders kunnen stellen om hun concurrentie duurzaam voor te blijven. Ten slotte markeert deze thesis de verschillende onto-epistemologische gedachtescholen die doorheen de jaren zijn opgeworpen binnen organisatieverandering als domein, hierdoor steun verlenend aan zij die anderen onderwijzen om te instrueren vanuit de eclectische invalshoek die organisatieverandering inherent verdient.

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Introduction

How can organizations go about change? That is the overarching question which this dissertation sets out to address. For some, this question might come across as rather odd: given the field of organizational development and change to have been established many decades ago, one might think a question so elementary to the topic to already be satisfactorily answered. And in a sense, it has been – yet, in so many different ways that actual answers have been noted to continuously elude us (Stouten, Rousseau, & De Cremer, 2018). While the topic of change in organizations has been dealt with from a variety of angles, the acknowledgement and interaction between such angles has been marked as limited at best, with communities of change practitioners and scholars "talking past each other, when dialogue between them could be beneficial" (Bartunek, Balogun, & Do, 2011, p. 4). Or, to quote Müller and Kunisch (2018): "Despite the value and richness of research, the continued accumulation of idiosyncratic, inconclusive and sometimes even contradictory findings restricts a comprehensive understanding of change. Therefore, we need to consolidate the insights shared across perspectives, identify contradictory findings and highlight 'white spots' that can only be uncovered by looking at all perspectives" (pp. 457-458). It is to this call that this dissertation explicitly responds – representing an explicit attempt at integrating and juxtaposing insights in the field on organizational change.

The objective of this dissertation is twofold. First, this work aims to highlight the idiosyncrasies of different perspectives related to the topic of organizational change. Although all inherently tie into the notion of organizations-in-motion, perspectives on organizational change can differ significantly in their baseline assumptions, turning each into a distinctly different lens for observing change as an organizational phenomenon. Second – and in complement to the first objective - this dissertation aims to lay bare the interconnections that may nonetheless exist between perspectives on organizational change as advanced. While perspectives may vary substantially in the inferences they make on change's elementary outsets, they can – and do – intermingle to some extent: rather than representing strict mental silos, perspectives depict leading streams of thought that can be further enriched through integration. In this sense, by highlighting the field of change as made up by tracks of interest that are contrasting yet mutually enabling at the same time, this dissertation aims to stimulate the cross-fertilization of extant research on organizational change – to acknowledge the joint potency of that which is already present, and provide direction on how to further build those insights still lacking.

To meet these objectives, this dissertation advances five dedicated essays on organizational change, constructing a scaffolding of different views on the topic as it is. Four of these essays (chapters 2, 3, 5 and 6) are based on case studies, conducted in the respective industries of IT consulting, diamond trading, container handling, and cooperative banking; one essay (chapter 4) is based on theoretical reconceptualization. Methodologically, this dissertation makes primarily use of qualitative approaches – ranging from in-depth interviewing (Alvesson, 2003) and observation (H. Becker et al., 2002), to visual elicitation (Banks & Zeitlyn, 2015; Bell & Davison, 2013) and discourse analysis (Johnstone, 2017).

Apart from the more specific contributions this dissertation will each time highlight in the respective essays to come, I deem it appropriate to here accentuate the more general theoretical contributions this work delivers to the field of change. First, this dissertation lays bare how authors in the field of organizational change have over time come to occupy different positions. By unveiling how authors may differ in the basic assumptions they uphold regarding change, this work allows further scholarly work on change to become more diverse and 'polymorphic' (Alvesson & Gabriel, 2013) – to be driven by " a wider range of recipes and approaches, as legitimate alternatives […], encouraging greater experimentation and variation" (p.254). Second, by highlighting how views on organizational change can be essentially complementary in spite of their differences, this dissertation contributes to the more holistic integration of the change conversation several authors have recently come to call for (Bartunek et al., 2011; Müller & Kunisch, 2018; Stouten et al., 2018). By initiating a basic framework for researchers on change to relate to, this dissertation wraps together scholarly strands of reasoning that have remained isolated and 'fragmented' as of yet (Stouten et al., 2018, p. 752) – thus allowing for the exchange, integration and stimulation of adjacent scholarly insights (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013; Doty & Glick, 1994). Finally, by addressing scholarly gaps in the field of change from a variety of outsets, this dissertation illustrates how different perspectives can yield opportunities for the further establishment of scholarly knowledge, hence contributing to the tenable advancement of the conversation as a whole. By doing so, this dissertation works to advance the change conversation's 'meta-triangulation' (Gioia & Pitre, 1990) – or the "application of paradigmatic diversity to foster greater insight and creativity" (Lewis & Grimes, 1999, p. 672).

In terms of practical relevance, it is important to understand that although an immense amount of scholarly insight on organizational change has long been present for practitioners to tap from, many authors have drawn attention to the limited extent to which such insights have come to be actually used (Hernes, 2014; Kieser, Nicolai, & Seidl, 2015; Stouten et al., 2018). As such, this

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dissertation contributes to the practical effectuation of knowledge on organizational change in three ways. First, by demarcating different lines of conversation within the field of change, this dissertation provides managerial practitioners with both the vocabulary and directions for how to make sense of specific scholarly advances on change. As practically implementing scholarly advice without any frame of reference has been rebutted as notoriously difficult (Alvesson & Willmott, 2012), improving practitioners' insight on how to fit their perceptions of change within the broader conversation may significantly soften their challenge – contributing to the quality of decision-making in result. Second, this dissertation highlights the often varied demands that change can impose on organizational leaders, and how organizational leaders may try to cope with such demands in return. By showcasing how change requires a complex array of competences from organizational leaders, this dissertation sheds light on the varied set of actions that leaders can advance in order to outperform their competition. Finally, by pushing the boundaries of our knowledge on change by means of five dedicated essay, this dissertation allows practitioners to tap from specific practical advice within the onto-epistemological outset they consider most opportune at any given time – to address the equivocality of change with the theoretical instruments they consider best suited at any particular moment.

This dissertation is structured as follows.

Chapter 1 sets out a theoretical scaffolding on change in an organizational context, offering conceptual backbone to the essays that follow. Six core perspectives are discussed, as structured according to three key dimensions: (i) development of change (*deliberate* vs. *emergent perspective*); (ii) impulse for change (*formative* vs. *responsive perspective*); and (iii) impediments to change (*dialectical* vs. *inertia perspective*).

Chapter 2 consists of an essay that chiefly relates to the tenets of the deliberate perspective, dealing with the question of how the presence of external change experts may come to influence managers' emotions. Drawing on a variety of data as gathered during a one-year consulting case, this chapter reveals the mechanisms underpinning managers' emotions in guided strategy-making from pre-strategizing to post-strategizing. By doing so, three fundamental emotional drivers are laid bare: interaction - or how practitioners engage with each other; temporality - or how practitioners engage with time; and impression - or how practitioners engage with mental representations of strategy-making and strategy consultancy.

Chapter 3 delivers an essay within the main premises of the emergent perspective, setting out how multilevel context influences change over time. Drawing on a longitudinal study of the diamond

trading industry, four phases of multilevel influence are identified: symbiosis, lock-in, knock-on, and disconnect. Highlighting each phase as setting the essential conditions for the next, this chapter illustrates how organizations' strategy and subsequent change may find themselves continuously determined by the cyclical development of the social system in which they are embedded.

In **chapter 4**, a theoretical essay is presented that discusses the conceptual interplay between the formative and the responsive perspective. Specifically, this chapter advances the notion of formative and responsive capabilities for change as representing a duality - or interrelated counterparts that are contrasting yet mutually enabling at the same time. Marking formative and responsive capabilities as conversely empowering a shared paradigm while holding their own, this chapter illustrates how to advance the literature on change by integrating disparate streams of thinking - allowing for the creation of more meaningful insight throughout.

Chapter 5 advances an essay that resides primarily within the dialectical perspective, adopting a dialectical view on the emergence and development of failure during change. Drawing on the case of a container handling firm, three processes are advanced. In a retentive process, change agents adhere to a change approach deemed successful in spite of alternatives emerging, causing tensions to gradually build within the organization's social atmosphere. In a reactive process, looming tensions find themselves affirmed and flare up, instigating the display of a new change approach that is antithetical to the one initially adhered to. Finally, in a recursive process, organizational members collectively recall the positive aspects of prior failure, smoothening organizational change towards re-combinatory synthesis. Marking failure's development as a dialectic, this chapter notes failure in change to be as generative as it is deteriorating, paving the way for both success and failure to continuously remit.

Chapter 6 sets out an essay within the tenets of the inertia perspective, taking up how organizations use discourse to realize instances of change formerly considered 'impossible' for identity reasons. Building on the case of a financial cooperation that increasingly aligned with capitalist banking practice, five tactics are advanced through which organizations can discursively relate strategy and identity in moments of change: denying dissonance, affirming dissonance, framing, rationalizing, and reconciling. Highlighting the dynamic complementarity of discursive tactics available for relating strategy and identity through change, this chapter offers an integrated perspective on how organizations may advance strategically while maintaining their identity – to construct their future, while keeping in touch with their past.

In conclusion, **chapter 7** discusses this dissertation's main implications, respectively zooming in on (i) its contributions to the scholarly conversation on organizational change, (ii) methodological implications, (iii) the ways this dissertation can add to managers' practical dealings with change, and (iv) the way we tend to teach organizational change in the classroom.

The research presented in this dissertation should be understood within specific boundaries. First, this dissertation does not represent the first attempt at contributing to a more overarching theoretical view on the field of organizational change: when considering in particular the excellent work on pluralism in change as advanced by Van de Ven and Poole (1995, 2005) and Poole and Van de Ven (2021), it is fair to say that this dissertation truly stands on the shoulders of giants. However, although such earlier research has certainly started to open up our conceptualizations of change in an organizational context, it is important to recognize that these studies still restricted their explorations to the different *process theories* that the field has come to advance – that is, to the different ways in which researchers conceptualize the phenomenon of an organization moving from A to B. This dissertation, in contrast, moves up a level of abstraction, revealing different sets of baseline assumptions as operationalized in the conversation on change (Qiu, Donaldson, & Luo, 2012; Ritzer, 1990). Second, although this dissertation discusses several core paradigms as present within the broader field of organizational change, it should be noted that these paradigms are intentionally highlighted on account of their theoretical relevance to the essays and chapters that follow. In consequence, although the perspectives as here set out can be considered prominent streams of thinking within the field of change, it must be recognized that they do not necessarily represent the only perspectives 'out there': indeed, other perspectives - deemed less relevant to the research as reported in this dissertation - may also abide in the field of change. Finally, despite the penchant for qualitative approaches as displayed in this dissertation, it should be noted that this work by no means intends to denounce research contributing to change from a quantitative angle: in fact, it is my believe that quantitative approaches have an equally important role to play in our coming to terms with the topic. Yet, given the type of questions I personally considered most interesting and pressing to address, qualitative approaches simply proved to be better suited – allowing to address queries of *why* and *how*, and so come to better understand the mechanisms behind change-related phenomena (Bansal, Smith, & Vaara, 2018).

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Chapter 1

Coming to terms with change in organizations

This chapter provides the theoretical foundations that underpin the chapters that follow. For sake of transparency, it is important to emphasize that perspectives as here discussed have been tackled in retrospect, *after* the essays as reported in subsequent chapters were developed. Hence, rather than being understood as an exhaustive overview of the full literature on change in an organizational setting, I would like to stress that the theoretical background as here considered is to be explicitly interpreted in the context of this dissertation – meant to offer theoretical support to the specific chapters that follow, rather than representing a systematic review of the complete organizational literature on change.

In the first part, this chapter will discuss contemporary work on change in organizations[1], structuring such discussion according to three main dimensions and six related perspectives. For each perspective, an overview of core tenets will be discussed. In a second part, this chapter will discuss how perspectives as highlighted are currently used in the establishment of theory, contending scholarly work on change as being constituted by tapping from one or several perspectives as advanced. In a third part, this chapter will discuss pressing scholarly gaps in perspectives as identified, thus marking how subsequent chapters will add to the conversation on change in organizations.

1.1 A meta-theoretical understanding of change

Looking into the topic of change in an organizational context – or "the difference in form, quality, or state over time in an organizational entity" (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995, p. 512) - it can be noted that authors have come to operationalize a plethora of different concepts, metaphors, and theories. However, when zooming in on the essentials of this varied body of work, it is possible to structure the conversation according to three core dimensions - or aspects of change (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017) – and six primary perspectives – or different ways of thinking on change (Boland Jr & Tenkasi, 1995). For an overview of dimensions and perspectives considered, I refer to Table 1.1.

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[1] Although change can affect many different 'objects' within an organization (such as structure, operational procedures, culture, etc.), note that this thesis will primarily refer to change from a strategic point-of-view: thus relating to change primarily as a shift in "the firm's mission, or in its scope, priorities and goals" (Müller & Kunisch, 2018, p. 457) – or, put more directly, as a shift in "what the organization does or plans to do" (Ravasi, Tripsas, & Langley, 2020, p. 5).

Table 1.1 Coming to terms with different dimensions and perspectives in the field of change

Dimension	Development of change		Impulse for change		Impediments to change	
Perspective	Deliberate perspective	Emergent perspective	Formative perspective	Responsive perspective	Dialectical perspective	Inertia perspective
Ontology	Reality is intelligible and orderly	Reality is transient, relative to sociality and place	Reality is potential	Reality is uncertain and replete with risk	Reality is developing through contradiction and opposition	Reality is restrained and self-enforcing
Epistemology	Knowledge comes from judicious analysis and scholarly logic	Knowledge comes from experience and reflection, and is derived from social interplay	Knowledge comes from the aspiration to pre-emptively develop	Knowledge comes from encountering and learning from failure	Knowledge comes from embracing tension and strain	Knowledge comes from accepting the limits of one's own possibilities
Interpretation of change	Change is rational and intentional	Change is bubbling up in escalation	Change is anticipatory to adversity	Change is responsive to adversity	Change fuels resistance and is fuelled by it in return	Change fuels resistance and is rendered undesirable or unattainable in return
Conceptual emphasis	The role of experts and explicit intervention	The role of chance and systemic influences	The role of managing resources	The role of letting resources manage themselves	The role of disagreement as catalyst	The role of disagreement as inhibitor
Examples of concepts	• Planned change • Change Management • Organizational Development	• Emergent change • Evolutionary change • Contextual change • Complexity in change • Processual change	• Org. Flexibility • Org. Adaptability • Org. Agility • Dynamic Capabilities	• Org. Resilience • Org. Robustness • Org. Recovery • Org. Turnaround • Learning from (failure in) change	• Dialectics in change • Tensions in change • Paradoxes in change • Dialogue in change	• Critical theories of change • Population ecology • Structural inertia • Org. imprinting • Path dependency

First, significant work has been conducted on the **development** of change, with authors primarily emphasizing the question of how change is produced within an organization. With regards to this dimension, both a *deliberate* and an *emergent* perspective have over time been established.

Second, a large amount of work has been conducted on the **impulse** for change, with authors accentuating why organizations develop or what they are primarily changing to. Concerning this dimension, both a *formative* and a *responsive* perspective have been advanced.

Third, a significant body of work has emphasized the **impediments** to change, with authors streamlining around the question of how conflict either stimulates or hampers change. Pertaining to this dimension, both a *dialectical perspective* and an *inertia perspective* have over time been developed.

While perspectives as displayed are all decidedly related to the organizational conversation on change, each does provide a fundamentally different outlook on change within an organizational setting. In what follows, this chapter will discuss the extant literature's state-of-the-art, this by focusing on both the core dimensions and related perspectives on change as highlighted.

1.1.1 Development of change

One of the primary dimensions of change looked into in organizational literature, is the way in which change is developed or established. With regard to this dimension, two perspectives have over time been established: the deliberate perspective and the emergent perspective.

Deliberate perspective. According to the deliberate perspective, change is the result of a rational and intentional undertaking. For proponents of this perspective, reality is orderly and intelligible, with knowledge of that reality being available through conscientious analysis and logical reasoning. Several major constructs on change are underlain by these onto-epistemological orientations, such as planned change (Bartunek et al., 2011; Dunn & Swierczek, 1977; Jones, 1969; Lippitt, 1958; Zaltman & Duncan, 1977), change management (Anand & Barsoux, 2017; Paton & McCalman, 1992; Todnem By, 2005), and organization development (Beckhard, 1969; Burke, 1992; Cummings & Worley, 2014; French, Bell, & Zawacki, 1994; Schein & Bennis, 1965).

From the vantage point of to the deliberate perspective, change can be thought of in a highly logical fashion, with actual changes preferably being planned out in strictly structured phases (Dunn & Swierczek, 1977; Robertson, Roberts, & Porras, 1993). While the content, number and order of such phases might differ according to the specific model advanced – e.g., Lewin's Three-Phase Process (K. Lewin, 1948), Beer's Six-Step Model (Beer, 1980), or Kotter's Eight-Step Model (Kotter, 1995) - most explicitly relate to a notion of rational problem-solving, with phases that link

back to diagnosis, analysis, action, and feedback (Stouten et al., 2018). By structuring change as a series of well-demarcated stages, adherents of the deliberate perspective emphasize the importance of rationalization – to let the change program be consciously devised, and allow order and logic to predominate.

In the rational context of the deliberate perspective, change is essentially understood as representing a deviation from the norm. The organization is thought of as an inherently stable entity, for which change implicates an intentional 'intervention' (Bennis & Shepard, 1956; Blake, Mouton, & McCanse, 1989; K. Lewin, 1946), or break up of normal procedure. To change an organization implicates breaching the borders of what is known and adamant, and thus explicitly pull away the organization from the standard of stability (French et al., 1994; Paton & McCalman, 1992). Guiding such intentional "coming between or among persons, groups, or objects for the purpose of helping them" (Argyris, 1970, p. 15), experts are considered predisposed in a manner that common organizational employees are not (Hambrick, Nadler, & Tushman, 1998). "It was felt that often potential adopters had neither the exposure to potential alternative innovations nor the technical expertise to evaluate them. The consultant, on the other hand, had a wealth of knowledge and expertise and could provide these resources, as needed, in a cost-efficient manner" (Parker, 1980, p. 432). In this sense, the deliberate perspective on change puts stark distinctions between those leading or designing the change, and those enduring the change put forward – between 'change agents' and 'change recipients' (Coch & French Jr, 1948; Parker, 1980).

By operationalizing such terminology, the deliberate perspective implies a strong division between those who go along with change, and those who do not. In fact, as several early writers marked their practical exploits with change to be anything but straightforward, the deliberate perspective can be deemed largely accountable for managers' convictions of change primarily sparking resistance amongst operational personnel (Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008; Piderit, 2000). In this sense, while the deliberate perspective can be rightfully considered one of the most uniting streams of thought on the topic of change in an organizational context – rallying several generations of scholars and managers to consider the topic in earnest – it can also be understood as an important driver of division, forcing a strong wedge between the different parties that are practically involved.

For adherents of the deliberate perspective, the success of a change program strongly relates to an eventual advancement in the organization's level of effectiveness (Beckhard, 1969; Paton & McCalman, 1992). Whilst seemingly strict in its evaluation, mark that this notion of effectiveness has over time been interpreted quite broadly, varying from the extent to which the organization

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succeeds in attaining the goals it has set out; the ability to safeguard needed resources; the retention of strategic fit with the external environment; or the extent to which all stakeholders find themselves satisfied with eventual outcomes (Burke, 1992; Levinthal, 1991; Stouten et al., 2018). Yet, what stands central in all these notions, however different, is the idea of change being effectively geared towards a measurable outcome – not to be conducted for the simple sake of transformation, but to be intentionally put up to advance the organization towards a more benign state-of-play (Stouten et al., 2018).

While the deliberate perspective has not altogether introduced change to the organizational setting, it did do much to validate the topic as one worthy of explicit thought and consideration. By conceptualizing theoretical models and structured reasoning, the deliberate perspective turned a rather abstract and fleeting notion into a concept that could be observed, understood, and potentially channelled. Empowering top echelons to work with change rather than to merely acknowledge its existence, deliberate theories turned change into something tangible – something that can be moulded and steered into proper direction, if only one's skillset is sufficient (Bartunek et al., 2011; Beckhard, 1969; Heidari-Robinson & Heywood, 2016; Zaltman & Duncan, 1977).

Emergent perspective. The emergent perspective, on the other hand, represents an important rebuttal to the rational dogmas of the deliberate perspective: here, change is emphasized as not being necessarily intentional, but rather as materializing due to an organization's social context. For proponents of the emergent perspective, reality is not so much fixed and intelligible as it is inherently transient, and relative to sociality and place. Coming to terms with such reality cannot be done through structured analysis and logical deduction, but is only possible through experience and reflection, derived from continuous social interaction. Constructs adhering to the emergent perspective include emergence in change (Plowman et al., 2007; Stacey, 1996; Wiedner, Barrett, & Oborn, 2017), evolutionary change (S. L. Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997; Morel & Ramanujam, 1999; Nelson & Winter, 1982), contextualism (Child & Smith, 1987; Pettigrew, 1985, 1987), complexity- and system-based thinking (P. Anderson, 1999; Houchin & MacLean, 2005; Stacey, 1995), and the processual view on change (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, & Van de Ven, 2013; B. MacKay & Chia, 2013; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).

For decades, taking care of change was considered an explicitly rational and intentional activity: organizations changed because the experts managing them considered it appropriate for them to do so. For adherents of the emergent perspective, however, this framing of change as a rational and intentional activity reflects the actual way of things rather poorly: according to these thinkers, major changes often find themselves unprecedented by any explicit intention at all (Dawson &

Andriopoulos, 2014; Kanter, 1992; Pettigrew, 1985). Rather than rational analysis or explicit motivation, these authors mark simple interaction as the prime element for giving way to alterations on an organizational level: being essentially embedded in the same 'complex system' (Stacey, 1995), it is the natural interplay between employees' individual decisions that eventually leads up to fundamental change on an organizational level (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985; Plowman et al., 2007; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). In this sense, change is not marked as the outcome of a premeditated plan, but rather as resulting from the continuous escalation of small-scale choices towards a somewhat consistent whole (Langley et al., 2013; Plowman et al., 2007; Weick, 2000). "Change takes place because most of the time most people in an organization do about what they are supposed to do; that is, they are intelligently attentive to their environments and jobs" (March, 1981, p. 564).

This reconceptualization of intentionality for change has significant implications for the individuals considered important. Under the prescripts of the deliberate perspective, successfully pushing for change required expertise and insight that the average employee simply did not possess. Consultants, change agents and experts were assumed to take the lead. For adherents of the emergent perspective, however, this centralization of high-level individuals in change is done off as nonsensical (Chia, 2002b; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). "The pace of environmental change is so rapid and complex that it is impossible for a small number of senior managers effectively to identify, plan and implement the necessary organizational responses. The responsibility for change is therefore of necessity becoming more devolved" (Burnes, 2011, p. 137). According to the emergent perspective, change is not to be conceived as the prime domain of senior echelons, but should rather be thought of as the imminent outcome of the everyday activities of all kinds of employees, whatever these employees' hierarchical level or occupation (Wiedner et al., 2017). In consequence, management should not occupy itself with trying to control and conduct change, as much as it should try to facilitate and support those changes that are already naturally emerging throughout the organization as a whole (Livne-Tarandach & Bartunek, 2009).

In this way, change should not be understood as the sporadic incident, but should rather be looked at as representing a status quo in itself. To quote Tsoukas and Chia (2002, p. 568): "If change is viewed as the exception, the occasional episode in organizational life, we underestimate how pervasive change already is." The organization and its change, as such, are best to be understood as inherently indivisible: continuously churning through time, without being defined by particular beginnings or endings (Child & Smith, 1987). "Changing, in this view, is not something that

happens to things – it is the way in which reality is brought into being in every instant" (Langley et al., 2013, p. 5).

Strongly related to this understanding of change as continuously bubbling up in escalation, one can discern the driving notions of chaos and disorder as being especially eminent in the view of those adhering to the emergent perspective. To quote Alvesson and Sveningsson (2015, p. 28): "Organizational change […] involves applying an understanding of a complex and chaotic organizational reality. Unforeseen consequences of planned organizational change, resistance, political processes, negotiations, ambiguities, diverse interpretations and misunderstandings are part of this. Consequently, organizational change is not mainly a matter of carrying out a sequential list of steps." For adherents of the emergent perspective, concepts such as uncertainty, complexity, and unpredictability come to be prominently figured, with organizational thinkers emphasizing "the importance of the unforeseen in a future not yet knowable" (Dawson & Andriopoulos, 2014, p. 189). Order and logic are, as such, derivatives of organizational reality as it is: when relating to notions implying pattern and predictability, we try to draw sensible interpretations of what is essentially far less structured and arranged – we try to distil something easily digestible from the "primordial soup of undifferentiated flux" (Chia, 2002a, p. 866).

Hence, for advocates of the emergent perspective, change should not be understood as a mere exercise in organizational optimization, but should instead be conceived as moulded by the diverse purposes and intentions of the broader context to which the organization is inherently affiliated. To change does not imply for the organization to simply redirect itself to a new course as given – rather, it relates to how the social structure of the organization develops such new course largely by and of itself, churning through the everyday wants and needs of all parties involved.

1.1.2 Impulse for change

A second dimension of change that has been thoroughly examined by organizational scholars, is the notion of why organizations develop or what organizations are precisely changing to. In this line of thought, two perspectives have over time been established: the formative perspective and the responsive perspective.

Formative perspective. In the formative perspective, change is chiefly incited by the need to proactively act on shifting market conditions in order to fend off competitive damage later on. Reality, in this sense, is largely thought of as potential, with knowledge from that reality originating from the aspiration to pre-emptively develop. Constructs related to this school of thought include the flexibility construct (Bahrami & Evans, 2011; Eppink, 1978; Sanchez &

Mahoney, 1996; Volberda, 1996), the notion of organizational or strategic agility (Doz & Kosonen, 2008, 2010; Junni, Sarala, Tarba, & Weber, 2015; Weber & Tarba, 2014), and the construct of dynamic capabilities (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 2000; Winter, 2003).

When considering change from a formative perspective, one essentially considers the act of change to be brought forth by particular anticipatory skills. While there has been quite some debate on what kind of skills should be considered – with a variety of categories being put forward, such as 'sensing, seizing, reconfiguring' (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997), 'perceiving, testing, implementing' (Winby & Worley, 2014), or 'reconfiguring, leveraging, learning, integrating' (Bowman & Ambrosini, 2003) - important to understand is that all different recommendations essentially relate to the same basic principle: namely, that change is about anticipation and prospection, and that change ultimately relies on the development of capabilities that are consultable when necessary. In this sense, strong emphasis comes to befall the notion of repetition, or frequency in change (Barreto, 2010; Helfat et al., 2007; Krijnen, 1979; Teece, 2014): "An essential feature is repeatability. Agile organizations continuously adjust to changing circumstances" (Worley, Williams, & Lawler, 2016, p. 77).

By relating to change from the outset of anticipatory skills, adherents of the formative perspective shift the notion of change from what is practically realized, towards what can be possibly achieved. To quote Teece (2014, p. 329), who phrases this distinction particularly clearly in regard of the dynamic capabilities construct: "Capabilities are what the organization could accomplish, not necessarily what it is currently producing". Change, as such, becomes a topic that is no longer strictly confined to the here-and-now, but comes to extend into a much more broadly defined future: the truly adaptable firm might not be the one that is most actively involved with change at any given moment, but might be the one that has the best potential for proactively doing so whenever necessary. In this sense, notions such as routine, predictability, repeatability and stability are not considered strictly separate from the idea of change: in fact, when tapped in the right fashion, adherents of the formative perspective claim they can work as powerful stepping stones for change to be at all produced (Weick & Quinn, 1999; Winby & Worley, 2014; Zollo & Winter, 2002). "The roots of dynamic capabilities lie in part in organizational routines - the firm's repositories of regular patterned behaviours and the firm's stored knowledge" (Arndt & Pierce, 2017, p. 413).

Strongly linked to this notion of stable practices are the organization's resources – or 'stocks of available factors that are owned or controlled by the firm' (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993, p. 35). In

the formative perspective, change is directly related to the organization's understanding of how to proactively make use of the resources it holds in possession: to be able to gather means necessary, to integrate and allocate them wherever they are needed, and recombine them for the generation of new value-creating strategies (Barreto, 2010; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Helfat et al., 2007). This idea of resources, however, is to be interpreted quite broadly: rather than concerning only monetary means, resources should also be understood as relating to physical means – such as specialized equipment; human means – such as specific expertise; and organizational means – such as a sensible configuration of, for example, a sales team (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). To change, hence, largely becomes a question of how to sensibly align such resources to fit the envisioned direction – or, put more directly, to 'manage firms as bundles of assets' (Hitt, Keats, & DeMarie, 1998, p. 37).

As a consequence of such emphasis on resources, the agency for change – or who can be considered primarily responsible for the organization's development – is driven up in terms of abstraction. No longer is change thought of as being chiefly put in motion by the intentions of individuals, either top or bottom: in the formative perspective, it is the organizational configuration itself that is offering the setting through which adaptations almost naturally occur. While individuals still have their place in the perspective – managers, for instance, are still expected to ensure a proper organizational setting is effectively installed - it is the organizational configuration that is assumed to incite change, as if on instinct (Augier & Teece, 2009; Felin & Powell, 2016; Helfat & Peteraf, 2015; Hitt et al., 1998; Rindova & Kotha, 2001).

Hence, building on the notion of stability through resources and available means, the formative perspective marks change as a capacity that is to be proactively aspired and nourished for use, hereby pushing the organization to achieve a sustained competitive advantage (Barreto, 2010; Claussen, Essling, & Peukert, 2018; Worley, Williams, Williams, & Lawler, 2014). "In turbulent environments, the goal of strategy becomes strategic flexibility. Being world-class is not enough; a company also has to have the capability to switch gears" (R. Hayes & Pisano, 1994, p. 78).

Responsive perspective. In contrast, in the responsive perspective, change is positioned as primarily instigated by the actual experience of adversity. In this school of thought, reality is considered inherently uncertain and replete with risk; to abstract knowledge from such reality, one can only encounter and work to learn from hardship (Kossek & Perrigino, 2016; Reeves, Levin, & Ueda, 2016). This onto-epistemological assumption is at the base of constructs such as organizational resilience (Annarelli & Nonino, 2016; Kossek & Perrigino, 2016; Linnenluecke, 2017; Van Der Vegt, Essens, Wahlström, & George, 2015; Williams, Gruber, Sutcliffe, Shepherd,

& Zhao, 2017), organizational robustness (Reeves & Deimler, 2011; Reeves et al., 2016), organizational recovery (Hoffi-Hofstetter & Mannheim, 1999; June-Young Kim, Kim, & Miner, 2009; Morrow, Sirmon, Hitt, & Holcomb, 2007) and turnaround (Pearce & Robbins, 1993; Trahms, Ndofor, & Sirmon, 2013), and the notion of learning from failure in change (Eberhart, Eesley, & Eisenhardt, 2017; Ji-Yub Kim & Miner, 2007).

According to adherents of the responsive perspective, change is primarily responsive to adversity occurring (Williams et al., 2017). This adversity, although unpleasant, is considered an almost unavoidable side-effect of a reality that is essentially unpredictable. "Our world is dominated by the extreme, the unknown, and the very improbable ... while we spend our time engaged in small talk, focusing on the known and the repeated" (Taleb, 2010, as found in Fiksel, Polyviou, Croxton, & Pettit, 2015). Although organizations might strive to avoid hardship to the best of their abilities, the sheer complexity of conducting business is deemed to render such aspirations almost unattainable by design. To quote Hamel and Välikangas (2003): "Success has never been so fragile" (p.52). In this sense, what is considered a prime characteristic of the sensible organization is not its capacity to adapt and change course prior to hardship materializing; instead, it is its capacity to change by the very graces of such hardship presenting itself – to "positively adjust under challenging conditions" (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003, p. 95).

From this outset, change is considered primarily from the metaphor of 'bouncing back' (Coutu, 2002, p. 49), in which organizations "effectively absorb, develop situation specific responses to, and ultimately engage in transformative activities to capitalize on disruptive surprises" (Williams et al., 2017, p. 740). Change, as such, is considered to represent an inherent part of what is essentially a larger reactionary cycle, sprung by the organizational experience of adverse events. By acknowledging adversity and eventually acting on and learning from it (Hamel & Välikangas, 2003; Kantur & İşeri-Say, 2012; Reeves et al., 2016; Vermeulen & Sivanathan, 2017; Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007), the organization can build on hardship to transform itself in ways that would prove altogether impossible in more sanguine times – hence "enabling a business to gain competitive advantage by learning how to deal with disruptions more effectively than its competitors" (Fiksel et al., 2015, p. 82).

While such disposition for change through adversity is marked to largely depend on the organization's resources, several authors more specifically emphasize the need to let such resources largely manage themselves (Linnenluecke, 2017; Reeves et al., 2016; Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007). Although adversity is affirmed to ultimately light the fuse for change to happen, it is the organizational resource configuration that either allows or bars such change from effectively

taking place. "Resiling from ongoing strain and discrete jolts implies the presence of latent resources that can be freely activated, combined and recombined in new situations as challenges arise" (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 3418). Key in this acclaimed leniency of resource allocation are terms such as slack, redundancy, modularity, decentralization, and loosening of control (DesJardine, Bansal, & Yang, 2019; Limnios, Mazzarol, Ghadouani, & Schilizzi, 2014; Reeves et al., 2016; Reinmoeller & Van Baardwijk, 2005). In this sense – and contrary to the more managerially steered connotation of the formative perspective – the responsive perspective emphasizes the need for change as occurring in almost natural response to things turning amiss – explicitly promoting the idea of "self-organization for sustainability" (Reeves et al., 2016, p. 55).

For the responsive perspective, this notion of organizational sustainability or 'survival' (June-Young Kim et al., 2009; Morrow et al., 2007; Williams et al., 2017) is what constitutes the main rationale for dealing with change at all – or, to quote Coutu (2002), "to act in ways that allow us to endure and survive extraordinary hardship" (p.51). From this outset of survival, change should not always push the organization towards improved levels of performance: in fact, for many responsive capability authors, allowing the organization to improvise rather than to optimize proves key (Coutu, 2002; Reeves & Deimler, 2011; Trahms et al., 2013). That being said, several authors do note more elevated ambitions for change in the context of rebounding from setback, highlighting the aspiration for organizations to ultimately change in a way that a state of 'zero-trauma' emits: "[A state in which] there is plenty of excitement, but there is no trauma - no calamitous surprises, no convulsive reorganizations, no colossal write-offs, and no indiscriminate, across-the-board layoffs" (Hamel & Välikangas, 2003, p. 54).

1.1.3 Impediments to change

A final dimension that has been thoroughly examined, is the notion of how conflict can be interpreted within a context of organizational change. Again, two perspectives can be primarily outlined: the dialectical perspective and the inertia perspective.

Dialectical perspective. According to the dialectical perspective, while change fuels resistance and conflict, it ultimately finds itself fuelled by such tensions in return. From this outset, reality is grounded in contradiction and opposition, with knowledge on reality essentially deriving from the act of embracing conflict and strain. Several constructs can be related to this particular school, including the notion of paradox in change (Eisenhardt, 2000; Jay, 2013; Luscher & Lewis, 2008; Quinn, 1988), dialectics in change (Farjoun, 2002; Nielsen, 1996; Seo & Creed, 2002), and change through dialogue (Carlsen, 2006; Ford & Ford, 1995; R. Thomas, Sargent, & Hardy, 2011).

In the dialectical perspective, change is essentially considered as sprouting from conflict – it "'comes out of' conflict, and conflict is necessary for change to occur" (Ford & Ford, 1994, p. 761). From this outset, change is not considered as occurring *in spite* of potential tensions, but rather as occurring *because* of tensions being at all present (Mitchell et al., 2014; Panayiotou, Putnam, & Kassinis, 2019; Piderit, 2000). These tensions are marked as an inherent aspect of the social character of all organization, in which different points of view either corroborate or collide (Seo & Creed, 2002). To quote Cule and Robey (2004): "Organizations are complex entities, comprised of many goal-directed individuals whose purposes may be incompatible" (p.231). In result, the dialectical perspective is replete with terminology related to elements of power, pressure, and politics (Ford & Ford, 1994) – emphasizing 'arenas of power relations' (Seo & Creed, 2002) by which actors "contribute to a larger solution by recombining inherited practices, technologies, and institutions to address their own unique and partisan interests" (Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2017, p. 865).

As tensions build up between different principles, practices, or orientations, they gradually build momentum – eventually 'gain[ing] sufficient power to confront and engage the status quo" (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995, p. 517). In many occasions, this confrontation can be interpreted quite literally, with dominant actors finding their orientations opposed by the points-of-view of parties progressively emerging (Panayiotou et al., 2019; Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). While such tipping points can at times materialize on account of external triggers, authors of the dialectical perspective emphasize the prime cause of such change to lie within the organization itself. To quote Ford and Ford (1994): "Although external forces, such as changes in the environment, may appear to cause the change, it is the interplay of internal contradictions that brings about the change. In the absence of these internal contradictions, the same external forces would have no consequence. This interplay explains why some organizations respond to environmental shifts and others don't; it also explains why there are differences in observed responses" (p.763). However, as change shifts the organization towards new directions, it inevitably set the stage for new tensions to gradually arise – thus making change "cyclical and recurrent; with time, the synthesis becomes the thesis for a new cycle of innovation and change" (Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2017, p. 865).

From the outset of the dialectical perspective, change is thus inherently spurred on by the disagreements occurring between actors, rather than by the capacities or knowledge these actors hold in themselves. In this sense, organizations are believed to best not shy away from elements promoting internal differences, but to promote such elements instead. "Pluralism in ideas, among people, within organizations, and across industries is a crucial driver of change" (Eisenhardt, 2000,

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p. 703). To stimulate such pluralism, the organization is called to foster diversity (Costanzo & Di Domenico, 2015), communication (Ford & Ford, 1995), and the openness for members to question the organization's current state-of-play (Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). "Although actors can become reflective at any time, the likelihood of a shift in collective consciousness that can transform actors from passive participants in the reproduction of existing social patterns into mobilized change agents increases when actors continually and collectively experience tensions arising from contradictions in a given socio-historical context" (Seo & Creed, 2002, p. 230).

For adherents of the dialectical perspective, change thus has little to do with a pronounced desire to organizationally improve, but rather accords to the natural political development as inherent in any sociality (Benson, 1977; Mitchell et al., 2014; R. Thomas et al., 2011). As the experience and eventual manifestation of frictions make the organization perpetually move from one socio-political position to another, change is argued as serving no higher purpose than the natural revitalization of standing organizational logics – breaking the organization loose from the web of rules, values and ideas that constitute its particular socio-political hierarchy, and installing a new - yet again confrontable - logic instead (Jay, 2013).

Inertia perspective. In contrast, according to the inertia perspective, the resistance that change fuels ultimately makes it difficult or undesirable for change to at all occur. Here, reality is largely conceived as fixed and self-enforcing, with knowledge of such reality emanating from the acceptance of one's own limitations for altering the organizational course. Several constructs have over time contributed to this onto-epistemological outset, such as the construct of structural or organizational inertia (Barnett & Pontikes, 2008; Burgelman, 2002; Gilbert, 2005; Hannan & Freeman, 1977, 1984; Kelly & Amburgey, 1991), organizational rigidity (Leonardbarton, 1992; Loderer, Stulz, & Waelchli, 2017; Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981), organizational imprinting (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Simsek, Fox, & Heavey, 2015; Stinchcombe, 1965), path dependence (Gruber, 2010; Sydow, Schreyögg, & Koch, 2009, 2020), or the overarching notion of critical theories on change (Abrahamson, 2004; Sorge & Van Witteloostuijn, 2004, 2007).

According to the inertia perspective, change should be actively questioned in terms of its "necessity, inevitability and goodness" (Spicer & Levay, 2012, p. 279): is change in an organizational context realizable – and if so, should we at all aim to do it? For many authors within this perspective, the answer to such questions is decidedly negative: as organizations are replete with mechanisms and routines that maintain or solidify historically established features or orientations – such as coordination effects, learning effects, investments outlays, and political constraints (Hannan & Freeman, 1977; G. M. Schwarz, 2012; Sydow et al., 2009) – changing

essential features of an organizational not only is eminently difficult, but also involves "an undeniable tendency to produce failure" (Sorge & Van Witteloostuijn, 2004, p. 1212). This does not mean that change is considered entirely impossible or harmful, but rather that it should stay limited to those elements that are not core to the organization – "peripheral features" (Hannan & Freeman, 1984, p. 150) – thus avoiding "to raise questions about organizational identity and disrupt[ing] organizational operations" (Kelly & Amburgey, 1991, p. 595).

From this outset, major changes are marked as typically not developing *within* organizations, but rather as developing *across* the organizational population as a whole (Hannan & Freeman, 1977, 1984). As newly founded organizations do not face the same historic dependencies and frictions that incumbent firms do, they are able to display organizational features that are different from those inherent in firms long-since established (Judge et al., 2015; Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Sydow et al., 2009, 2020). While such differences will not always amount to particular competitive advantages, they at times just might – making incumbent firms struggle to retain organizational relevance, and ultimately, disappear (Kelly & Amburgey, 1991; Koch, 2011; Vergne & Durand, 2011). In this sense, the level of analysis in which change predominantly occurs is considered not to be organizational one, but that of the organizational population – installing change "through the creation of new organizations and organizational forms and the replacement of old ones" (Hannan & Freeman, 1984, p. 150).

While change is thus believed to occur predominantly on a level of analysis that is more macro than the organizational one, adherents of the inertia perspective do acknowledge that change programs are nonetheless regularly undertaken on an organizational level. Such efforts, however, are believed to be largely misguided, incited by the private goals of individuals rather than by the public goals of the organization as a whole (Abrahamson, 2004; Sorge & Van Witteloostuijn, 2004, 2007; Spicer & Levay, 2012). "We need to recognize the interests that often lie behind not only change processes, but also models and theories of organizational change and the broader discourse of change itself. Doing so questions the widespread assumption that change processes are value-free and fulfill the interests of everyone. […] Critiques have pointed out that wave after wave of organizational change processes are largely in the interest of the financial elite who now control many organizations" (Spicer & Levay, 2012, p. 281). In this sense, change is claimed to often serve as window-dressing, suiting the personal needs of involved individuals while having little – or even harmful – impact on the collective (Hannan & Freeman, 1984).

While the inertia perspective thus represents a largely negative view on change in an organizational setting – that is, relating to its impossibility or undesirability – it should be credited for balancing

the voluntaristic appreciations of other perspectives with an angle that is decidedly more deterministic: while change can be wished for, its effectuation is always inherently related to the broader set of organizational features – both internal and external - in which it is bound to take place (Miller & Chen, 1994; Simsek et al., 2015; Thietart, 2016; Tripsas & Gavetti, 2000). "Despite the theoretical preoccupation with change, organizations also contain powerful defensive routines that balance change with stability" (G. M. Schwarz, 2012, p. 550). Important to note is that this balancing of change with stability also validates the notion of resistance to change, revaluing resistance from an inconvenience to a "legitimate expression of those being changed seeking to defend themselves and hold onto hard won rights and resources" (Spicer & Levay, 2012, p. 280). In this way, although the inertia perspective can be rightfully considered as a negative take on change, it hardly represents a trivial view – setting out how organizations can struggle to change, and what the implications of such struggle might very well be (Abrahamson, 2004; Gilbert, 2005; Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Sydow et al., 2009).

1.2 On the use of perspectives on change

Having discussed the core dimensions and perspectives of change as currently predominant in scholarly conversation, I deem it instructive to here spend some words on how such ways of thinking are used in the development of theory. Principally, two kinds of approaches can be opted for (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Huff, 2009; Lewis & Grimes, 1999; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995, 2005).

First, there are scholars that firmly anchor themselves within the intellectual tenets of one particular perspective. Theory on change originating from such *homogenous positioning* is firmly rooted in one specific set of assumptions, and generally comes to further advance the interpretive repertoire on which it is built. The work on appreciative inquiry offers a good example of theory originating from such positioning (Bushe, 2011; J. Reed, 2006; Whitney & Cooperrider, 2011), in this case relating to the deliberate perspective on change. Originally advanced by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987), appreciative inquiry represents an inherently positive take on change management, in which the organization develops by drawing insight from "those organizational features that employees feel are successful" (Stouten et al., 2018, p. 754). In a first stage ('discovery'), organizational members are encouraged to contemplate on what goes well within the firm and how such success is actually achieved. In a second stage ('dream'), employees are asked to imagine how such successes could be rendered even more prominent, with actionable practices on a new ideal being drawn out in stage three ('design'). In a fourth and final stage ('destiny'), practices are wrapped together in encompassing change plans, and execution kicks off.

Having gone through the first section of this chapter, the avid reader will be quick to recognize the core tenets of the deliberate perspective in the theory of appreciative inquiry. Emphasizing change as a phenomenon that can – and should - be cultivated through explicit analysis, structured reasoning, and intentional intervention, Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) grounded their theory in a distinctly logical and intelligible outset on organizational reality. However, in doing so, the authors contributed to the deliberate perspective an approach that offers "considerably more attention to change recipient participation than other models" (Stouten et al., 2018, p. 754), and emphasizes the importance of leveraging positivity for further improvement. In this way, while the theory of appreciative inquiry has decidedly tapped from the deliberate perspective in order to make sense of organizational reality, it has also added to its overall intellectual heritage – pushing the boundaries of the paradigm by offering a richer repertoire for others to tap from.

Second, authors can integrate elements of different perspectives, composing new insights by recombining features of two or more ideal-type outsets. Theories originating from such *heterogeneous positioning* (try to) capitalize on different sets of views, and reconnect standing knowledge on change in innovative ways. A meaningful illustration of theory sprouting from such heterogeneous positioning can be found in the work on organizational ambidexterity (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; March, 1991; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996), or "the organization's capability to both explore and exploit - to compete in mature technologies and markets where efficiency, control, and incremental improvement are prized and to also compete in new technologies and markets where flexibility, autonomy, and experimentation are needed" (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013, p. 324). In one of the earliest conceptualizations on ambidexterity in an organizational context, Tushman and O'Reilly (1996, p. 11) highlight successful organizations as "evolving through relatively long periods of incremental change, punctuated by environmental shifts and revolutionary change" - hereby respectively tapping both from the coincidental and processual understanding of change as implicated in the emergent perspective, as from the more intentional and event-based take on change of the deliberate perspective. Later, this conceptualization of ambidexterity shifted to the very skills the organization would require to match ongoing exploitation with proactive exploration (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008; Turner, Swart, & Maylor, 2013), hence adding the aspirational quality of the formative perspective to the theoretical mix. Finally, as the difficult balance between maintaining efficiency and changing profusely became emphasized as a leading paradox for organizations to live by, several authors infused the conversation on organizational ambidexterity with explicit elements of the dialectical perspective (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009, 2010; Benner & Tushman,

2003; W. K. Smith & Tushman, 2005) – noting the determined embrace of conflict and disagreement as a major feature of the effectively ambidextrous organization.

Although these two approaches to theory-building on change in an organizational setting are quite different, both come with particular benefits and drawbacks (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Huff, 2009; Lewis & Grimes, 1999; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995, 2005). Building theory by drawing on one perspective, for one, offers the advantage of theory that is simple and elegant: as reality is perused from a single angle, conceptualizations are mostly consistent and coherent. While theory in this way can be *complicated* or challenging to comprehend, it commonly is not *complex* – there are limited numbers of factors or circumstances to be taken into account. As a drawback, however, this implicates that change theories developed through homogenous positioning tend to be somewhat far removed from organizational reality as it is: as organizational life has been marked as "multilayered" (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995, p. 526), change theories shunning such complexity have been critiqued as offering a fairly poor blueprint for practitioners to effectively work with (Alvesson & Gabriel, 2013; Kieser et al., 2015; Starbuck, 2004). Theory drawing from multiple perspectives, on the other hand, can alleviate such issue. With the context in which change takes place generally extending over time and space, different perspectives may become more or less relevant according to the specific situation one is relating to. In this sense, when building theory from the outset of multiple perspectives, one can allow conceptualizations to reflect the various facets of organizational life as it moves both temporally and spatially. For example, while top echelons of the organization may be hard at work to intentionally push the organization into a particular new direction – substantiating a more deliberate perspective – lower level employees may simultaneously generate a series of small-scale developments through daily interaction – justifying a more emergent perspective on that same organizational context. Or, while an organization may develop primarily through the exchange and interaction of conflicting ideas in times of plenty – validating a dialectical perspective – that same organization's impediment for change might be completely different in times of hardship – hence favouring a responsive or inertia perspective. In this sense, while the theories resulting from such tapping of different perspectives may lack the simplicity of those developed by drawing on a single paradigm, they are claimed to generally lean closer to the empirical reality they purpose to lay bare (Lewis & Kelemen, 2002) – advancing research "not as a search for *the* truth, but as more of a search for comprehensiveness stemming from different worldviews" (Gioia & Pitre, 1990, p. 587).

1.3 Moving forward with perspectives on change

In this final section, I will discuss how the papers included in the following five chapters will advance the perspectives here discussed. While some chapters will primarily address the theoretical tenets of one particular conversation in the field of change (chapters 2, 3, 5 and 6), others will work to explicitly integrate several such views (chapter 4). In the overview paragraphs that follows, I will as such each time highlight how the chapter in question adds to the perspective it is most prominently related to.

Moving forward with the deliberate perspective. For many years, the deliberate perspective on change has come to emphasize the role of experts in intervening in the strategic course of an organization (D. Anderson, 2010; Burke, 2017; French, 1969). While these experts might a times be found within the organization's boundaries, they can also be explicitly solicited from outside the firm as it is - for example, by hiring strategy or management consultants (Sturdy, Clark, Handley, & Fincham, 2009). These external advisors may provide the organization with the expertise on change it essentially lacks, facilitating the development and implementation of a new organizational course, while also legitimizing the act of doing so (Nikolova & Devinney, 2012).

However, while much has been written on the way external consultants can impact the cognitive processes of developing strategic change in an organization, relatively little has been said about the emotional processes underpinning such interventions. That such affective underpinnings can nevertheless be quite prevailing, speaks from the extent to which strategic guidance forces top managers to closely interact with outside individuals for addressing key concerns. From this outset, **Chapter 2** addresses the following research question: *How do managers' emotions unfold in a strategy process directed by a strategy consulting firm; and what are the drivers of shifts in emotions during such trajectory?*

Building on a variety of qualitative data as gathered during a one-year consulting case (e.g., emails, reports, observational notes, audio recordings of speeches and meetings, in-depth interviews, etc.), this chapter reveals the mechanisms underpinning managers' emotions in guided strategy-making from pre- to post-strategizing, highlighting specific processes as they develop over time. In doing so, three elementary emotional drivers are laid bare: (i) interaction - or how practitioners engage with each other during guided strategy-making, both within groups and between groups; (ii) temporality - or how practitioners engage with time throughout the strategy-making trajectory; and (iii) impression - or how practitioners engage with mental representations of strategy-making and strategy consultancy. By elucidating how emotions progressively materialize when managers

solicit strategic advice, this chapter adds to our understanding of how a guided strategy-making trajectory can be affectively managed – to gain insight into the ways that emotions unfold when strategy consultants come to be involved, and to help appropriately address such emotions as they do.

Moving forward with the emergent perspective. Next, the emergent perspective has long-since emphasized the importance of context and sociality for organizations to change (Livne-Tarandach & Bartunek, 2009; Pettigrew, 1985, 1987; Plowman et al., 2007): whether by levels of analysis more macro or more micro than the organizational one, change has been noted to decidedly relate to the social context in which it is to take place. While such relations can be top-down (i.e., emanating from levels of analysis that are more macro than the organization) or bottom-up (i.e., emanating from levels of analysis that are more micro than the organization), they have been called to both firmly impact the changes put forward by the embedded organization (Child & Smith, 1987; Stacey, 1995) – with actors "making choices interactively, in inescapably local conditions, by drawing on broader rules and resources" (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002, p. 577).

However, while the presence of such contextual antecedents to change have been well established, little research has so far been conducted on the dynamics by which these influences are interrelated. That such dynamic approach to multilevel inquiry on change is nevertheless particularly relevant, speaks from the multitude of calls emitted on its behalf over the years (Cronin & Vancouver, 2019; Kozlowski, as found in Eckardt et al., 2019; Hitt, Beamish, Jackson, & Mathieu, 2007; Chan, as found in Hoffman, 2019; S. E. Humphrey & LeBreton, 2019; Kozlowski, Chao, Grand, Braun, & Kuljanin, 2016; Rousseau, 2000). Building on this, **Chapter 3** addresses the following research question: *How does a multilevel social system influence organizational strategy over time?*

Drawing on a variety of qualitative data as gathered throughout a longitudinal observation of the diamond trading industry (e.g., interviews, archival data, observational notes, audio recordings of panel discussions and presentations, etc.), this chapter lays bare multilevel influences on organizational strategy as developing in four main phases: symbiosis, lock-in, knock-on, and disconnect. Marking each phase of multilevel influence as essentially setting the conditions for the next, we showcase how organizational strategy finds itself continuously paced by the ongoing interactions between the macro and micro context in which the organization finds itself embedded. Doing so, this chapter contributes to the emergent perspective on change by interweaving extant insights on multilevel influences through temporality.

Moving forward with the formative and responsive perspective. As the current chapter has shown, significant advances have been made in the formative and responsive perspective on change. While the former view emphasizes change as a capacity that needs to be pre-emptively developed (Doz & Kosonen, 2008; Teece et al., 2000; Volberda, 1996), the latter view presses on organizations' potential to change in reaction to adversity already manifesting (DesJardine et al., 2019; Linnenluecke, 2017; Williams et al., 2017).

However, although scholarly advances on both views have developed significantly in isolation, there has been little work on the potential cross-fertilization of these related angles in theory. Not only has such detached consideration of related conceptions been argued to hinder the further advancements of scholarly theory, it has also been marked as having detrimental effects on the practicability of claims advanced (Alvesson, Gabriel, & Paulsen, 2017; Astley & Van de Ven, 1983; Ghoshal, 2005; Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Rousseau, Manning, & Denyer, 2008). Against this background, **Chapter 4** addresses the following research question: *May formative change capabilities be drawn on for the betterment of responsive capabilities - and vice-versa?*

Laying bare both contrast and interdependence, the essay as taken up in this chapter rebuts the segregation as currently maintained between organizations' formative and responsive capabilities for change, instead making the case for both as being dualistically interrelated – 'contradictory, but also mutually enabling' (Farjoun, 2010, p. 202). Marking formative and responsive capabilities as conversely empowering a shared paradigm while holding their own, this essay highlights the relevance of integrating disparate streams of thinking on change, allowing for the creation of more meaningful insight throughout (Alvesson et al., 2017; Astley & Van de Ven, 1983) – to tap from 'complementarity despite disparity' (Gioia & Pitre, 1990, p. 572), and bolster the conversation's inclusive diversity for increased impact on scholarly, as well as managerial practice (Ghoshal, 2005; Rousseau et al., 2008).

Moving forward with the dialectical perspective. In change, the rate of failure has long been noted as disproportionately high (Mellahi & Wilkinson, 2004; Palmer, Dunford, & Akin, 2016). Given this reality, scholars have come to increasingly focus on failure as a research subject - focusing on the causes behind change failure (Sheppard & Chowdhury, 2005), the implications of change failure (Anheier, 1999; Wilkinson & Mellahi, 2005), or strategies to develop from failure (Edmondson, 2011).

Yet, this surge in research interest in change failure notwithstanding, it should be noted that most studies on the topic have developed from a static, cross-sectional outset (Heracleous & Werres,

2016). Time-sensitive perspective, on the other hand, have been developed far less intensively (Anheier, 1999; Dahlin, Chuang, & Roulet, 2018). Against this backdrop, **Chapter 5** will address the following research question: *How does failure emerge and develop during organizational change?*

Based on an in-depth case study in the container handling industry, this chapter contributes to the literature on failure in change by advancing a dialectical perspective, offering the scholarly community insight in the emergence and development of failure as happening in three processes. In a retentive process, lack of deviation from a change approach causes organizational tensions to build. In a reactive process, tensions flare up and incite a change approach antithetical to the one initially adhered to. Finally, in a recursive process, synthesis is induced through the positively framed recollections of failure by the organization's members. Marking failure to animate a continuous interweaving of both success and further failure in change, this chapter notes failure's emergence and development to be as generative as it is deteriorating, hereby adding dynamic nuance to the dialectical perspective on change.

Moving forward with the inertia perspective. Finally, when organizations mean to change strategically – or alter what the organization intends to do - an important core feature to retain alignment with is the organization's identity – or who the organization believes itself to be. Such alignment can be safeguarded by avoiding strategic changes that would confront the original organizational identity; or it can be mended, by engaging in active organizational identity work.

However, while studies have increasingly looked into the strategy-identity nexus in change, there has been little work on the use of discourse in such matter – such as speeches, newsletters, strategic plans, etc. Yet, with both strategy and identity having been increasingly claimed as constituted through narrative, a discursive approach seems particularly relevant to address situations of deadlock – that is, when the two might potentially be seen as at odds with one another, with possible consequences for the acceptability of change initiatives among stakeholders. Building on this, **Chapter 6** will come to address the following research question: *How do organizations discursively relate strategy and identity in moments of change?*

To address this question, this chapter draws on textual data from the Desjardins Group, a financial services cooperative founded in Quebec, Canada in 1900. Tapping into an organizational magazine database that spans a period of 80 years, our findings delineate five tactics by which organizational leaders discursively connect strategy and identity during moments of change: denying dissonance, acknowledging dissonance, framing, rationalizing, and reconciling. By examining the evolution

over time for a series of six critical change events, we highlight the complementarity of discursive tactics in sustaining linkages between new strategic initiatives and a deeply held identity. Doing so, this paper nuances the inertia perspective on change by illustrating how discourse can be a powerful means for relating strategy and identity during change - enabling an organization to project itself into the future, while maintaining links to the past.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter has laid out the theoretical background against which the remainder of this dissertation will feature. Marking six different onto-epistemological perspectives in the organizational conversation on change – i.e., the deliberate perspective, the emergent perspective, the formative perspective, the responsive perspective, the dialectical perspective, and the inertia perspective – this chapter highlights the scholarly angles in the literature as being both rich and diverse. While insightful theory can be – and has been - established by drawing on the tenets of any single perspective, this chapter has argued that useful theory can also originate from the shrewd integration of multiple perspectives at once. In the chapters that follow, this dissertation will consecutively address a prominent gap as noted in the scholarly conversation of each theoretical perspective identified – hence illustrating the field of change as offering much to draw on, while still displaying many future research tracks that remain untouched.

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Chapter 2.

On the emotional dynamics of guided strategizing: An affective view on strategy-making directed by strategy consultants[2]

Abstract

While work on affect in strategy-making has been increasingly developing, relatively little research has been conducted on the emotional dynamics of strategy processes directed by strategy consultants. Drawing on a variety of qualitative data gathered during a one-year consulting case, this chapter looks into the way emotions unfold when managers solicit external strategic advice. Specifically, this chapter reveals the mechanisms underpinning managers' emotions in guided strategy-making from pre- to post-strategizing, highlighting processes as they develop over time. Doing so, three fundamental emotional drivers are laid bare: interaction - or how practitioners engage with each other; temporality - or how practitioners engage with time; and impression - or how practitioners engage with mental representations of strategy-making and strategy consultancy. By revealing how emotions become manifest when managers find themselves strategically directed, this chapter offers insight into how a guided strategy-making trajectory can be affectively managed – to make sense of emotions when they unfold, and to address them appropriately as they do.

Key words

Emotions, Emotional mechanisms/drivers, Strategy practice or process, Strategy consulting, Change and development

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[2] This chapter is based on a prior version as published in Strategic Organization: De Keyser B, Guiette A, Vandenbempt K. (2021). On the Emotional Dynamics of Guided Strategizing: An Affective View on Strategy-Making directed by Strategy Consultants. *Strategic Organization*. doi:10.1177/14761270211032212

2.1 Introduction

In the recent conversation on the practicing or making of strategy, emotions have been gaining prominence (Burgelman et al., 2018; Elfenbein, 2007; Huy, 2012; Huy & Zott, 2019): contrary to the primarily rational take on strategy as developed in the early strategic management literature, nascent work on strategy practices or processes has increasingly repositioned strategy-making as an activity that is inherently affective in nature (Kouamé & Liu, 2020; Vuori & Huy, 2020). For some, the role of emotions in strategy-making chiefly concerns the way feeling states can affect the individual behaviour and cognition of practitioners (Balogun, Bartunek, & Do, 2015; Huy, 2011; Vuori & Huy, 2016); for others, emotions are primarily enacted in the way practitioners converse about or express themselves on strategy (Liu & Maitlis, 2014; Netz, Svensson, & Brundin, 2020). Irrespective of such inclination, it can be noted that emotions have been progressively drawn into the strategic sphere – having evolved from a topic "treated at the periphery of the strategic management literature" (Huy, 2012, p. 240) to one that is increasingly incorporated at its core (Vuori & Huy, 2020).

However, while recent research has come to deliver compelling insights in the affective grounds underlying organizations' strategy practitioners, relatively little consideration has so far been given to the unfolding of emotions when such practitioners find themselves extended by a set of externally hired professionals, such as strategy consultants. This omission seems critical for two reasons. First, with studies having marked consultants as being increasingly called on in the making of strategy (Armbrüster & Glückler, 2007; Cerruti, Tavoletti, & Grieco, 2019; Sturdy, 2011), a strict focus on practitioners dealing with strategy internally seems to be bypassing the strategy-making reality that many organizations nowadays face. Second, as the involvement of outside advisors has been shown to potentially have powerful effects on the emotional experiences of client members (Cerruti et al., 2019; Fincham, 1999; Nikolova & Devinney, 2012; Sturdy et al., 2009), work on emotion in strategy processes/practices seems to be at risk of skipping out on a contextual factor that may prove to be highly significant to the establishment of both its theoretical and managerial core. Building on this, we advance the following research question: *How do managers' emotions unfold in strategy processes directed by strategy consultants; and what are the drivers of shifts in emotions during such trajectories?*

To address this question, this paper draws on the case of an international IT integrator, which was assisted in a major strategy-making exercise by one of the globe's most renowned strategy consulting firms. Building on a variety of qualitative data as gathered during a one-year time frame

(e.g., emails, reports, observational notes, audio recordings of speeches and meetings, in-depth interviews, etc.), this chapter reveals the mechanisms underpinning managers' emotions in guided strategy-making from pre- to post-strategizing, highlighting specific processes as they develop over time. In doing so, three elementary emotional drivers are laid bare: (i) interaction - or how practitioners engage with each other during guided strategy-making, both within groups and between groups; (ii) temporality - or how practitioners engage with time throughout the strategy-making trajectory; and (iii) impression - or how practitioners engage with mental representations of strategy-making and strategy consultancy. By elucidating how emotions materialize when managers solicit strategic advice, this chapter contributes a critical – yet often overlooked - contextual element to the literature on affect in strategy practices or processes: that is, how the involvement of strategy consultants can impact the emotional trajectory and rendered strategy outcome of those organizational members practicing strategy – and how such impact can be potentially managed in consequence.

In what follows, we start by looking into extant work on emotions in strategy practices/processes, zooming in on how the soliciting of strategy consultants might matter in terms of affect. After describing our methodology, we set out the findings of our study by elaborating on the mechanisms underlying emotionality in guided strategy-making from pre- to post-strategizing. We conclude by discussing the theoretical implications of emotional dynamics as observed, and by offering tracks for further research.

2.2 Theoretical background

2.2.1 On emotions in strategy practices/processes

Ever since the mid '90s, emotions have been increasingly integrated in organizational studies (Ashkanasy et al., 2017; Zietsma and Toubiana, 2018), with researchers having focused particularly on the stimuli leading up to emotional responses (Kelly and Barsade, 2001; Brief and Weiss, 2002; Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004; Gaddis et al., 2004), registration mechanisms giving meaning to stimuli (Ellsworth and Scherer, 2003; Wrzesniewski et al., 2003; Scherer and Ceschi, 2000), the experience and expression of emotions (Basch and Fisher, 2000; Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995; Morris and Keltner, 2000; Conroy et al., 2017), the way emotion are regulated (Gross, 2013; Humphrey et al., 2015; Lian et al., 2017), and the attitudes, behaviour and cognitions that are caused by certain emotions (Forgas and George, 2001; Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996; Boudens, 2005; Cropanzano et al., 2017). While researchers have proposed a variety of interpretations for what exactly constitutes an emotion, the most widely held definition is that

emotions are "adaptive responses to the demands of the environment [...] typically referring to discrete and intense but short-lived experiences" (Elfenbein, 2007: 317) – this in contrast to moods, which are "longer and more diffuse, and lack awareness of the eliciting stimulus" (p.317). Affect, for its part, is often used as an umbrella term, encompassing both mood and emotion (Forgas, 1995).

Although much of the earlier research on affect in organizations seems to have been focused on emotions in normal working situations (Ashkanasy, 2003; Bono, Foldes, Vinson, & Muros, 2007; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987), recent interest in the field has been progressively drawn to those events that specifically impact an organization's core goals or objectives. Of particular significance, to this end, has been the work on emotions in strategy practices or processes. To quote Huy (2012, p. 241): "Research on emotion has shown that people experience emotion when they appraise events (real or imagined) as potentially impacting (positively or negatively) their important goals or well-being; how people appraise the potential (or real) impact of these events, and how they would cope with these events, generate a variety of emotions, which in turn influence how people think and act. As a result, many strategic contexts in which emotions likely arise, especially when experienced by large groups of people or by a few influential members such as top executives, can have important consequences for the firm's actions and outcomes."

Building on such noted relevance of approaching strategy from an affective angle, a number of authors have come to gradually unpack the critical role emotions may have within a strategy context. For some, this role is primarily related to the way affective experiences actively influence the behaviour of engaged strategy practitioners. Huy (2011), for example, highlighted how emotions may prompt middle managers to either support or dismiss strategic initiatives as laid down by the organization's top executives – even when such strategic initiatives prove harmless to managers' own personal interests. Vuori and Huy (2016), for their part, indicated how ongoing experiences of negative emotions (such as fear) can hinder the rational integration of attention amongst strategy practitioners, hereby undermining the innovativeness of strategic decisions and ultimately resulting in myopia for the organization as a whole. In a similar vein, Balogun et al. (2015) showed how emotions as experienced during strategy-making can drastically alter the narratives for change that managers eventually operate towards employees, leading to significant differences in the ways in which developed strategies are eventually made sense of.

For others, the role of emotions in strategy-making is less related to individual experiences than it is to the way in which practitioners actively express such experiences in interpersonal communication. For example, drawing on the analysis of strategic conversations as conducted

within seven different top management teams, Liu and Maitlis (2014) uncovered how the display of different emotions in strategic dialogue can effectively shape managers' approach to the making of strategy. Whether one expresses positive or negative feelings in strategy-making does not simply impact the overall ambience amongst practitioners – it can also significantly alter the strategy that these practitioners eventually form. Related to such insight, Netz et al. (2020) highlighted how affective reactions can guide strategic decision-making in moments of crisis or time pressure, with emotional expressions generally prompting the exchange of crucial information between middle management teams and corporate levels.

Yet, while such nascent work has started to lay bare how emotions can underpin the efforts of an organization's strategy practitioners, it is remarkable how little is known about the unfolding of emotions when practitioners find themselves extended by a set of externally hired professionals, such as strategy consultants. Nevertheless, due to the growth and prominence of the consulting industry, strategy consultants play important roles in strategy processes across a large number of organizations (Cerruti et al., 2019; Sturdy, 2011). Furthermore, as strategy consultants interfere as 'outsiders' in the pinpointing of key organizational goals by managers (Mohe & Seidl, 2011), they add a contextual element to strategy-making that makes the generation of emotions especially likely (Ashkanasy, Humphrey, & Huy, 2017; Elfenbein, 2007; Zietsma, Toubiana, Voronov, & Roberts, 2019). We argue, therefore, that while work on emotions in strategy-making has been aptly developing in a setting of practitioners practicing strategy 'on their own', it has largely overlooked the important emotional consequences that can be expected when such practitioners finds themselves facilitated by strategy consultants.

2.2.2 On the emotional impact of (strategy) consultants

Although there is little direct research on emotional dynamics in strategy processes that are directed by external parties, the work that has been done in the general consulting literature does offer some important indications of emotions due to external involvement (Mosonyi, Empson, & Gond, 2020). For instance, focusing on the relationships as developing between clients and consultants throughout a consulting trajectory, several authors have marked client-consultant interactions as potentially engendering significant emotional responses (Fincham, 1999; Nikolova & Devinney, 2012; Pozzebon & Pinsonneault, 2012; Sturdy et al., 2009). A consistent theme in this kind of research is that consultants spark emotions amongst clients by interacting with them in a different way than what these tend to consider normal – hence relating to client practitioners in the capacity of 'outsiders' (Sturdy et al., 2009, p. 458). While such 'outsider' interactions can generate positive emotions when considered stimulating or enriching, they can also engender

negative emotions when considered overly foreign from the organization's typical way of working (Ben-Gal & Tzafrir, 2011; Mohe & Seidl, 2011). Specifically, Lambrechts, Grieten, Bouwen, and Corthouts (2009) highlight in this respect the 'emotional demands' that client-consultant interactions generally impose on a decision-making trajectory; with Nikolova, Möllering, and Reihlen (2015) even showing how the outcome of a consulting trajectory can be largely contingent on the emotional connections as constituted in client-consultant interaction.

Another line of research that provides some suggestion of emotionality in processes directed by external advisors is the work on hype and disillusionment in consulting projects (Fincham & Clark, 2002; Jung & Kieser, 2012; Sorge & Van Witteloostuijn, 2004; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2001). As consultants are required to sell their services in a successful way, they often intentionally resort to the use of swollen rhetoric and popularized management fashions (Abrahamson, 1996; Kitay & Wright, 2007). Yet, while such "commercial reduction of complexity" (Sorge & Van Witteloostuijn, 2004, p. 1207) can advance the consultant's initial success in terms of getting hired (Harvey, Morris, & Müller Santos, 2017), it has been noted to undermine clients' overall satisfaction by provoking emotions of disillusionment and disappointment (Clegg, Kornberger, & Rhodes, 2004; Sturdy, 2009). In this way, by inducing negative emotions through rhetoric, consultants may eventually come to invalidate the services they offer throughout the consulting trajectory as a whole (Jung & Kieser, 2012; Kitay & Wright, 2007).

Together, these studies give a first indication of the importance of emotional experiences within processes that are directed by external consultants. However, because these analyses typically do not focus on the notion of emotions in directed strategy-making per se, they provide only limited insight in the unfolding of such emotions over time. Furthermore, as the large majority of these studies has been developed from the outset of the consulting organization, there has been significant analytical distance to the emotional dynamics as unravelling within the client organization. Finally, because studies typically tend to focus on the emotional impact of a single aspect of consulting involvement (such as the use of rhetoric), our understanding of emotional dynamics as developing during guided strategy-making can be considered fragmented at best. Therefore, against the backdrop of this literature review, we advance the following research question: *How do managers' emotions unfold in strategy processes directed by strategy consultants; and what are the drivers of shifts in emotions during such trajectories?*

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 Research context

This chapter is based on an in-depth case study of an IT organization (pseudonym 'ITCo'), followed over a one year time frame. We explicitly opted for a single case design to allow for an inquiry that would be both sufficiently deep and fine-grained (Yin, 2009): as the organization in question resolved to see its strategy-making effort facilitated by one of the leading strategy consulting firms in business (pseudonym 'ConsultantCo'), we considered the case to provide a rich and representative setting for the research question as formulated. Furthermore, as we had received confirmation of access to the case prior to the strategizing process effectively starting out, we found ourselves confronting the rare opportunity of following the emotional experiences of top managers throughout the entire strategy trajectory. While none of the authors had any prior experience with ITCo, one of the researchers did have extensive experience with ConsultantCo. In data gathering and analysis, we therefore chose to mobilize this author primarily for contextual reference, hereby avoiding potential bias in the processing of empirical material.

Traditionally, ITCo's primary source of revenue came from advising firms on how to implement Enterprise Resource Planning software. Founded shortly after the start of the new millennium, ITCo had rapidly grown to employ over 2000 employees, with an established physical presence in over a dozen countries across the globe. Employees were managed by a group of 42 top managers ('TMT'), who were organized according to a partnership model: senior employees could 'make partner' if they excelled in various criteria, and if they were accepted by standing partners. Partners originated from eight different countries, with the majority having a Western European nationality. Within this top management group, a subgroup of six represented ITCo's core strategy team ('TST'). This subgroup consisted of those top managers the larger group had collectively mandated to lead in addressing ITCo's strategic issues, and consisted of various nationalities and levels of seniority.

By the end of 2018, ITCo's core strategy team started preparing for the organization's fifth 'strategy exercise', i.e., a strategizing effort conducted every five years to revitalize the organization's purpose and directions. To facilitate this exercise, the core strategy team had asked several consulting firms to draft a proposal, after which the full management team would decide who to hire. Eventually, the decision was made to draw on ConsultantCo, one of the world's most highly acclaimed strategy consulting firms. Over a period of six months (January 2019 – June 2019), ConsultantCo assisted ITCo's top managers in developing a new global strategy, with a

revised company mission and six new corporate objectives – commonly referred to by the firm as 'strategic pillars' – as the exercise's prime outcome.

2.3.2 Data collection

Empirical material consists of three main sources of data, gathered during a one year time frame (January 2019 - January 2020). For an overview, we refer to Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Overview of data collection methods used

	1. Observations	2. Interviews	3. Archival data
Why	Coming to terms with the strategy process, and observe emotionality in strategizing.	Understand how ITCo's top managers personally related to their emotional experiences during strategizing.	Triangulate responses as given and check references made.
What	Five sessions, ~ 80 hours: • 2019, January 28 – 29: France Top Management Team Meeting • 2019, January 30 – February 1: France Leadership Conference • 2019, June 17 – 18: The Netherlands Top Management Team Meeting • 2019, October 11: Global Launch of Strategy • 2020, January 22 – 24: France Leadership Conference	35 interviews, 83% of top management: • 14 from Belgium & Luxembourg • 3 from The Netherlands • 2 from United Kingdom • 4 from France • 3 from Brazil • 1 from North America • 2 from China • 3 from Singapore • 3 from International Coordination	Variety of sources: • Internal mailings • Reports, including the report delivered by ConsultantCo • Meeting notes • Slide-decks • Survey outcomes • Chat box conversations • Annual reports • Reflective documents
How	Modes of data gathering: • Audio recording • Video recording • Notes • Pictures	In general: • Each ~ 50' in duration • Video over IP • Recorded and transcribed verbatim • Semi-structured: Interviewer-led and respondent-led	Access to top management's online sharing platform (i.e., Microsoft Teams): • Online • Structured according to temporal moment
Researcher reflexivity	• Researcher with no prior experience with either ITCo and ConsultantCo performing observations • Observation sessions spread in time • Recordings made to avoid subjective selection of data • Informal conversations conducted after sessions to check for context	• Interview guideline checked for context by top management member • Interview guideline fine-tuned for relevance as progressing • Notes made for non-verbal cues • Combination of interviewer-led and respondent-led approach	• All data gathered as available on the sharing platform, avoiding potentially subjective selection • Context of archival data verified through check-up conversations with a top management member

Observational data. To get acquainted with the strategy process as well as witness emotions during strategy-making first-hand, we organized five multiple-day observational sessions, consisting of an approximate 80 hours of observation. During sessions, we observed how ITCo's top management team dealt with the strategy-making at hand, both when facilitated by strategy consultants and when operating solo. Observational sessions were spread in time to allow for picking up on changing emphases: two were conducted at the start of the strategy-making process, one in the middle, one at the official launch of the developed strategy, and one at the start of strategy implementation after consultants had left. To capture the variety of activities and emotions during observational sessions, we made notes, captured audio and/or video recordings, and shot pictures (Huy, 2012; Kouamé & Liu, 2020). In order to avoid observer bias, observations were conducted by a researcher that had no prior experience with either ITCo or ConsultantCo. To frame

observational data in sufficient context, informal conversations were typically conducted with top managers and/or strategy consultants after each observational round. Finally, to keep track of the process in a structured way, we established a logbook of all activities taking place.

Interviews. Next, to understand how ITCo's top managers personally related to their emotional experiences during strategizing, we interviewed 35 out of 42 top managers. Interviews were conducted from September 2019 to January 2020, after strategy consultants had left. Interviews were on average 50 minutes in duration, with the shortest one taking 27 minutes and the longest one spanning 74 minutes. As top managers were located in various offices across the globe, interviews were conducted by means of video conferencing software.

In a first part, we asked interviewees reflective questions in a semi-structured way, with the initial guiding questionnaire being checked for context by a member of the top management team most closely collaborated with. As interviews progressed, we fine-tuned this questionnaire several times to allow for increased accuracy and relevance in response. In a second part, we switched our interviewer-led style to the technique of visual elicitation (Banks & Zeitlyn, 2015; Bell & Davison, 2013), aiming to further stimulate respondents' emotional expression through the provision of visual cues (Kouamé & Liu, 2020). During visual elicitation, we showed respondents a selection of 50 randomly gathered images - ranging from pictures displaying scenes of low arousal and positive valence (e.g., people shaking hands) to images depicting scenes of high arousal and negative valence (e.g., people being yelled at) - and asked respondents to comment on those images they felt best represented their sentiment during the strategizing trajectory. Having made their selection, we asked respondents to arrange their images chronologically, providing them with a canvas of the strategizing trajectory as was commonly communicated. In case images were considered relevant for multiple moments in time, respondents could either use duplicates of images as provided, or arrange images in overarching phases. While we stimulated respondents to clarify their selection and chronological arrangement verbally, we only interfered in case of ambiguity about explanations given.

All interviews were recorded in full. In addition, we made notes throughout each session to pick up on more tacit information such as body language, raising or lowering of voice, remarkable silences in between statements, or particular exclamations or emphases.

Archival data. Finally, to triangulate responses as provided during interviews or check references made, we secured access to the top management team's online sharing platform (i.e., Microsoft Teams). In this way, we were able to look into a wide variety of archival data sources,

including internal mailings, meeting notes, reports, slide-decks, survey outcomes, chat box conversations, etc. To avoid selection bias, we downloaded all archival data as available from the server, digitally classifying it according to the moment in the strategy-making trajectory it most notably related to. To verify the context and background of pieces of archival data that generated ambiguity, we conducted several follow-up conversations with a member of the top management team most closely related to the notion of strategy and strategy-making.

2.3.4 Data analysis

Before starting actual analysis, a preparatory step consisted of systematizing all available data. This included transcribing recorded interviews; uploading data as gathered from observations, interviews, and archival sources in a digital platform that allowed to keep track of codifications and queries (i.e. Nvivo); and anonymizing references to people and places. Throughout our analysis and related theorization, we continuously checked our understanding of events and emotions with a member of ITCo's core strategy team, this to ensure that our abstractions of the case did not drift from the setting as observed.

In analysing the data, we proceeded by means of two steps: (i) identifying top managers' emotional journey in guided strategizing through visual mapping; and (ii) identifying the affective mechanisms behind such emotional journey through qualitative codification. In what follows, we describe these steps in more detail.

In a first analytical step, we set out to gain an initial understanding of the emotional journey top managers had gone through during strategizing with strategy consultants. To this end, we first scanned through all data available, highlighting affective references to time periods or specific events as having occurred throughout the strategizing trajectory. To gain an understanding of emotional experiences that was sufficiently rich, we scoured empirical material for references to emotions that were explicit (such as direct indications of emotions as provided in interviews or archival data), but also drew on our data to list emotions that had featured in a more tacit or implicit way (such as emotional expressions as observed during observation; or emotions as implied in selected images during visual elicitation). These references were jointly listed in an Excel file, in which we marked the data source, the timing and/or event considered, and the specific emotion as noted (e.g., disappointment, anger, pride). Based on Russell (1980)'s commonly used circumplex model of affect, we then catalogued identified emotions according to overarching affective categories (Kouamé & Liu, 2020), labelling each emotion in terms of valence (positive/negative) and level of arousal (high/low). For example, expressions of anger or frustration categorized as

emotions of negative valence and high arousal; while expressions of comfort or serenity categorized as emotions of positive valence and low arousal. Having this list of categorized emotional references at hand, we then visualized top managers' affective experiences on a chronological 'visual map' (see Appendix 1; Langley, 1999, p. 700), with the location of event boxes indicating which category of emotions had been noted most prevalent amongst top managers (Huy, 2012). Certain boxes cross several bands, illustrating the mixed character of particular events. Based on this visualization, we scanned top managers' emotional journey for continuities in experiences within particular periods and for discontinuities at periods' frontiers. This act of 'temporal bracketing' (Langley, 1999, p. 703) resulted in the identification of five major emotional phases of guided strategizing: that is, pre-strategizing; early strategizing; midway strategizing; late strategizing; and post-strategizing.

In a second analytical step, we drilled down on the affective mechanisms behind emotional phases as identified. To organize all empirical material according to phases as demarcated during temporal bracketing, particular attention was paid to cues indicating general chronology (e.g., 'in the beginning', 'halfway through', 'at the end'), relative indications of time (e.g., 'after x', 'before y') and specific events (e.g., 'during our meeting in France', 'stepping out from our session in The Netherlands'). Next, for each phase as identified, we coded all empirical material according to three levels of abstraction (see Appendix 2; Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). In a first level, empirical material was coded descriptively, with researchers zooming in on the activities and experiences as exhibited. In a second level of axial coding, descriptive codes were conglomerated on a higher level of abstraction, depicting the core drivers leading up to emotions as experienced. For example, descriptive codes 'TMT engaging in affective peer-pressuring' and 'TST setting out interpretative schema on strategy-making' were eventually clustered under the axial code 'Interaction focused on collectivization of interpretation'. In a final stage of theoretical coding, all axial codes were skimmed for overall dynamic coherence, eventually constituting the affective mechanisms behind each time period as identified.

2.4 Findings

In this findings section, we will report on the mechanisms underlying managers' emotions as observed over various phases throughout the guided strategy-making trajectory. For an overview, we refer to Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 On the emotional mechanisms of strategy-making directed by strategy consultants

DRIVERS \ PHASES	EMOTIONALITY IN PRE-STRATEGIZING	EMOTIONALITY IN EARLY STRATEGIZING	EMOTIONALITY IN MIDWAY STRATEGIZING	EMOTIONALITY IN LATE STRATEGIZING	EMOTIONALITY IN POST-STRATEGIZING
INTERACTION *Or how practitioners engage with each other*	Interaction… focused on collectivization of interpretation	Interaction… focused on initialization of between-group contact	Interaction… focused on interpersonal reflection	Interaction… focused on strategy outcome rather than process	Interaction… focused on the presentation of success
TEMPORALITY *Or how practitioners engage with time*	Temporal orientation… towards the past	Temporal perception… of time having 'started'	Temporal perception… of time having reached a tipping point	Temporal perception… of time contracting	Temporal orientation… towards the future
IMPRESSION *Or how practitioners engage with mental representations of strategy-making and strategy consulting*	Impression… based on conjectures rather than facts	Impression… confronting reality as it is	Impression… fits and misfits becoming increasingly shared	Impression… tapped to reconstruct strategy-making as experienced	Impression… based on public affirmation rather than personal experience
	EXPECTATION MECHANISM	CONFRONTATION MECHANISM	AGGREGATION MECHANISM	RESTRICTION MECHANISM	RECONSTRUCTION MECHANISM

2.4.1 Emotionality in pre-strategizing

In the pre-strategizing phase, emotions are primarily underpinned by shared impressions rather than reality. As managers exchange stories on former experiences with strategy consulting and draw on the general reputation of consultants as hired, they come to construct an affective framework that is based on conjectures rather than facts. These conjectures then become collectively embedded through interpersonal interactions between the client's different management groups, eventually fuelling strong emotions of either positive or negative anticipation vis-à-vis the strategy-making yet to come. Given the affective tie-in during this phase with events that are anticipated to happen rather than with those that are actually taking place, we refer to this mechanism as *expectation*.

Impression based on conjectures rather than facts. Before the strategizing trajectory kicked off at ITCo, we found many managers to determine how they should be feeling about the strategy-making as upcoming. Often, such anticipatory establishment of feeling rules seemed primarily tied to conjectures rather than facts. For example, as the decision to solicit the services of ConsultantCo had officially been made, many managers started to share their experiences with 'similar' strategy consultants, or referred to ConsultantCo's general reputation as a 'top performer' (TMT 10), a 'consulting star' (TMT 1), or even an 'advice guru' (TMT 14). Particularly indicative of the affective predominance of conjectures during pre-strategizing is the following statement by TMT 7, as expressed during observation: "You should have seen the way some of our managers were drooling over the fact that we had ConsultantCo to guide us - the famous ConsultantCo. That very idea created this kind of ecstatic vibe, I guess, where many already felt certain of what would be laid out to us later on."

Temporal orientation towards the past. In addition to conjectures of strategy consulting and strategy-making being increasingly relied on for affective guidance, we found many managers looking for emotional directions in past experiences. "There was a lot of talk amongst the managers, with many of the more senior guys telling stories about the ways in which consultants had serviced ITCo in the past, or about earlier experiences they had had in different firms. To me, it sounded like many already knew what was going to happen – and how we should be feeling - based on what they had experienced before" (TMT 6, interview). Feeling rules, as such, came to be primarily based on assumption and former experience.

Interaction focused on collectivization of interpretation. As impressions and temporal recollections came to offer emotional guidance to managers, many started to gradually pressure

their peers to affectively interpret the situation in similar ways. Interactions, as such, came to largely collectivize affective interpretations. Particularly indicative, in this regard, is the following quote by TMT 21 as stated in interview: "In those early days, some of us felt that the general atmosphere of unbridled enthusiasm was maybe overdoing it a bit – after all, what did any of us really know about what was going to happen with ConsultantCo? But if you would express yourself in this way, you would be shoved of as a cynic. And it is hard to keep moping on your own, you know." Similar illustrations of interactions collectivizing interpretations could also be noted in the initial framing of the consulting exercise by members of ITCo's core strategy team, both in archival documents and in physical meetings. Coining phrases such as 'grasping the chance to grow up', 'decisions yet to be made being the most crucial ones in the history of ITCo so far', 'exciting times ahead', and 'ConsultantCo being a firm you all undoubtedly know', we found the core strategy team to set out specific affective schema for managers to draw on – stimulating impressions as by then widely developed and shared, and further prompting emotions generated because of them. "'Let's stir things up!' Yeah, that's pretty much how I was stimulated to feel at the time" (TMT 27, visual elicitation exercise, comments on selected image of cookery gear imprinted with said slogan).

2.4.2 Emotionality in early strategizing

In early strategizing, emotions are chiefly underpinned by potential discrepancies between impressions as initially established and client-consultant interactions as they effectively turn out to be. As managers initialize contact with strategy consultants as hired, they come to accrue actual experience with the practices and practitioners they heretofore have only mentally conceived. These experiences are then gradually compared to the impressions as initially constructed, eventually leading to the valence of initial emotions being reversed (in case of large discrepancies) or remaining the same (in case of small discrepancies). Given the role of opposition between impression and interactions for emotions as at this time unfolding, we refer to this mechanism as *confrontation*.

Interaction focused on initialization of between-group contact. Although the behaviour of ITCo's managers during the pre-strategizing phase might have suggested otherwise, it is important to emphasize that only members of the core strategy team had already met up with consultants as solicited. In consequence, as strategy-making at ITCo effectively started out - materializing in frameworks, kick-off sessions, interviews by consultants, explorative discussions, etc. – many managers came to establish their first substantial interactions with the strategy consultants as hired. "To me, it feels special, this session. Why? Because it's the first real engagement I have with the

ConsultantCo consultants" (TMT 17, during observation). What seemed to increase the affective implications of such initial client-consultant interactions even further, was the fact that interactions within the different groups of the client organization had in contrast been toned down significantly - with the core strategy team having "removed itself from the driver seat" (TMT 12) in order to make room for consultants as solicited. An excellent illustration of such toning down of interactions within the client organization can be found in the following recollection of TST 36, as expressed in interview: "At one point during the initial sessions, I noted that things weren't going too smoothly. So, given my personality, I stood up and started to back consultants in their discussion with our managers. But as I started to do so, TST 24 stopped me short: we had paid consultants to facilitate our strategy-making, so we should let them take the lead. And he was right, you know – why else would we pay them [i.e., consultants] all that money? So I went back to my seat, and held my tongue."

Temporal perception of time having 'started'. Often, the affective weight of these initial client-consultant interactions seemed reinforced by the idea of them having "started the clock" (TMT 4). Particularly indicative of the affective implications of such temporal perception is the following set of reflective notes, made by the observing researcher during one of the first observational sessions in France: "As I come to talk with managers, it is striking that all seem to give quite some emotional weight to experiences as established during first contact. The official trajectory start – and the idea that 'time has kicked off' (TMT 8) with it – seems to add to the affective connotation of initial interactions."

Impression confronting reality as it is. As managers established their first actual interactions with consultants as solicited, we found them to gradually compare such interactions with impressions as initially constructed. A particular illustration of the emotional impact of such comparisons can be found in one of the early observational sessions in France. During a break in between sessions, top managers clustered in groups of three to four, engaging in small talk with each other. After a while, one of the managers leaned towards his conversation partners, made a wide, questioning gesture with his arms, and asked in a lowered voice: "Is this it? Is this what this strategy exercise is going to be?" (TMT 35). Other top managers in the group shrugged and nodded, marking themselves disappointed as well - with strategy consultants being denounced as "not amounting to what we had in mind" (TMT 27). For those managers who did not make note of large impression discrepancies, on the other hand, the emotional impact of early strategizing seemed much more limited, as can be found illustrated in the following interview statement by TMT 10: "I felt pretty ok, I guess – as I had been careful not to get too carried away by the initial eagerness of hiring

ConsultantCo, I had kept my expectations somewhat modest. So in my view, ConsultantCo did deliver on my initial impressions – and I felt fine."

2.4.3 Emotionality in midway strategizing

With the guided strategy-making trajectory reaching a temporal midpoint, managers become specifically aware of time being limited. As this causes managers to share reflections on the consulting trajectory, it allows them to associate individual experiences with those of the larger group, eventually driving emotions to become increasingly aroused. Given the role of socialization and shared considerations for emotions as here developing, we refer to this affective mechanism as *aggregation*.

Temporal perception of time having reached a tipping point. Somewhere halfway through ITCo's strategy-making, an important shift seemed notable. As top managers came to realize that they had reached the temporal mid-point of the guided strategizing trajectory, many became explicitly aware of the time constraints imposed on strategy-making. Illustrative of such raised temporal awareness are observational notes made on managers referring to time as "ticking" (TMT 22), "halfway-spent" (TMT 20), or even "slipping between our fingers" (TMT 2). Or, as stated by TMT 21 in interview: "I guess somewhere halfway through we realized that, eventually, this whole strategizing thing would hit a deadline – that time, as a matter of fact, was limited…"

Interaction focused on interpersonal reflection. For most managers, this increased awareness of time incited explicit interpersonal reflections on the way in which the first half of the trajectory had been spent, as well as on the way in which the second half would have to be tackled in consequence. Most illustrative of these interactions at ITCo are a number of archival documents developed on account of several "managerial ventings" (TST 3) to the core strategy team: a 'preliminary consultant evaluation', which built on managers' input to provide strategy consultants with feedback on how they had been taking care of things; a 'priority survey', rendering explicit what managers still expected to see addressed in the remainder of the trajectory; and a 'booster presentation', trying to pinpoint how to stimulate commitment to the strategy-making as a whole. "Sparked by the recognition that half of available time has been spent, many managers seem to have become increasingly vocal, thinking out loud on what they have so far thought or felt on the strategy-making, as well as on the consultants guiding us. It seems that all those things that initially laid dormant now bubble up towards the surface" (TST 36, informal conversation).

Impression fits and misfits becoming increasingly shared. In consequence of such reflective interactions, it became increasingly shared amongst managers how initial impressions had proven

either aligned or misaligned with client-consultant interactions as they effectively proved to be. In result, while managers' emotions had remained relatively muffled during the phase of early strategizing, such emotions now became increasingly manifest and aroused: stirred up by the way in which they had been exposed and shared on a collective level. Particularly illustrative of this affective arousal is the following statement by TMT 2, expressed during interview on negative emotions as experienced: "I initially wondered whether I was the only one who felt the way I did about ConsultantCo's way of approaching things. But when we [i.e. managers] started talking to each other – I guess we were somewhere halfway through - it seemed far from being the case: many of us had actually been feeling disappointed! For me, that was the cue - the cue that whipped up my disappointment into anger and frustration. Before, I had felt let down on my own – but now I felt outright offended, as a group."

2.4.4 Emotionality in late strategizing

In late strategizing, the perceived contracting of available time pushes interactions to centre on strategic outcomes rather than processes. This incites managers to neutralize emotions, allowing the guided strategy-making trajectory to be reconstructed in a way that fits with employees' generally upheld beliefs. Given the noted importance placed on restraining emotions – both positive and negative – during this phase, we refer to the affective mechanism as *restriction*.

Temporal perception of time contracting. As the strategizing trajectory got closer to the point at which strategy consultants would leave and strategy would have to be presented to all organizational employees, we noted managers to become increasingly aware of the trajectory's final deadline – illustrated by managers often engaging in 'countdown references' during observation (e.g., "We only have one more month to go" (TMT 1); "One more month, and it's showtime" (TMT 35)). Time, hence, was considered to be running out.

Interaction focused on outcome rather than process. A particular consequence of such perception of the trajectory nearing an end was that we found managers to increasingly centre their interpersonal interactions on the intended outcomes of strategy-making, rather than on the processes leading up to them. A noteworthy expression of this dynamic was offered by TMT 30 during visual elicitation, commenting on an image of a lightbulb glowing brightly in a row of duds: "In those final stages, we realized that the shortening of available time required us to focus on precisely this - making the lightbulb glow. It no longer mattered how we would find ourselves doing it, but we recognized that that was what ultimately counted: coming up with decent strategy - making the lightbulb glow." In result, we noted managers to increasingly neutralize emotions,

this for the sake of presumed rationality in decision-making. One example of such affective neutralization relates to an observational session in The Netherlands, at which top managers were having their final set of sessions with strategy consultants. During a heated discussion on whether or not ITCo should eventually be moving forward in a particular geographical area, one manager of the core strategy team rose from his seat and called for "more rationality – getting worked up again will get us nowhere" (TST 24). Or, to quote TMT 12, as reflecting on the The Netherlands sessions in interview afterwards: "We had almost run out of time - we needed the strategy to come together. We all sensed that there was no room for emotions flaring up anymore, for us either bickering or yodelling about how consultants went about things: we needed to keep our wits about us, think rationally, and get our act together." While top managers thus still experienced emotional states of high arousal, we found the valence of such states to be largely neutralized.

Impression tapped to reconstruct strategy-making as experienced. An important consequence of such interactions focused on outcomes rather than processes, was that managers would affectively reconstruct their strategy-making according to the impressions they considered upheld in the organization at large. An excellent indication of this can be found in the following comments by TST 18 during visual elicitation, provided on an image of a figure directing others in the making of a large arrow: "In those final stretches, we needed to construct a narrative on strategy and its making – one that would 'fit' with what our employees believed, or even wanted to believe on the matter. If we had at times felt shitty about the way we had been facilitated, so be it; if we had felt overjoyed about those guys [i.e., consultants], so be it; but we could not let that distract us from constructing a way forward in a way that was both convincing and relatable to our employees".

2.4.5 Emotionality in post-strategizing

In post-strategizing – after strategy consultants have left - the future performance of the organization requires managers to promote the strategy irrespective of emotions as experienced during its making. This causes managers to gradually recollect the reconstructed impressions of strategy consulting rather than the interactions they effectively had, leading to positive emotions despite having potentially felt more negative throughout. Given the role of narrative and story on emotions as sustained in post-strategizing, we refer to this mechanism as ***reconstruction***.

Interaction focused on the presentation of success. As ConsultantCo had left and the ITCo managers had to present the outcome of the strategizing trajectory to their employees, we noted interactions within the client organization to become predominantly focused on delivering the appearance of success. Or, as remarked by TMT 13 during visual elicitation, commenting on an

image of an employee enthusiastically mounting stairs towards a radiant trophy: "In the end, we needed to project towards our employees that the strategy-making with ConsultantCo had been a stellar thing, and that the results coming out of it would lead us towards success. In other words, we needed our employees to forget about the stairs – and to focus on the trophy".

Temporal orientation towards the future. This tendency towards success in interpersonal interactions was found to be further reinforced by the temporal orientation that managers in post-strategizing seemed to adhere to: for many, only the future now remained, with past events becoming increasingly disregarded. Particularly indicative of this temporal orientation is the following set of reflective notes, made during interviews that were conducted after the strategy kick-off session had been delivered: "When being asked about strategy-making, many managers now immediately start talking about implementation. It takes some extra questions to get them to focus again on the events and experiences that have led up to the strategy as developed. Their temporal orientation seems to have explicitly moved towards the future, and is drawn away from former events."

Impression based on public affirmation rather than personal experience. An important implication of such orientation towards future success, however, is that we noted many managers at ITCo to face an emotional challenge: that is, to consistently affirm the strategy towards employees in a positive manner, despite having personally experienced its making in a much more coloured way. A particular example of this emotional challenge can be found the following observational notes, made during the strategy's global launch: "The audience seems buzzing with anticipation. As the lights go out and top managers start presenting the strategy, many claim themselves as feeling 'proud', 'honoured', 'satisfied' or 'confident', with strategy consultants being repeatedly mentioned in an appreciative way. […] It is hard to make out the same people who talked about their doubts and scepticisms along the way. […] Public expression and personal experience now seem to be two very different things."

However, as emotions as publicly displayed proved consistently positive, we found them to gradually overwrite managers' own affective experiences – with recollections amongst managers becoming progressively focused on "our accomplishments" (TMT 23) and "the good times we had" (TMT 14). Particularly indicative of such dynamic are the following statements by TST 36, as shared during observation: "Throughout this strategy exercise, I often talked with some of the managers about our previous strategy-making, with another strategy consulting firm. If I really focus on it, I remember us experiencing the same difficulties that we experienced now: the fretting, the discussions, the not knowing where to go... But – and that's the funny thing about it - that is

not what we seem to collectively remember when talking to each other: in shared conversation, it's the story we afterwards constructed that stuck – the story in which everything went smoothly, in which strategy consultants were amazing. It makes things easier to deal with, I guess."

2.5 Discussion

2.5.1 Critical reflections

This chapter sheds light on how managers' emotions unfold in strategy processes that are directed by strategy consultants. By laying bare the core mechanisms at work behind managers' emotional experiences during guided strategy-making, this chapter contributes a critical – yet often overlooked - contextual element to the literature on affect in strategy practices or processes: that is, how the involvement of strategy consultants can impact the emotional trajectory and rendered strategy outcome of those organizational members practicing strategy – and how such impact can be potentially managed in consequence.

In pre-strategizing, emotions are underpinned by impressions rather than actual client-consultant interactions. As managers share recollections of former consulting experiences and tap into the general image of consultants as hired – thus making sense of their situation by drawing on emotional history (Fineman, 1996) and consultants' face (Patriotta & Spedale, 2009) - they constitute a set of feeling rules (Hochschild, 1979) that is based on assumptions rather than facts. As these feeling rules gradually solidify into group norms through ongoing interactions between the client's managerial groups, they eventually come to incite strong positive or negative emotions vis-à-vis the strategy-making yet to come.

Next, as managers start personally interacting with strategy consultants – thus commencing the construction of an actual client-consultant relationship (Nikolova & Devinney, 2012; M. Schwarz & Clark, 2009) - they come to gather real experiences with the practices and practitioners they heretofore have only guessed on. As these experiences are gradually compared to impressions as initially developed, they eventually lead to the valence of initial emotions being reversed - in case of expectancy violation - or remaining the same - in case of expectancy affirmation (Elfenbein, 2007; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005).

With the guided strategy-making trajectory being about halfway through – the 'midpoint' (Gersick, 1988; Holt & Johnsen, 2019; Okhuysen & Waller, 2002) - managers become specifically aware of time constraints, leading them to share tentative experiences and remaining expectations. As these interactions render managers' increasingly aware of the affective interpretations of their

peers, they eventually cause extant emotions to become aroused through socialization and interpersonal expression (Elfenbein, 2007).

In late strategizing, the perceived shortening of available time urges participants to focus on intended outcomes rather than the ways in which such outcomes are effectively achieved. This causes managers to neutralize standing emotions (Blake E Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995), eventually allowing them to 'backtrack' (Elfenbein, 2007) and recompose their strategy-making trajectory in a way that meets with employees' generally upheld beliefs.

Finally, as the future performance of the organization requires employees to support the strategy as developed, managers are expected to consistently promote the strategy irrespective of the emotions they experienced during its making. This emotion regulation (Gross, 2013; R. H. Humphrey, Ashforth, & Diefendorff, 2015; Lian, Yam, Ferris, & Brown, 2017) causes managers to eventually recollect the constructed impressions of strategy consulting rather than the interactions they effectively had, leading to emotions of positive valence despite having potentially felt more negative throughout.

While the affective mechanisms as identified differ in actual dynamics, it can be noted that they all essentially rely on the same emotional drivers. In the remainder of this discussion section, we will theoretically explore the core drivers behind affective mechanisms as noted - thus zooming in on interaction, temporality, and impression.

Interaction as emotional driver. The first element we found to significantly drive emotions during guided strategy-making, was interaction – or the way in which those practicing strategy engaged with others involved in the process. For example, as client managers came to have their first personal encounters with strategy consultants – physically meeting them in interviews, plenary sessions, workshops, etc. – these interactions offered the very grounds on which the emotions of early strategizing proved to be eventually built. Interestingly enough, however, we found the emotional relevance of interactions to not stay limited to those as established between client and consultant (Mohe & Seidl, 2011; Nikolova & Devinney, 2012; Pozzebon & Pinsonneault, 2012; Sturdy et al., 2009), but to also extend to interactions as displayed between the client's different manager groups. Although such within-client interactions rarely seemed constitutional for emotions as experienced, they did prove elementary for the regulation of those emotions already present. For example, as ITCo's managers pushed each other to conform interpretations during pre-strategizing, their very interactions seemed to consolidate many of the emotions as present within the client organization as a whole. Or, as the core strategy team acted as a soundboard for

managers' reflections during midway strategizing, emotions as by then only tacitly present became increasingly explicit through managerial interaction. In this way, while our findings corroborate earlier indications of the emotional relevance of interactions as established between clients and consultants (Fincham, 1999; Mohe & Seidl, 2011; Nikolova & Devinney, 2012; Sturdy et al., 2009), they also extend such indications by highlighting the affective importance of interactions between the client's different management groups. By highlighting how subgroups within the larger client team may affectively lead (or mislead) emotional experiences throughout strategy-making, this chapter explicitly answers emitted calls to conduct research on 'the social emotional interactions among members of the top team and how these influence […] the strategizing process and outcome" (Huy, 2012, p. 242).

Temporality as emotional driver. A second aspect we marked constitutive for the emotional dynamics as herewith observed, was temporality – or the way in which those practicing strategy engaged with time throughout the guided strategy-making trajectory. For example, as the strategizing trajectory was perceived as approaching a closing point – at which strategy consultants were scheduled to leave and strategy would have to be presented to all organizational employees – we found organizational managers to increasingly suppress their emotions for sake of presumed rationality. Two notes of interest are to be made.

First, while authors such as Gersick (1988), Okhuysen and Waller (2002) and Holt and Johnsen (2019) have marked the importance of a temporal midpoint for group dynamics, the findings of this study extend such earlier work by emphasizing the affective grounds on which such midpoint seems inherently based. As the consulting trajectory at ITCo came to be halfway spent, we found managers' increased awareness of 'time being limited' to incite frank reflections on client-consultant interactions as formerly established, as well as on client-consultant interactions as ultimately desired. As such reflections came to associate and arouse affective experiences as heretofore only tacitly present, they eventually stimulated shifts in behaviour for the engaged group as a whole. In this way, although a temporal halfway point does seem to lead to "dramatic changes in team's behaviour patterns" (Gersick, 1988, p. 33), the findings of this study mark such mechanism to be inherently mediated by the emotions underlying it - with a group ultimately not altering its ways on account of time "slipping between [its] fingers" (TMT 2), but due to the emotions underpinning such temporal perception as developed.

Second, while existing work on the notion of time in group dynamics has primarily emphasized the way individuals are aware of time (Blyton, Hassard, Hill, & Starkey, 2017; Holt & Johnsen, 2019), our study extends such emphasis by highlighting the affective importance of the way

engaged individuals orient themselves towards time. For example, as managers primarily oriented themselves to past events during pre-strategizing, subsequent emotions seemed primarily based on former rather than current experiences with strategy consultants. Similarly, as managers started to temporally orient themselves towards the future during post-strategizing, their affective recollection of guided strategy-making seemed to gradually become more aligned with the organization's oncoming needs than with actual experiences. In this way, although this study corroborates former work on the importance of temporal awareness for group dynamics (Blyton et al., 2017; Holt & Johnsen, 2019), it also extends such earlier work by emphasizing the affective relevance of temporal focus (Bluedorn, 2002) or orientation (McGivern et al., 2018): marking the way in which managers orient themselves to either past, present or future to be as important for their emotional development in guided strategy-making as their actual awareness of time at all.

Impression as emotional driver. A third and final driver we marked foundational for the emotional mechanisms as herewith observed, was impression – or the way in which practitioners engage with mental representations of strategy-making and strategy consultancy. For example, as the client was gearing up for getting involved with the consultant organization during pre-strategizing, we found managers' emotions to be largely inspired by mental depictions of what strategy consulting generally entailed. Similarly, after strategy consultants had left, we noted the affective experiences of organizational managers to be widely overwritten by mental representations of strategy consulting as considered expected and necessarily affirmed. In this way, while Balogun et al. (2015) have shown emotions as often being decisive for the organizational narrative as eventually distributed, our findings complement such relationship with one that, surprisingly, goes the other way around: highlighting the narrative reconstruction of strategy-making as also being highly constitutional for the emotions as experienced throughout.

Of particular interest in this matter, however, is that we found such reconstruction of reality to be seldom incited by the intentional actions of the consultant organization - such as the hyping of their own services (Harvey et al., 2017; Sorge & Van Witteloostuijn, 2004; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2001), the use of management fashions (Abrahamson, 1996; Kitay & Wright, 2007), or the adoption of swollen rhetoric in general (Alvesson & Johansson, 2002; Kipping, 2011; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005) - but to be instead primarily driven by actions initiated within the client organization itself. For instance, while ConsultantCo had effectively established its general reputation in the marketplace, it were client managers who explicitly drew on such reputation in pre-strategizing conversation; just as we found it to be client managers who eventually hailed consultants' involvement in the strategy-making as conducted – not because consultants stimulated

them to do so, but because such mental representations were considered more suitable for the success of the strategy as developed.

An important consequence of such mental reconstruction of reality by client members is that – ironically enough – it often seem to be clients themselves who contribute significantly to the affective misgivings as are often reported with regards to consultant involvement (Alvesson & Johansson, 2002; Sorge & Van Witteloostuijn, 2004). Specifically, while we found managers' affective experiences throughout guided strategizing to be varied and intense, we also noted such affective experiences to not be recollected truthfully in shared memory. As managers' function requires them to consistently promote the strategy outcome towards employees, shared recollections of the consulted strategizing trajectory gradually come to be 'overlearned' (Blake E Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Gross, 2013), with managers "filter[ing] experiences to present their own rhetoric of success" (Zbaracki, 1998, p. 602). Yet in doing so, it should be noted that managers ironically sow the seeds for negative experiences to reoccur in future trajectories: for by recollecting their trajectory in an overly favourable way, managers unintentionally set the scene for expectations to again prove misaligned with strategy consulting as it really is. In this way, while earlier work has expounded on the culpability of consultants in the development of overly strung expectations and disillusion (Fincham & Clark, 2002; Jung & Kieser, 2012; Sorge & Van Witteloostuijn, 2004; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2001), this study marks client members to play a role of almost equal importance in such potential disenchantment: with managers who selectively recollect strategy consulting as experienced, yet in doing so, establish the very foundations for potentially disesteemed experiences to re-occur in later trajectories.

2.5.2 Boundary conditions and directions for further research

This chapter draws on the longitudinal study of a single organization, which found itself guided in its strategizing effort by a prominent strategy consulting firm. An interesting feature of the target organization was that top managers were organized according to a partnership model. As partners represent their organization both as managers and shareholders, we recognized the top managers in question to most likely have an intimate connection with the organization and its future directions, thus rendering an inquiry into the emotions behind guided strategizing particularly relevant. However, given such setting, we do consider it valuable to conduct follow-up research in contexts where top managers are either more or less personally related to the organization they preside. An example of the former context would include managers that do not own shares of the organization they work for (e.g., in the public sector) potentially dampening the affective underpinnings of strategizing under external guidance. A valuable example of the latter context

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would include top managers that also represent the founding figures of the venture they engage in, potentially intensifying the affective underpinnings as laid out in this chapter.

Next, as the strategy consultants involved in our case represented one of the most acclaimed firms in the industry, a valid question is whether and how the emotional dynamics of top management strategizing would differ if the external facilitating party had less prestige to tap from: that is, would similar affective mechanisms be underpinning the unfolding of emotions if consultants were less distinguished in terms of reputation? And, if not: might affective mechanisms as sparked by less established consultants perhaps be preferable to those as engendered by their highly respected counterparts?

Finally, although this study is based on the strategy-making trajectory of an organization with offices around the globe, the majority of activities took place in a western context - e.g., with 27 out of 35 interviews being conducted with individuals originating either from the United States or the European Union. An interesting outset for follow-up research, hence, is to ask whether affective underpinnings as observed would uphold in cultures with a significantly different take on emotions and their expression: do emotions unfold in similar ways across different cultures, and are they underpinned by the same emotional drivers? Of particular interest in this regard are those cultures that are generally accredited with an explicitly open (e.g., Brazil) or closed attitude (e.g., China) towards (the expression of) emotions (Hareli, Kafetsios, & Hess, 2015; Scherer, Clark-Polner, & Mortillaro, 2011). How do top managers experience emotions of guided strategizing in such contrasting settings, and to what extent do emotions develop differently?

2.6 Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined how emotions unfold in strategy processes directed by strategy consultants. Specifically, this chapter has revealed the consecutive mechanisms underpinning managers' emotions in guided strategy-making from pre- to post-strategizing, highlighting specific processes as they develop over time. In doing so, three elementary emotional drivers have been identified: interaction, temporality, and impression. Marking how emotions develop when managers find themselves strategically directed, this chapter contributes to our understanding of how strategy processes directed by strategy consultants can be affectively managed – to advance our understanding of how emotions unfold when strategy consultants come to be involved, and to aid in the appropriate addressing of emotions as they do.

Appendix 2.1a Overview of strategizing at ITCo - Description

Date	What	Description
2018, July - August	Management Consultant Beauty Contest	Three major consultancy firms are contacted to emit a proposal, including a working schedule and a price. Each proposal is presented at the offices of the respective consultancy firm.
2018, October	Management Consultant Selection	ITCo's core strategic taskforce selects ConsultantCo to facilitate their strategic exercise.
2018, October 20 – 27	Brazil Top Management Team Meeting	ITCo's core strategic taskforce presents ConsultantCo's proposition to the rest of the top management team, which confirm their approval.
2018, November 22	Kickoff Meeting	The designated ConsultantCo work team hosts a kick-off meeting for ITCo's core strategic taskforce, presenting themselves and their intended work schedule.
2018, December 11	Design Session	The ConsultantCo work team invites ITCo's core strategic taskforce to brainstorm on the themes most eagerly addressed.
2018, December – 2019, January	Top Management Team Interviews	The ConsultantCo work team interviews all members of the ITCo top management team individually, spending on average one hour each. Recordings are not being made. Notes are taken, but are not generally shared afterwards.
2019, January 28 - 29	France Top Management Team Meeting	The ConsultantCo work team hosts ITCo's top management team for plenary sessions, discussions, working groups, meditation exercises, and interview debriefs.
2019, January 30 – February 1	France Leadership Conference	ITCo's top management team and senior management get together for keynotes and workshops on the decided framework of the strategic exercise, and presents ITCo's own organizational turnaround as an example of strategy revision. ConsultantCo hosts a 'world café', in which a physical survey is being conducted and workgroups are being put together to discuss strategic topics.
2019, February 2	Engaged Coalition Set-up	ITCo's core strategic taskforce decides it also wants to gain strategic input from organizational members that do not belong to senior management. To that end, managing directors are called to nominate employees to be part of an 'engaged coalition'. A group of 178 organizational members is being amassed, that will later be asked for input by means of online surveys (i.e., Fluidity).
2019, February 19	Fluidity Survey 1 – On growth opportunities	The 'engaged coalition' is asked for input on potential growth opportunities, this in terms of geography, industry, new IT applications, digital platforms, IP, value chain, and business model.
2019, February – March	Customer surveys and interviews	ConsultantCo surveys 21 of ITCo's customer firms, with members of six firms being interviewed in person. Topics addressed include why the firm has become a customer of ITCo, what ITCo is believed to do, what ITCo could potentially improve on, and what sources of growth are considered relevant for ITCo.
2019, March 8	Fluidity Survey 2 – On purpose	The 'engaged coalition' is asked for input on redefining the organizational purpose.
2019, March 11	Factbook Report Presentation and Workgroup Set-up	Based on top management interviews, customer surveys and its own corporate data base, ConsultantCo delivers a 'factbook' report of 228 slides, of which 104 are presented to the top management team by means of Video over IP software (i.e., Zoom). At the end of the presentation, ITCo's core strategic taskforce introduces the set-up of different working groups, which will be required to each zoom in autonomously on the topics as raised by the factbook – to discuss what needs to be done and develop concrete initiatives.
2019, March	Workgroup meetings (pre-Belgium)	Workgroups meet up on topics outlined by ConsultantCo, coming up with initiatives to suit the general strategic plan – to be discussed in Belgium.
2019, May 13 – 14	Belgium Top Management Team Meeting	ConsultantCo hosts a session in which top management presented the initiatives as put together in different workgroups. After each presentation of initiatives, the entire top management team takes a vote. As outcomes are considered insufficient, a new meeting is scheduled to sharpen propositions made.
2019, May 20	Fluidity Survey 4 – On innovation	The 'engaged coalition' is asked for input on potential sources of innovation.
2019, June	Workgroup Meetings (pre-The Netherlands)	Workgroups meet up at their own initiative, coming up with initiatives to suit the general strategic plan – to be discussed in the Netherlands.
2019, June 10	Fluidity Survey 5 – On storylines about strategy	The 'engaged coalition' is asked for input on the framing of the strategy being outlined.
2019, June 18 – 19	The Netherlands Top Management Team Meeting	ConsultantCo hosts a session in which top management presents the initiatives as put together in different workgroups. After each presentation of initiatives, the entire top management team takes a vote. The input of the 'engaged coalition' is being presented, as gathered throughout five online surveys. The top management team eventually outlines six new strategic objectives (i.e., 'strategic pillars') and reframes the organizational mission.
2019, July – September	Writing of Strategy Narratives	ITCo's core strategic taskforce writes down the narrative that will be broadly communicated for the strategic plan as developed. The overall slogan to head the strategic plan is developed.
2019, October	Design and Organization of Global Launch	ITCo's core strategic taskforce decides on how to most appropriately bring the message of the strategic plan to the organization in general.
2019, October 11	Global Launch of Strategy	The formulated strategy is presented to all organizational employees. Presentations are being held simultaneously around the globe, with managing directors in each country presenting the same centrally devised slide deck.
2020, January 19-20	France Top Management Team Meeting	ITCo's top management team discusses the implementation of the strategy as developed.
2020, January 21-24	France Leadership Conference	ITCo's top management team and senior management get together for keynotes and workshops on the company's future. ConsultantCo is present and delivers a final keynote. The implementation of the strategic plan is featured as main topic.

Appendix 2.1b Overview of strategizing at ITCo - Visual mapping

Positive emotional valence		Neutral emotional valence		Negative emotional valence	
High arousal	Low arousal	High arousal	Low arousal	Low arousal	High arousal

Timeline: Fall 2018 — January 2019 — March 2019 — May 2019 — June 2019 — October 2019 — January 2020

Phases:
- Phase 1: Pre-strategizing
- Phase 2: Early strategizing
- Phase 3: Midway strategizing
- Phase 4: Late strategizing
- Phase 5: Post-strategizing

Nodes:

- Consultant proposal presentation
- Consultant selection
- Consultant presentation and approval
- Kick-off meeting, presenting consultants and schedule
- Design session to pick themes to address
- Consultants conduct interviews with all TM
- Consultants host TMT for reflective sessions in France
- Set-up of 'engaged coalition'
- Consultants host senior managers for reflective sessions in France
- Fluidity survey 1
- Fluidity survey 2
- Consultants conduct customer interviews and surveys
- Factbook report presentation
- Workgroup setup
- Workgroup meetings
- Check-in meeting, to check for progress
- Booster document for commitment
- Fluidity survey 3
- Provisional evaluation consultants
- Provisional evaluation call
- Priority survey, asking TMT for input
- Expert sessions, hosting 11 external experts
- Workgroup meetings
- Consultants host TMT for decisional sessions in Belgium
- Consultants host TMT for decisional sessions in The Netherlands
- Fluidity survey 4
- Fluidity survey 5
- Design and organization of global launch
- Writing of strategy narratives
- Global launch of strategy (experienced)
- Global launch of strategy (displayed)
- ITCo hosts reflective sessions in France for execution

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Appendix 2.2a Extract of coding analysis – Pre-strategizing

Theoretical coding	Axial Coding	Descriptive coding	Empirical material
Expectation mechanism *In which practitioners' emotions are primarily underpinned by collectivized conjectures based on past experiences rather than current reality.*	**Interaction… focused on** collectivization of interpretation	TMT engaging in affective peer-pressuring	"Initially, I felt pretty skeptical about this whole thing [i.e., strategy process directed by consulting firm]. But the other guys [i.e., managers] would not hear about it: the general vibe was one of enthusiasm – and everybody was nudging each other to feel that same way. I would have been the moaning outcast, otherwise." (TMT 16, informal conversation during observation)
		TST setting out interpretative schemata on strategy-making	"Littering texts about the upcoming exercise with terms such as 'expertise' and 'high quality', ITCo's core strategy team seems to confirm managers in their excitement and expectations about what is to come. The mood is cheery, with little attention for bumps down the road." (Observational notes) "We made sure to remember the useful things of our previous strategy exercise. It put everyone in the right state of mind." (TST 3, informal conversation during observation)
	Temporal orientation… towards the past	Time perception being centered around former events	"In that initial stage, more than looking forward to the strategy consulting that was to come, I had the sensation that many of my peers were looking back to similar things they had experienced in the past. It was past, rather than future, that reigned supreme in conversation." (TMT 7, informal conversation during observation)
		Time perception being centered around former knowledge	"Everyone was starting to weigh in with what they knew from former firms – what did one remember about strategy-making and about strategy consultancy, about ConsultantCo, about other firms…. The knowledge and the timeframe which we tapped in that premature stage – which guided our decision-making as well as the way we felt – seemed, ironically enough, to be focused on the past rather than the present." (TMT 27, interview) "I guess we were using this 'old' knowledge – these stories of past experiences, this hearsay on ConsultantCo's prior successes – to get some intel on our own upcoming trajectory, and on the way we should be feeling about that trajectory coming up at all. I don't think many of us were actually looking – really looking – to the future, at that time." (TMT 32, Visual elicitation, Comments on image of captain using a sextant in order to navigate)
	Impression… based on conjectures rather than facts	Assumptions based on storytelling	"Like many in our group, I wasn't a top manager yet during our previous strategy exercise. I have very little experience with these kinds of exercises – apart from hear-say, that is. Yet, the top managers that have participated in earlier years often recollect how great such experiences have been for them in the past. I start to understand that this is something to feel excited about – even proud, for being allowed in." (TMT 32, Informal conversation during observation)
		Assumptions based on consultants' general status	"We were under the impression that ConsultantCo, the big strategy consulting company, would know it all. They would solve all our issues, and good times would be coming." (TMT 23, Interview) "The advantage of having an organization like ConsultantCo is the fact that they have that name on the business card. At the same time, it's a disadvantage - because it puts a lot of expectations on what will be done." (TST 26, Interview)

Appendix 2.2b Extract of coding analysis – Early strategizing

Theoretical coding	Axial Coding	Descriptive coding	Empirical material
Confrontation mechanism *In which practitioners' emotions are primarily underpinned by potential discrepancies between initial conjectures and client-consultant interactions as effectively experienced.*	**Interaction…** focused on initialization of between-group contact	TMT engaging with consultants for the first time	"It's the first time we actually engage with these consultants, of whom we have talked for several months. I have to admit that it takes some getting used to – the fact that *they* are the one directing our strategy, instead of *us*." (TMT 23, informal conversation during observation)
		TST leaving strategy-making to external consultants	"During one of the initial sessions, the pace seemed somewhat off – with managers not engaging with consultants in a constructive way. Trying to put things back on track, TST 36 stood up and started directing the process – only to be called off by the more senior TST 24. 'We have paid the consultants to do that'." (Observational notes, France Top Management Meeting)
	Temporal perception… of time having started	Time perception centered around starting trajectory as formalized	"This is it – it has officially begun." (TMT 10, Informal conversation during observation) "The time is now, the start of our journey. The road may be long, but we are taking the first step: an important one, that is." (TMT 27, Informal conversation during observation)
		Time perception giving emotional weight to initial impressions	"As I come to talk with managers, it is striking that all seem to give quite some emotional weight to impressions as initially established. The official trajectory start – and the idea that 'time has kicked off' (TMT 8) with it – seems to add to the affective connotation of initial experiences." (Observational notes, France Top Management Meeting)
	Impression… confronting reality as it is	Reality on practices being checked against initial assumptions	"Several top managers seem to struggle with the assumptions they had of the strategy exercise, and the way the organization tackles things in reality: many had expected to be dazzled by consultant input, while reality is much more framework-driven – much more mundane. While the process has only just started, there already is significant malcontent." (Observational notes, France Leadership Conference)
		Reality on practitioners being checked against initial assumptions	"In our very first session, it struck me that these people [i.e., consultants] seemed far less knowledgeable about our industry than they were always given credit for. They seemed far less senior than I had expected, too." (TMT 34, Interview) "We were too much in the impression that ConsultantCo was the big strategy consulting company that… [Silent] And at the start, it seemed that they were not." (TMT 23, Visual elicitation, Comments on an image of a tiger reflecting in a mirror as a kitten)

Appendix 2.2c Extract of coding analysis – Midway strategizing

Theoretical coding	Axial Coding	Descriptive coding	Empirical material
Aggregation mechanism *In which the awareness of a temporal midpoint encourages the sharing of tentative reflections, allowing managers to associate individual experiences with those of the larger group and driving emotions to become increasingly aroused.*	**Interaction…** focused on interpersonal reflection	TMT explicitly reflecting on consultants' conduct as well as their own	"Slide deck – Debrief ConsultantCo" (Archival data document, in which the results of a survey to evaluate strategizing progress are being reported by ITCo's strategic core team) "I understand now that we ourselves [i.e., top managers] have had a big hand in the frustrations as experienced throughout this strategy exercise. We were acting, feeling, in certain ways, and that eventually led us here." (TMT 23, Informal conversation during observation)
		TST reflecting on further strategy-making with consultants	"In this feedback session ITCo's core strategy team had with ConsultantCo, we made it very clear what they had delivered, and what we still expected. For one, we wanted external experts to be invited to talk to us. And eventually, they did do that." (TST 36, Informal conversation during observation)
	Temporal perception… of time having reached a tipping point	Time constraints being increasingly recognized	"Confronted with the fact that half of the scheduled time has been spent, feelings of top managers seem increasingly aroused." (Observational notes) "I guess somewhere halfway through we realized that, eventually, this whole strategizing thing would hit a deadline – that time, as a matter of fact, was limited…" (TMT 21, Interview)
		Time management being drawn back to client organization	"Somewhere halfway through, I think, we came to realize that shrugging it off wasn't going to help… So much time had already been spent, and we were still finding ourselves nowhere with the strategy." (TMT 5, Interview)
	Impression… fits and misfits becoming increasingly shared	Alignment between impression and reality being recognized collectively	"We had to learn about how others were experiencing this - we had to converge and align somehow on the assets before we could start thinking about something useful. That process of difference in recognition and convergence, for me, was mandatory." (TMT 15, Interview)
		Misalignment between impression and reality being recognized collectively	"Halfway through, it became clear to me that I wasn't the only one whose mental picture of strategy-making and strategy consultants had given out. Many seemed to share the same experience. It validated what I felt, I guess – and stirred it up a bit, because now it was for the group." (TMT 29) "I got to the point where I realized that there were others whose initial impressions had also fooled them. That prompted my emotions further." (TMT 23)

Appendix 2.2d Extract of coding analysis – Late strategizing

Theoretical coding	Axial Coding	Descriptive coding	Empirical material
Restriction mechanism *In which the perceived contracting of available time pushes interactions to center on strategic outcomes rather than processes, inciting managers to sap extant emotions of valence and narratively reconstruct strategy-making in a way that fits with employees' generally upheld beliefs.*	**Interaction…** focused on strategy outcome rather than process	TMT emphasizing the need for reaching presentable outcomes	"It is remarkable how much emphasis is increasingly put by participating managers on the need for reaching presentable outcomes. All seem to have become increasingly concerned with what they will eventually need to communicate to subordinates." (Observational notes, The Netherlands Top Management Team Meeting) "The process, the process, the process… I think it's time to zip it on the process, as well as our feelings towards it – and to focus on reaching a presentable outcome instead." (TMT 35, informal conversation during observation)
		TST pushing for usual heuristics regarding decision-making	"During those late sessions in Amsterdam, it became increasingly common for senior top manager to step up, and take the lead. In this way, we started to resort again to the way we normally approached any topic. It simply sped things up, and made things less emotionally colored." (TMT 6, Interview) "In Amsterdam, 'the usual suspects' began to increasingly step up. It was time to get things done, to think, and act – we didn't have time to mess around with our feelings anymore." (TMT 12, Interview)
	Temporal perception… of time contracting	Time being increasingly related to a final deadline	"Playtime is over." (TMT 14, Informal conversation during observation) "We only had one month left before consultants would be packing their bags. The deadline for making strategy was coming up…" (TMT 1, Interview)
		Time constraints invalidating sensibility of emotions	"We started to deny we were feeling anything at all, I guess. Rationality and a clear mind, that was what we thought we needed." (TST 26, Visual elicitation exercise, Comments on selected image of head filled with books) "Eventually, we simply didn't have the time to only consider how we felt: we had an obligation, to our employees, to come up with a strategy for success." (TMT 22, Interview)
	Impression… tapped to reconstruct strategy-making as experienced	Neutralization of current strategy-making according to shared assumptions	"I feel fine, just fine. Really. Just fine. We all need to. To make decisions, after all." (TMT 21, Informal conversation during observation) "'Keep calm and organize.' [Stays silent for a while]. That eventually became our implicit moto, I guess. Like, 'shut up, and get things moving'." (TMT 28, Visual elicitation exercise. Comments on selected image of said slogan)
		Revisioning of strategy-making as experienced according to shared assumptions	"We need to build a convincing story about the strategy as well as the process that has led to it. What we have jointly experienced is one thing – what we need our employees to tap from, what they will believe, might be another. (TST 18, Informal conversation during observation) "Everyone knows, or believes to know, that ConsultantCo delivers decent strategy-making. All of us [i.e., managers] did too, initially. So, when developing the story that will be shared with our general employees, that is what we are going to emphasize: that we have enjoyed decent, and thoughtful strategy-making." (TST 18, Informal conversation after interview)

Appendix 2.2e Extract of coding analysis – Post-strategizing

Theoretical coding	Axial Coding	Descriptive coding	Empirical material
Reconstruction mechanism *In which the required backing of strategy as developed causes managers to recollect the reconstructed impressions of strategy consulting rather than the interactions they effectively had, leading to emotions of positive valence despite having potentially felt more negatively inclined.*	**Interaction…** focused on the presentation of success	TMT and TST moderating experiences of strategy-making to prompt the sensation of success	"We can never say that we have no idea how the strategy came about, can we? We are the organization's top managers – it is our job to make strategy, and thus also support that strategy we ourselves have made." (TMT 8, Interview)
			"Of course I will always support the strategy, even if I thought the process difficult. It doesn't matter how I felt about making it - my guys only need me leading the outcome." (TMT 31, Interview)
			"At the launch, I was expressing myself as feeling proud and really great… but I knew the strategizing hadn't always been like that at all. I knew I for one didn't always have an easy time. There had been a lot of tough moments, but I didn't – I couldn't – say that to my guys. My position requires me to back up the strategy made, irrespective of the process leading up to it." (TMT 8, Interview)
		TMT and TST moderating experiences of strategy consultants to prompt the sensation of success	"The ConsultantCo name is dropped occasionally throughout the launch presentation, especially when a major issue is being called out. It seems as if ITCo is utilizing the ConsultantCo name to highlight the outcome of the strategizing exercise as resting upon solid analysis and expertise – not as having emerged from struggle, but as having emerged from certainty." (Observational notes, Global launch)
			"I wish that I had been there, interacting with these ConsultantCo guys. Sounded like that was amazing." (ITCo employee, Informal conversation during observation)
	Temporal orientation… towards the future	Time perception being centered around future events	"What matters now, is how we go forward – the time that is still coming up. The rest is irrelevant." (TMT 5, Interview)
			"This is what matters now, you see? This section right here. The future." (TMT 29, Visual elicitation, Pointing to the final arrowhead of the chronological time-line as presented)
		Time perception being drawn away from former events	"In all, it doesn't really matter how we have done things, how we have or have not quarreled, or how we have worked up to this point. It doesn't. What matters, is the strategy that we have come to develop, and what we are going to do with it in times to come." (TMT 23, Informal conversation during observation)
			"When being asked about strategy-making, many managers now immediately start talking about implementation. It takes some extra questions to get them to focus again on the events and experiences that have led up to the strategy as developed. The perception of time seems to have moved explicitly towards the future, and is drawn away from former events." (Reflective notes, made during interview rounds)
	Impression… based on public affirmation rather than personal experience	Displayed emotions on strategy-making becoming overlearned, overwriting experienced emotions	"In my own words? That would be the six strategic pillars. Pillar one, for starters…" (TMT 9, Interview, Asked to reflect on the strategizing process as experienced)
			"Asked about their experiences in the strategy-making process, many top managers initially start talking in 'learned' terminology (e.g., the six 'strategic pillars' developed). It is only after some prying that they let go of the narrative they are generally required to share, and start talking about their actual experiences." (Reflective notes, made during interview rounds)
		Top managers recalling the narrative of making strategy rather than the actual experience	"You know, during this strategy exercise, I often talked with some of the guys [i.e., top managers] about our previous strategy exercise, with another strategy consulting firm. I remember us experiencing the same difficulties in our strategy-making that we experienced now: the fretting, the discussions, the not knowing where to go… But – and that's the funny thing about it - that is not what we seem to collectively remember when talking to each other: in shared conversation, it's the story we afterwards constructed that stuck – the story in which everything went smoothly, in which strategy consultants were amazing. It makes things easier to deal with, I guess." (TST 36, Informal conversation)

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Chapter 3.

Are diamonds forever? Towards a dynamic understanding of multilevel influences on strategic change [3]

Abstract

While the topic of organizational strategy has been increasingly examined from a multilevel perspective, there has been little work on the dynamics by which micro and macro influences are temporally interrelated: How does a multilevel social system influence organizational strategy over time? Drawing on a longitudinal study of the diamond trading industry, this chapter identifies four phases of multilevel influence: symbiosis, lock-in, knock-on, and disconnect. Highlighting each phase as setting the essential conditions for the next, we illustrate how organizational strategy finds itself continuously determined by the cyclical development of the social system in which it is embedded. By doing so, this chapter contributes to the literature on strategy and strategic change, laying bare the complementary temporality of micro- and macro-level influences. In addition, combining a hierarchical with a temporal approach, this chapter adds to the literature on multilevel inquiry, illustrating how research across levels can be reconciled with research over time.

Keywords

Multilevel inquiry, Organizational strategy, Organizational change, Context, Macro-environment, Micro-environment

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3.1 Introduction

Diamonds are forever… You know the phrase, right? I often found myself wondering if that also holds true for us, the organizations. Our context, our people… They kept us solid in what we did, in what everybody did, for a very long time - but, eventually, they also spurred us to change in ways I could not have imagined… In this way, how we are influenced by all that is 'diamonds' - I think it's forever there, but it's not forever the same. (Expert 9, personal communication, 6 September 2019)

In the field of organizational strategy, multilevel approaches have long been prominent: whether by 'context' or by 'people', organizational strategy has long been marked as prompted by levels other than the organizational one. Originally, inquiries on top-down processes prevailed: in well-known theories such as contingency theory (Burns & Stalker, 1961; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; R. E. Miles, Snow, Meyer, & Coleman, 1978; Miller, 1984; Woodward, 1965), contextualism (Pettigrew, 1985, 1987), (neo-) institutionalism (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996) and market orientation (Hult & Ketchen Jr, 2001), researchers looked into the idea of how social levels that are more 'macro' than the organization can influence its strategy nonetheless. More recently, however, inquiries on bottom-up processes in strategy have become almost equally in vogue: with research having developing on topics such as the strategic impact of top management teams (Amason, 1996; J. B. Thomas & McDaniel Jr, 1990; Wiersema & Bantel, 1992), strategy-as-practice (Burgelman et al., 2018; Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007; Whittington, 2006), micro-foundations in strategy (Felin, Foss, & Ployhart, 2015; Foss & Lindenberg, 2013), managerial cognition (Nadkarni & Barr, 2008), and behavioural strategy (Gavetti, 2012; Levinthal, 2011; Powell, Lovallo, & Fox, 2011), researchers have come to increasingly examine how social levels that are more 'micro' than that of the organization can drive its strategy all the same.

Yet, while the notion of strategy has been extensively related to both top-down and bottom-up influences, there has been little work that looks into the dynamics by which such influences on organizational strategy are temporally interrelated (Schneider, as found in Hoffman, 2019). That such dynamic approach to multilevel inquiry is nevertheless particularly relevant, speaks both from the multitude of calls emitted on its behalf over the years (Cronin & Vancouver, 2019; Kozlowski, as found in Eckardt et al., 2019; Hitt et al., 2007; Chan, as found in Hoffman, 2019; S. E. Humphrey & LeBreton, 2019; Kozlowski et al., 2016; Rousseau, 2000), as well as from the empirical extract provided at the start of this introduction: in effect, are multilevel influences on organizational strategy as 'forever' as they are often implicitly assumed? Or, as a research question: *How does a multilevel social system influence organizational strategy over time?*

To address this question, this chapter draws on a longitudinal study of the diamond trading industry. Tapping from a variety of qualitative data as gathered over a ten year time frame (e.g., interviews, archival data, observational notes, audio recordings of panel discussions and presentations, etc.), this chapter lays bare multilevel influences on organizational strategy as developing in four main phases: symbiosis, lock-in, knock-on, and disconnect. Marking each phase of multilevel influence as essentially setting the conditions for the next, we showcase how organizational strategy finds itself continuously paced by the ongoing interactions between the macro and micro context in which the organization finds itself embedded.

Doing so, this article contributes to the literature in four ways. First, this article showcase how macro- and micro-level influences on strategy are decidedly interconnected through temporality, and can be understood as largely oscillatory – with the prominence of either form of influence often setting the very conditions for the other to remerge over time. Second, we illustrate how researchers looking across levels can further extend the validity of their theories by concurrently bringing in a temporal dimension. Third, by illustrating the weight of top-down and bottom-up influences on organizational strategy to vary temporarily, this paper offers an important argument for increased interaction between two relatively separate fields of literature. Finally, by laying bare the different phases of multilevel influence on organizational strategy, this article helps managers to identify and prepare for the strategic nudges their organization will presumably come to incorporate from its micro- and macro-level contexts.

In what follows, we first review the literature on organizational strategy from the outset of multilevel inquiry. After setting out methodology, we elaborate on the key findings of our study, zooming in on four phases of multilevel influence as identified. We conclude by discussing our findings' main implications and by offering tracks for further research.

3.2 Theoretical background: Strategy from a multilevel outset

When talking strategy, one generally relates to a consistent set of activities an organization proposes to undertake in order to position itself advantageously in its environment (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985; M. E. Porter, 1991). Strategy concerns a sense of direction as well as an understanding – however limited or sub-optimal - of how that direction will be pursued (Faulkner & Campbell, 2006): it concerns "what organizations do or intend to do to achieve superior performance" (Ravasi et al., 2020, p. 5).

From a multilevel outset, the organization defining such strategy should not be understood as operating in isolation, but should be looked at as in continuous relation with other system levels

(S. E. Humphrey & LeBreton, 2019; Molloy, Ployhart, & Wright, 2011). Residing in "nested arrangements" (Hitt et al., 2007, p. 1387), the strategizing organization should be comprehended as made up of levels below the organizational level – or levels that are more 'micro' than the organization, such as employees or departments - and as being embedded in levels above the organizational level – or levels that are more 'macro' than the organization, such as industries or environments (Klein, Tosi, & Cannella, 1999; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Molina-Azorín, Pereira-Moliner, López-Gamero, Pertusa-Ortega, & Tarí, 2019). While such hierarchy of micro and macro levels can generally be made, note that the presence of specific levels differs across organizations or contexts (Gully & Phillips, 2019). In addition, when relating to a level as being either 'micro' or 'macro', note that one always implicitly relates to the phenomenon of interest: while teams will be considered 'macro' when looking into individual phenomena, note that those very teams will be considered 'micro' when looking into organizational phenomena (Rousseau, 1985).

Overall, the literature distinguishes between two types of processes taking place across levels within the social system: top-down processes – describing how higher-level elements influence and shape lower-level phenomena – and bottom-up processes – describing how lower-level units jointly interact to eventually engender higher-level phenomena (Kozlowski, Chao, Grand, Braun, & Kuljanin, 2013; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Lang & Bliese, 2019; Ostroff, 2019; Rousseau, 2011). In the conversation on organizational strategy, both angles of multilevel influence have been relatively well addressed. In what follows, we will provide a brief overview of strategy work that operates a top-down perspective, and work that operates a bottom-up perspective.

Organizational strategy from a top-down perspective. When referring to organizational strategy from a top-down perspective, one relates to theories in which strategy is considered as shaped and constrained by levels beyond the organizational level, such as industry or environment (Powell, 1992). Many of the more 'classical' theories on strategy or strategic management effectively accord to this perspective (Misangyi, Elms, Greckhamer, & Lepine, 2006, p. 572), with prominent examples including contingency theory (Burns & Stalker, 1961; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; R. E. Miles et al., 1978; Miller, 1984; Woodward, 1965), contextualism (Pettigrew, 1985, 1987), (neo-) institutionalism (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996) and market orientation (Hult & Ketchen Jr, 2001). While these theories differ in the nuances and highlights they make, a central feature in all of them is that the firm is considered an entity whose strategic behaviour is molded by the structural factors of the higher-level context in which it effectively competes – strategy, as such, is linked to the setting in which the organization resides (Misangyi et al., 2006). Lounsbury (2007), for example, illustrated how the strategies of mutual funds located in Boston and New

York typically differed according to the organizational context these cities provided: while the trustee logic as present in Boston drove mutual funds to focus on conservative, long-term investing, the more aggressive logic as present in New York pushed firms primarily towards strategies related to the management of growth money. Another example of top-down influences shaping organizational strategy can be found in the work by Johnson (2007), who showed that institutional conditions - such as existing organizational templates and the strong presence of the French state – had a decisive impact on the strategic choices behind the founding of the Paris Opera. Hence, when relating to organizational strategy from a top-down perspective, one contends that the presence, timing and effectiveness of strategic actions is affected by levels of analysis that supersede the organizational one (Nadkarni & Barr, 2008). What the organization does or intends to do, should thus not be understood in isolation from its broader setting – instead, context and organizational activity are marked as inherently interrelated (S. E. Humphrey & LeBreton, 2019).

Organizational strategy from a bottom-up perspective. In contrast, when referring to strategy from a bottom-up perspective, one relates to theories in which strategy is marked as emerging or arising from the consecutive interactions of levels below the organizational one - such as individuals, teams, or organizational units (Eckardt et al., 2019; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Rousseau, 2011). While theories adhering to a bottom-up perspective have been around for quite some time – such as theories on the impact of top management teams (Amason, 1996; J. B. Thomas & McDaniel Jr, 1990; Wiersema & Bantel, 1992), or theories on the impact of managerial cognition (Nadkarni & Barr, 2008) – much of the work being conducted in this line of research can be considered relatively nascent, with prominent examples including the emergent conversations on strategy-as-practice (Burgelman et al., 2018; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006), behavioural strategy (Gavetti, 2012; Levinthal, 2011; Powell et al., 2011), and the micro-foundations of strategy (Felin et al., 2015; Foss & Lindenberg, 2013). While the specific micro-level that aforementioned theories emphasize can be altogether different, all essentially consider organizational strategy as the manifested outcome of lower-level interactions – as being a "macroscopic pattern arising from the local interaction of agents" (Epstein, 1999, p. 53). For example, in an early study on the evolution of a medical school, Kimberly (1979) highlighted how the personal characteristics and aptitudes of the founder significantly impacted the organization's strategy and actions for years to come. Or, consider the work by Wiedner et al. (2017), who illustrated individuals gaining control over valuable resources as eventually redirecting the organization's strategy towards formerly uncharted areas. In this sense, when relating to strategy from a bottom-up perspective, one contends the organizational level phenomenon to be formed

through the ongoing correspondence of small-scale occurrences – self-organizing into a collective property that lower-level units might not have anticipated (Aiken, Hanges, & Chen, 2019).

While the strategy literature has demonstrably seen significant advances in both the top-down and bottom-up perspective, there has been little work that integrates these approaches more dynamically. In this way, although the conversation has established reasonable insight on *what* multilevel influences on organizational strategy might entail, there has been relatively little insight on the dynamics – the *when* and *how* – by which these influences generally play out. To quote S. E. Humphrey and LeBreton (2019): "Despite the fact that scholars intuitively recognize that behaviour is continuous, research has consistently neglected to theorize or test dynamic models" (p.3). That such exclusion in the multilevel inquiry on organizational strategy proves particularly critical, speaks from the following statement by Cronin and Vancouver (2019): "Dynamism is not well represented within multilevel research, and such an omission can seriously undermine the validity of findings from research that ignores such dynamics" (p.90). Therefore, given this theoretical background, we advance the following research question: *How does a multilevel social system influence organizational strategy over time?*

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Research context

This chapter is based on a qualitative inquiry of the diamond industry, focusing on organizations located in the Antwerp Square Mile (i.e., the city's dedicated diamond quarter). As both the diamond industry and geographical location is particularly known for its close-knit ecosystem (Prinsloo, Spektorov, & Linde, 2011), we considered it to be an especially useful context for looking into questions of a multilevel nature. For an overview, we refer to Table 3.1.

On an *individual level*, diamond traders identified themselves closely with their occupation, referring to themselves as 'diamantaires'. Most diamond traders had received little formal training or schooling, with most having acquired all necessary skills on the job. While the majority of Antwerp's active diamond traders was of elderly age, a younger generation of traders was gradually stepping up. On a *group level*, diamond traders often belonged to larger diamond trading families, with the occupation often dating back several generations. In addition, diamond trading families were not seldom interlinked by marriage, establishing social interconnections in between family groups. Stepping up towards the *organizational level* – our main level of analysis - diamond trading families generally represented themselves in trading organizations.

Table 3.1 Case context

Product context	**Industrial-quality.** While diamonds are typically understood as being incorporated in pieces of jewellery, the material's innate characteristics also make it highly relevant for particular industrial purposes (e.g., electronics, surgical scalpels, optical windows). For these type of applications, diamonds are generally used that lack the quality that is required in gemstone applications.
	Gem-quality. Diamonds of exceptional quality, on the other hand, are used in jewellery. These diamonds are generally referred to as 'gem-quality', with four characteristics eventually making up the overall value of any particular stone: (i) carat - or the weight of a stone; (ii) clarity – or the visual quality of the stone; (iii) colour – or the colour that the stone emits; and (iv) cut – or the finesse with which a stone has been polished.
Innovation context	**Natural stones.** Traditionally, diamonds are formed deep within the Earth's crust. As combinations of temperature and pressure build over millions of years, they can result in crystalline structures of pure carbon, commonly known as diamonds.
	Synthetic stones. More recently, however, engineers have developed ways to compose similar carbon structures in laboratory environments. The following two techniques are most common in contemporary production.
	High Pressure – High Temperature (HPHT): With the HPHT technique, the temperature and pressure conditions as present within the Earth's crust are simulated, thus creating the necessary circumstances for carbon atoms to cluster together in crystalline diamond structures.
	Chemical Vapor Deposition (CVD): With the CVD technique, carbon atoms are present in a gas and are gradually stacked on top of a substrate, thus 'layering' a diamond from the ground up.
Industry context	**Upstream.** In the diamond business, upstream parties generally consist of large mining conglomerates, such as the De Beers Group, Alrosa Mining Company, Dominion Diamond Mines, or the Rio Tinto Mining Group. These upstream parties provide the rough stones that parties further down the value chain will work with. Geographically, upstream activities are primarily located in areas such as Africa, Russia, Australia or Canada.
	Midstream. Next, rough stones undergo a variety of activities. For gem-quality stones, these midstream activities range from being sorted; being scanned and mapped; being graded or quality-checked; and being distributed to the most suitable party. A variety of midstream actors generally takes care of these activities, with parties typically focusing on one specific action. Geographically, midstream activities are quite scattered, with major hubs being in Belgium, the United Arab Emirates, India, and Hong Kong.
	Downstream. Finally, polished stones are processed into jewellery and sold to the end customer. Geographically, consumer markets mainly consist of the United States and Europe, with markets in countries such as China developing rapidly.
	Supportive and related parties. To support the efficient processing of diamond-related activities, several organizations take care of auxiliary activities, such as industry representation to governments, financing, logistic and networking facilities ('bourses'), etc.
Multi-level context	**Environment (macro).** Trading organizations found themselves embedded in a rather comprehensive diamond environment, with over 1,600 trading organizations being registered in Antwerp. With the vast majority of Antwerp-based diamond traders having either Jewish or Indian roots, socio-cultural communities were highly prominent. In addition, technological, legal and financial support was tailored to the needs of the diamond industry: for example, systems such as industry-based arbitrage were allowed as a means to solve legal issues among traders.
	Inter-organizational network (macro). Trading organizations were generally member of one of four dedicated diamond bourses, each specialized in a different product of trade (e.g., polished stones, rough stones, etc.). Larger trading organizations could also enlist as dedicated long-term vendors or 'sightholders' of mining companies (e.g., De Beers), allowing them privileged access to supply that smaller traders did not have. In addition, all trading organizations were represented by a sectoral umbrella organization (i.e., Antwerp World Diamond Centre), that informed traders of upcoming policies and lobbied on their behalf.
	Organizational level (level of analysis). Diamond trading families generally represented themselves in trading organizations. While the smallest trading organizations could be made up of just one or two diamond traders, larger ones could employ the majority of family members. If large enough, trading organizations were divided in different units (e.g., polished vs. rough trade)
	Group (micro). Diamond traders often belonged to larger diamond trading families, with the occupation often dating back several generations. In addition, diamond trading families were not seldom interlinked by marriage, establishing social interconnections in between family groups.
	Individual (micro). Diamond traders identified themselves closely with their occupation, referring to themselves as 'diamantaires'. Most diamond traders had received little formal training or schooling, with most having acquired all necessary skills on the job. While the majority of Antwerp's active diamond traders was of elderly age, a younger generation of traders was gradually stepping up.

While the smallest trading organizations could be made up of just one or two diamond traders, larger ones could employ the majority of family members. If large enough, trading organizations were divided in different units (e.g., polished vs. rough trade). Next, trading organizations were jointly embedded in *inter-organizational networks*. Trading organizations were generally member of one of four dedicated diamond bourses, each specialized in a different product of trade (e.g., polished stones, rough stones, etc.). Larger trading organizations could also enlist as dedicated long-term vendors or 'sightholders' of mining companies (e.g., De Beers), allowing them privileged access to supply that smaller traders did not have. In addition, all trading organizations were represented by a sectoral umbrella organization (i.e., Antwerp World Diamond Center), that informed traders of upcoming policies and lobbied on their behalf. Finally, trading organizations found themselves embedded in a rather comprehensive diamond *environment,* with over 1,600 trading organizations being registered in Antwerp. With the vast majority of Antwerp-based diamond traders having either Jewish or Indian roots, socio-cultural communities were highly prominent. In addition, technological, legal and financial support was tailored to the needs of the diamond industry: for example, systems such as industry-based arbitrage were allowed as a means to solve legal issues among traders.

3.3.2 Data collection

This chapter builds on the qualitative empirical material as gathered over the course of ten consecutive years (2010-2020). Throughout this time period, three general approaches to the accumulation of data were used: (i) industry participation; (ii) archival data; and (iii) expert interviews. For an overview of data sources collected, we refer to Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Overview of data collection methods used

What	1. Participant observation	2. Archival data	3. Expert interviews
Why	Observation of multilevel influences in a natural context. Establishment of contact base to gain access to industry data.	Consolidation of a dataset through which multilevel influences on organizational strategy could be indirectly observed.	Validation of insights established. Solicitation of insights potentially missed out on.
How	• Three board member mandates for diamond organizations • Six consultancy projects for diamond-related parties • Participation in an international diamond conference • Three editions of an industry-focused summer school	• Publicly available databases (e.g., The Diamond Loupe) • Industry-specific databases (e.g., Kimberley Statistics) • Personal contact databases (e.g., Diamond Intelligence Briefings)	• Semi-structured • Interviewer-led • One to two hours in duration • On location • Recorded and transcribed verbatim • Notes on tacit social information (e.g., body language, laughing)
Outcome	• Field notes (30 p.) • Audio recordings of presentations (300') • Audio recordings of discussion panels (120') • Contact base	• Reports (273) • Press releases (175) • Slide decks (40) • White papers (6)	Interview transcripts (700'): • Three diamond traders • One capital investor • Two industry analysts • Three sector federation executives

First, to be able to observe multilevel influences on organizational strategy in a natural context, we immersed ourselves in the diamond trading industry (Agar, 1996; Gummesson, 2000). Several practical hinging points have as such been explored. To establish a contact base from which to gain initial access to the industry, one of the authors occupied three consecutive executive mandates for diamond-related organizations located in the Antwerp Square Mile, residing as an independent board member for a sector federation for a period of eight years, and for a grading authority at the time of writing. Next, in order to better understand the social system trading organizations found themselves embedded in, all authors involved themselves in industry-commissioned project work, jointly covering six consultancy projects for parties affiliated to the diamond industry. Further, to observe how diamond representatives formally communicated with one another, two of the authors took part in an international diamond conference in which 374 diamond representatives noted presence (incl. government officials, executives of mining/trading/retail companies, capital investors, and independent analysts). Finally, to solicit explicit views from diamond experts, we collaborated on the set-up of four editions of a two-week industry-focused summer school, inviting 36 diamond-related executives to share their insights with young professionals. While such participant activities granted us with a large amount of tangible data (e.g., field notes regarding informal conversations and executive meetings, audio recording of conference presentations and panel discussions, internal mailings), note that our intentions for this first round of data collection were primarily (i) to generate tacit experience with the industry as such (H. S. Becker & Geer, 2003); and (ii) to establish a contact base from which to secure further data needs (Morse, 1994).

Next, to consolidate a dataset from which multilevel influences on the strategy of trading organizations could be indirectly observed, we set out to supplement our database as initialized through participant observation with a wide variety of archival data. Keeping in line with our research question, we aimed to primarily secure documents relating either to the positioning of one or more diamond-related parties, or to an analysis of the diamond industry in general. Building on contacts as established throughout industry participation, this effort eventually culminated in the identification of 494 archival documents (i.e., 273 reports, 175 press releases, 6 white papers, and 40 slide decks) - originating either from publicly available databases, or from databases that required specific access.

Finally, to validate insights established and probe for insights potentially missed out on, we concluded our data collection by means of expert interviews. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted with nine industry experts: three of which occupied executive positions at diamond

trading companies, one represented a large capital investor, two marked as renowned diamond industry analysts, and three held executive positions at the sector federation of which one of the authors resided in the board. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, with conversations being guided by a questionnaire that focused on the strategic developments of diamond trading companies. Interviews varied between one and two hours in duration and were recorded in full, with notes being made during the sessions to capture tacit social information such as body language, laughing, raising of voices, or notable silence of respondents.

3.3.3 Data analysis

In analysing our data, we proceeded by means of three main steps: (i) data preparation; (ii) data visualization; and (iii) data codification. In what follows, we describe these steps in more detail.

First, to allow for consistency in the actual analysis of empirical material, we prepared data as having originated from various sources into similar formats. To this end, we constituted ad verbatim transcripts of data that had been gathered verbally (e.g., presentations, discussion panels, in-depth interviews) and digitalized any physical material as having been developed over time (e.g., notes). For reasons of confidentiality, references to people and places were generally anonymized in primary data sources. Next, all available empirical material was categorized according to data collection method and party of origin, allowing the eventual tracking of references if needed. Finally, all data was juxtaposed according to date within a digital platform (Nvivo) - offering us a structured outset from which to temporally evaluate, code, search, and theorize on the empirical material as a whole.

Next, we set out to distinguish the temporal patterns according to which multilevel influences on the strategy of diamond trading organizations had played out. To do so, we drew on Langley (1999)'s technique of 'visual mapping' (p.700), developing a transient visualization of the social system in which diamond trading organizations were embedded over time (see Figure 3.1). As vertical dimension, we listed the different multilevel clusters as *a priori* defined (i.e., individual, group, organization, inter-organization, and environment); as horizontal dimension, we listed the time variable. As we scanned through the empirical material as collected, we re-iterated several of such visual maps, eventually reaching a temporal representation that best fitted the case as observed. Then, making use of the technique of 'temporal bracketing' (Langley, 1999, p. 703), we perused this temporal overview for continuities within particular periods and for discontinuities at periods' frontiers. Eventually, this resulted in the identification of four major phases of multilevel influence on organizational strategy.

Figure 3.1. Temporal mapping of multilevel influences on diamond trading organizations
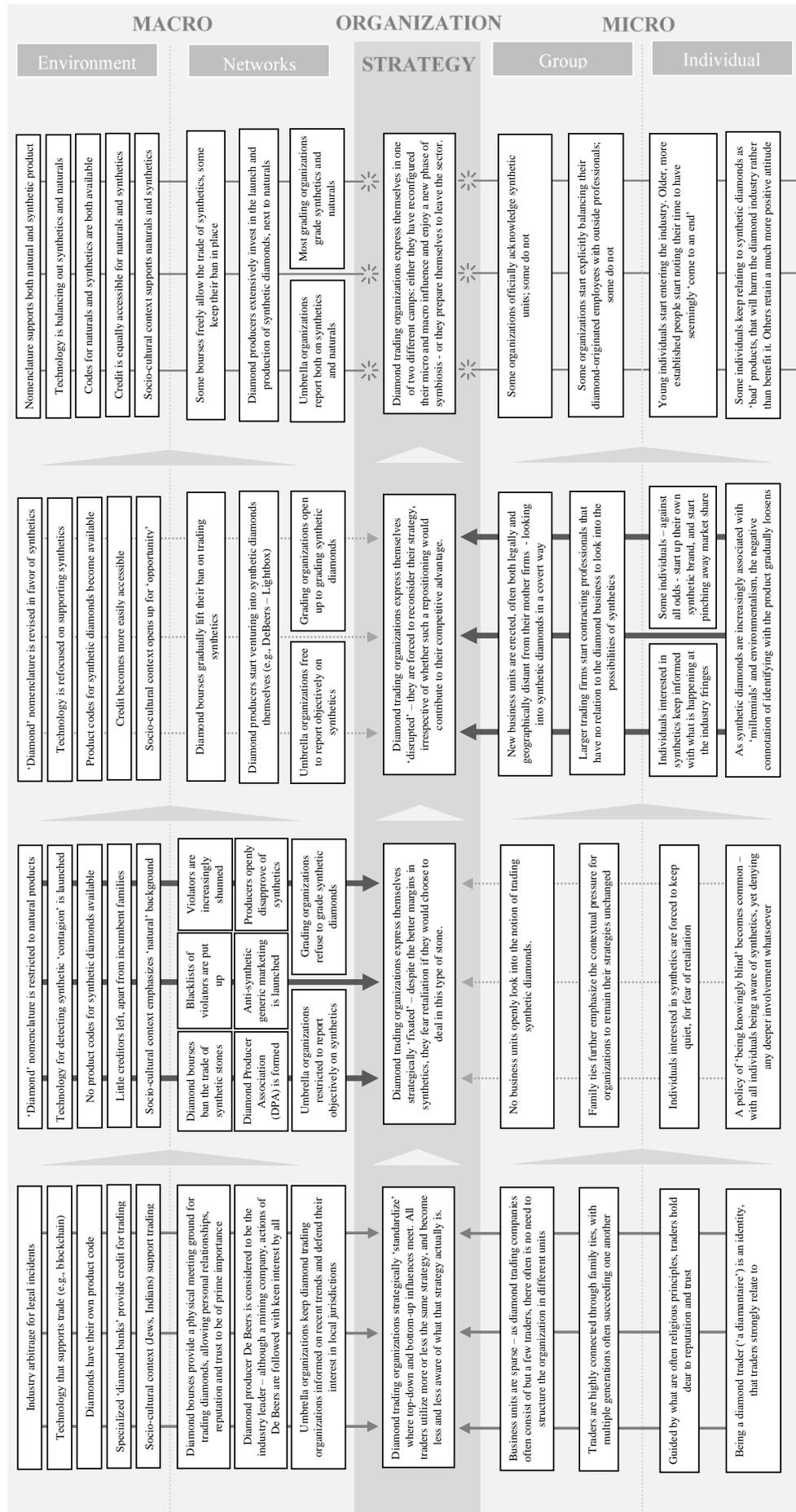
Finally, we set out to lay bare the mechanisms and meanings behind temporal phases as identified. To this end, we coded empirical material according to three levels of abstraction (see Table 3.3; Dennis A Gioia et al., 2013). In a first level of descriptive coding, empirical material was coded according to particular events and practices as displayed. In a second level of axial coding, these events and practices were clustered in several temporal episodes – for example, clustering the descriptive codes 'organizations openly conform to macro influences to remain embedded in the social system' and 'organizations keep doing what they have long-since done to avoid economic retaliation' into the axial code 'organizational strategy is fixated'. In a final level of theoretical coding, episodes were skimmed for developments and turning points, hereby giving temporal meaning to the phases as initially highlighted. In the findings section that follows, it is this set of temporal phases that will be further explored.

3.4 Findings

In this findings section, we will set out the dynamics of multilevel influence on organizational strategy, consecutively covering four temporal phases as observed in the diamond trading industry: symbiosis, lock-in, knock-on, and disconnect.

3.4.1 Multilevel symbiosis

In a phase of multilevel symbiosis, top-down influences on organizational strategy synchronize with bottom-up influences, causing strategy to become standardized. Eventually, this standardization contributes to the perception of the macro context as increasingly self-evident and 'given'.

Top-down processes synchronize with bottom-up processes. As we came to our first encounters with the diamond trading business, one word consistently rang through nearly all conversations we had or overheard at the time – being 'trust'. In fact, looking at the history of diamond trading in the Antwerp Square Mile, it became clear that the entire industry had long been geared to a form of conduct based on trust and reciprocity. Some examples of this range from interpersonal deals being made on verbal agreement only ('mazal'); industry-specific expert committees sorting out trader disputes without the interference of official courts; or long-lasting trader transactions based entirely on family interconnections.

> The real diamond business isn't so much about sorting or product expertise as it is about trust. (Rapaport, 6th May 2002, p.1)

Table 3.3 Extract of temporal coding of multilevel influences on diamond trading organizations

Theoretical coding	Axial Coding	Descriptive coding	Empirical material	Contextualized vignette
Phase 1: Multilevel symbiosis	i. Top-down processes synchronize with bottom-up processes	Macro influences geared towards a community of trust	"The real diamond business isn't so much about sorting or product expertise as it is about trust." (Rapaport, 6th May 2002, p.1)	Traditionally, diamond trading was a deeply embedded activity. At a micro level, diamond traders ('diamantaires') constituted diamond-related families, with relational ties guiding the way business should be done. Practices were passed on from father to son, as were relationships and reputation. At a more macro level, trading organizations saw themselves directed by a set of different inter-organizational networks, such as bourses, supplier networks, and sector federations. These inter-organizational networks contributed to the industry's environment, characterized by specific legal arrangements (e.g., within-industry arbitrage, oral contracts), financial institutions (e.g., diamond banks) and socio-cultural contexts (e.g., Jewish communities of diamond traders). For decades, this micro- and macro-level context defined organizations in rather similar ways: both levels were geared towards a trade in which trust and community stood prime. For organizations that accommodated to such expectations, economic benefits were significant: although the community expected a lot, it could also buff the ailing organization extensively. In light of such rewards, diamond trading organizations started to gradually standardize their practices, until new generations of diamond traders had a hard time figuring out why things were exactly done in a certain way. In result, the macro-context became self-evident, and inter-organizational networks increasingly dominant.
		Micro influences geared towards a community of trust	"Personal relationships are still a key part of this business." (Schulman, Conference Presentation, 14th November 2017)	
	ii. Organizational strategy is standardized	Organizations reconcile macro and micro influences to become embedded in a profitable social system	"If you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. It's that simple." (Expert 2, interview)	
		Organizations do what others are doing to legitimize their operations	"I doubt many traders have explicitly thought about what their strategy is going to be. They do what they do, because that is what makes them 'diamantaires' – because it's what the others do, and what their fathers before them were doing." (Expert 9, interview)	
	iii. Gradual stiffening of the macro context	Environment becomes increasingly self-evident	"That sense of community – it is at times overpowering. Many traders have never known anything besides this industry, and thus consider the environment as something that has always been there – and will always be there." (Claes, personal communication, 1st September 2017)	
		Inter-organizational networks become increasingly dominant	"Almost all trading companies in this geographical hub are related to one or more bourses." (Expert 2, interview)	
Phase 2: Multilevel lock-in	i. Top-down processes start overwriting bottom-up processes	Macro influences nudging embedded organizations in how to behave	Bharat Diamond Bourse Fully Entitled to Ban Trading in Synthetic/Laboratory-Created Diamonds." (World Federation of Diamond Bourses, 2015)	As the diamond macro-level context became increasingly institutionalized, it started to dictate how trading organizations were to strategically behave – forcing them to conform to macro-level directions, in spite of micro-level elements potentially arguing otherwise. One of the most notable examples of such overruling concerns the abdication trading organizations were expected to pledge vis-à-vis synthetic, or laboratory-made, diamonds. While some individuals expressed their profound interest in trading synthetic diamonds and in the increased profit margins that came with their trade, such micro-level expressions were explicitly repressed by the macro-level context through social or economic intimidation – in fact, failure to stand up to this 'test by God' (Rapaport, 2016, p. 36) was not at all tolerated. However, while such multilevel context left little space for micro-level elements to openly pursue what they considered interesting in the product of synthetic diamonds, it did not silence such elements altogether. In fact, in many trading organizations, an alternate business setting looking into the opportunities of synthetic diamonds was covertly erected in parallel to the common activity of trading natural stones. In this way, although the macro-level context had overwritten explicit micro-level influences on strategy, it paradoxically made their implicit impact all the more forcefully.
		Micro influences of embedded organizations being repressed	"Being a sightholder of De Beers [i.e., being part of a supplier network] is a profitable but demanding venture. They command what you have to do - or what you shouldn't be doing." (Expert 1, interview)	
	ii. Organizational strategy is fixated	Organizations openly conform to macro influences to remain embedded in the social system	"Should you decide to start dealing synthetics, the bourses would blacklist you. Literally - your picture against the wall. I can tell you: if your face was amongst those pictures, you would have a very hard time trading with people here." (Expert 3, interview)	
		Organizations keep doing what they have long-since done to avoid economic retaliation	"Why they [i.e., trading organizations] don't switch over to synthetics? You can bet they're too damn scared to make a run for it: to lose out on natural supplies by DeBeers." (Even-Zohar, personal communication, September 5, 2017)	
	iii. Clandestine developments in the micro context	Non-conforming individuals are covertly examining strategic options	"All traders covertly rely on their expert employees to make sense of this synthetic trend – they hope to tap some profound insight." (Expert 2, interview)	
		Organizational units are being covertly erected to examine strategic options	"I would never acknowledge this to someone from the industry, but we are investing in a unit that is looking into the opportunities of using synthetic stones. Far away from the mother company, that is – even in a different geographical location." (Expert 1, interview)	

Table 3.3. Extract of temporal coding of multilevel influences on diamond trading organizations (continued)

Theoretical coding	Axial Coding	Descriptive coding	Empirical material	Contextualized vignette
Phase 3: Multilevel knock-on	i. Bottom-up processes start overwriting top-down processes	Micro influences become too beneficial to ignore	"Some individuals and business units discovered that synthetics could be making you a profit margin of about 30 to 40 per cent on the dollar. Comparing that with the 1 to 2 per cent profit margin of natural diamonds… It's an astronomical difference." (Expert 2, interview)	While diamond trading organizations kept up the aforementioned secrecy for looking into synthetic diamonds for quite a while, the potential implications discovered did gradually work their way up to the more macro levels of analysis. As small-scale trading in synthetic stones was found to potentially yield double digit profit margins (compared to the near nil profit margins that traders normally had to accept), many trading organizations got increasingly aroused by the notion of trading synthetics. Micro-level influences had over time groomed the setting – all that was now left to do, was wait for the signal to take off.
		Industry leader changing strategy	"In late-May, industry bellwether De Beers crossed the Rubicon, announcing the company would be entering the lab-created diamond jewelry space through a subsidiary called Lightbox." (The Diamond Loupe, 26 November 2018)	
	ii. Organizational strategy is disrupted	Organizations are forced to reconsider their strategy to keep up with developments in social system	"You had to see it… The Antwerp Mile was in nothing less than a frenzied state… Everybody was scrambling to keep up with this new acceptance that seemed to have befallen the synthetic diamond. Everyone had to reconsider their strategy – what are we going to do?" (Expert 3, interview)	This starting signal eventually came in the form of industry leader DeBeers officially announcing to begin dealing in synthetic diamonds, dropping what became known as a 'bombshell' (The Diamond Loupe, 29th May 2018) in the trading industry. However, while several traders had secretly anticipated the breakthrough of synthetic stones for many years, many – more traditional - traders had not. Now, confronted with a macro context that rapidly toppled over in favor of synthetic produce (e.g., restrictive nomenclature being overthrown, new product codes being introduced, refocus of technology in support of synthetics), traders were forced to reconsider their strategic orientation - for better, or for worse. In addition, as other trading organizations increasingly shifted some portion of their activities towards synthetic products, those organizations slacking to do so felt increasingly pressured to either revise their strategy, or leave the industry altogether.
		Organizational shifts make it harder for other organizations not to shift	"As organizations started to refocus, it put increased pressure on those that were not ready to make such strategic shifts. Many didn't want to start doing something else – but the thought now had to cross their mind" (Expert 4, interview)	
	iii. Micro developments take hold in macro context	Inter-organizational networks revise their stance	"HRD Antwerp grades world's first wearable lab-grown 'all diamond' ring" (The Diamond Loupe, 7th of February 2019)	
		Environment is gradually attuning to micro developments	"[US] Federal Trade Commission drops 'natural' from definition of diamond, a win for lab-grown producers" (The Diamond Loupe, 26th of July 2018)	
Phase 4: Multilevel disconnect	i. Top-down processes desynchronize with bottom-up processes	Macro influences geared towards new developments	"All Signet Jewelers Banners in US now sell synthetics" (The Diamond Loupe, 16th December 2019)	Eventually, this state of strategic upturn lead to two distinct categories of trading organizations: that is, those that redirected their strategy towards the new micro-macro setting; and those that did not. For this latter category of firms, it became increasingly clear that the macro-level context was exerting influences towards the validation of synthetic diamonds, while the micro-level context did not: in fact, many individuals and groups in this category of organizations still considered it their duty to safeguard the industry in general from the synthetic 'contamination'. However, as individuals kept opposing themselves to synthetic developments, their organization gradually disjointed from the macro system in general. By holding on to strategies that had proven their merit for decades yet felt short in meeting the challenges of the present, these trading organizations increasingly saw their relevance and economic presence eroded. Such strategic erosion eventually led to the ousting of several traders from the industry, interpreted by many as a 'purging' of non-adaptive enterprises. For those organizations remaining, a new normal was gradually installed – a new normal in which micro and macro context were, once again, attuned.
		Micro influences geared towards business as usual	"RapNet members say 'no' to synthetics" (Rapaport News, 3th June 2019)	
	ii. Organizational strategy is eroded	Organizations fail to reconcile macro and micro influences, finding themselves increasingly dislocated from social system	"It is darn hard to change time-honored conceptions and accept that what was true yesterday is no longer true today" (Diamond Intelligence Briefing, 28(788), p. 8328)	
		Organizations hold on to strategies that they are familiar with	"The established guys in the family… They simply couldn't cope with all these developments. They held on to what they had always known to work – even when it didn't work anymore." (Expert 1, personal communication, 27th April 2020)	
	iii. Micro-macro uncoupling pushes out organizations from developed social system	Organizations are ousted from the social system	"Those that couldn't follow… They were removed from the system" (Expert 3, personal communication, 29th October 2019)	
		Social system re-harmonizes between remaining organizations	"We expect lab-grown diamond substitution to stay within 5% to 15% in value terms through 2030. […] As mines deplete, lab-grown diamonds could offset a portion of the reduction in supply of natural diamonds." (Bain Diamond Report, 2019, p.38)	

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Trading here as an organization… It emerges from personal relations and trust, you know. I know a guy that knows a guy that knows a guy… And suddenly, I have the kind of stone I need. (Industry representative 1, personal communication, 28 August 2017)

Important to note, in this regard, is that this trust-based climate seemed as much stimulated by the macro- as by the micro-level context in which organizations operated. While individual and family ties (micro) could make or break the success of any trading organization operative in the Square Mile, so too were inter-organizational networks and environmental elements (macro) first and foremost geared towards the trustworthiness of the trading organization in question: failure to resonate as a trustworthy party was equalized to failure in general. In this way, top-down and bottom-up processes on the strategy of embedded organizations were found to largely synchronize, with trust as their common denominator.

Everything, the entire context we trade in… It is geared to trust and community. From the people and their families up towards the organizations, and from the networks and 'diamond vibe' down. Thus, as an organization trading here, you must be too. (Industry representative 2, personal communication, 28 August 2017)

Organizational strategy becomes standardized. In result of such micro- and macro-level context pushing organizations in similar ways, we found organizations to generally standardize their strategy, with little variation in trading orientation to be at all discernible. As trading organizations reaped both legitimacy and economic benefits from landing such 'strategic sweet spot' (Expert 8), little incentive seemed present to reconsider strategy eventually.

Being successful as a diamond trader… It was about being in tune with your people and with the community as a whole. If you could make that work, then you had nothing to worry about. (Industry representative 3, presentation, 30 August 2017)

I remember the early days, when I started out as a kid at my father's. What diamantaires expected from a company and what the industry expected from a company: it was pretty much the same thing - which was to trade closely to one another. For trading organizations that could settle in the midst of such expectations, good times were coming. (Industry representative 4, panel discussion, 1 September 2017)

Gradual stiffening of the macro context. However, as trading organizations increasingly came to hold true to the same 'strategic templates' (Expert 9), the macro level context in which organizations operated came to be considered more and more self-evident. In this way, trading diamonds became embedded in an ever stricter context.

As diamond traders went about their business, all in the same way, they unconsciously consolidated an almost uniform environment. To give an example: if people in the Square Mile want to renew their furniture, they go to the same shop. If people need a plane ticket, they go to the same travel agency. Same with lawyers: always the same lawyers. These are small-scale examples, but it really illustrates the diamond trader's environment as something that has, over time, come to be considered as 'given'. (Expert 4, interview)

Over time, this whole system became something of a given. […] I think, the more we tried to fit in, the more we lost our say in all of it - because it simply kept growing above our heads, you know. (Expert 7, interview)

This stiffening of the macro level context also seemed to affect the very networks trading organizations were affiliated to.

As the industry established itself, the context in which diamond traders operated became increasingly solidified: it was something that traders themselves had constituted, but that they - ironically enough - eventually had little to no real influence on. Big suppliers, big networks, big overarching groups - these became the real hands on the steering wheel. (Expert 9, interview)

In this way, as the synchronized influence of top-down and bottom-up processes came to standardize the strategy of trading organizations, such standardization gradually solidified the macro-level context in which organizations found themselves embedded – leading up to a more established industry, with less leeway for voluntarism and distinct organizational direction.

3.4.2 Multilevel lock-in

Next, in a phase of multi-level lock-in, top-down processes start overwriting bottom-up processes, causing the strategy of organizations to get fixated. Although fixation renders organizations seemingly compliant at surface level, it eventually stimulates strategic developments covertly taking place in organizations' micro-level context.

Top-down processes start overwriting bottom-up processes. As the diamond macro context came to be considered increasingly self-evident, it gradually started to nudge diamond traders more explicitly in how they were to behave, eventually up to the point where macro-level context explicitly repressed micro-level elements. One of the most consistent examples of such macro-level predominance concerns the pressure diamond traders were subject to regarding the onset of synthetic, or laboratory-grown, diamonds. While several trading individuals had considered laboratory-grown diamonds a potentially interesting strategic option to explore, many had

experienced their interest to be forcefully restrained by the macro-level context their organizations were embedded in.

> At a certain moment, I very much feared for my job, simply because I had openly expressed my interest in synthetics. The community was 'not amused', to say the least. It was that sensitive. (Expert 4, interview)

> Several years ago, I became president of a research facility the industry had. At a certain moment, I decided to invite the synthetic producers to come and talk about their product. The Antwerp mile was in a complete uproar! That single action caused such a racket - you wouldn't believe it. (Expert 1, interview)

While macro-level influences overruling organizations' micro-level context could be quite direct, many sources of pressure were administered more indirectly, with several macro-level decisions - such as negatively toned nomenclature, the blocking of a separate product code, or the banning of laboratory-grown products from bourse floors - all nudging individuals or organizational groups more implicitly towards a retaining of the status-quo.

> The diamond context has conditioned the traders to believe that 'what's good for the producers must be good for all of us'. While that may have been the case in the past, it certainly is not today. (Diamond Intelligence Briefing, 30(859), p. 4)

Organizational strategy becomes fixated. In result of such strong-arming of micro-level influences by macro-level context, we initially found all 1,600 registered diamond traders of the Antwerp Square Mile openly renouncing the strategy of dealing in laboratory-grown products. As traders generally feared the social or economic repercussions of side-stepping the macro-level context, all remained true to the traditional strategies of trading.

> There was an immense fear of economic punishment if one would opt in on synthetics. In result, nobody moved. (Expert 4, interview)

> Out in the open, most traders acted as if they had never heard of synthetics. Which was complete bullshit, of course. But they had to, in order to retain their social credit. (Expert 3, interview)

Clandestine developments emerging in micro-level context. Yet, while the prominence of top-down influences made trading organizations strategically conform to macro-level expectations in visible practice, it also stimulated the emergence of clandestine developments on a micro level. Often, these covert developments spawned from the efforts of a couple of 'deviant' individuals, who considered the laboratory-grown trade too interesting to blindly omit.

It's rather incredible, actually: you have this amazingly tight system, in which the context is basically hammering down on what you as organization can and cannot do… but if you look carefully, you also see the sprouts of individual exploration popping up within that very same system. Daughters that start using Instagram or WhatsApp to become personal shoppers; sons that constitute new lines of jewellery; and even individuals that covertly look into the notion of synthetics... (Expert 4, interview)

While these hushed individual efforts at times converged in the formation of full-blown organizational units, affiliations of such units to the mother organizations were – without exception - carefully covered up.

Many diamond companies are already into lab-grown business, but they have not come out officially. (Dilip Mehta, as found in The Diamond Loupe, 18 November 2019)

What happened, is that people interested in synthetics would go about erecting different businesses or business units, through a maze of different financing channels and representatives - so no one could trace it back to the activities of the mother firm. This meant that openly, the organization was renouncing synthetic diamond trading - but below the surface, it would become deeply involved in exploring the strategic possibilities. [...] That happened a lot. In fact, if you now would give me a list of ten synthetic diamond organizations, I bet I would be able to mark at least seven of them as actually being managed by sightholders of De Beers. (Expert 2, interview)

In this way, while the predominance of top-down processes over bottom-up processes fixated the strategy of embedded organizations at face value, it also stimulated the clandestine exploration of strategic options at more micro levels.

3.4.3 Multilevel knock-on

In a third phase, bottom-up processes start overwriting top-down processes, eventually causing the strategy of organizations to become disrupted. As organizations increasingly pivot to developments as originating in the micro-level context, the macro-level context gradually internalizes developments as put forward.

Bottom-up processes start overwriting top-down processes. With micro elements of several trading organizations covertly looking into the strategic opportunities of dealing in laboratory-grown products, it eventually became apparent that the profits of doing so could be quite substantial: according to some estimates, profit margins of trading laboratory-grown products could be as much as 40 percentage points higher than they were in the scarcely profitable trade of

natural goods. In result, although traders still maintained their strategy of renouncing laboratory-grown products publicly, attitudes of stringent rejections became increasingly rare.

> One finds more and more diamantaires who quietly dream of getting into synthetics […]. (Diamond Intelligence Briefing, 883(33), p.6)

> The growing acceptance of synthetic diamonds [originated] from a known but rarely-discussed angle: synthetic diamonds deliver higher profit margins to retailers than natural diamonds. (Zimnisky, as found in The Diamond Loupe, 12 of February 2020)

Eventually, this unshackling of micro influences from top-down restraints fully surfaced with industry leader De Beers announcing to venture forwards in the business of laboratory-grown diamonds, dropping what some considered a 'bombshell on the industry' (The Diamond Loupe, 30 May 2018) by 'crossing the Rubicon' (The Diamond Loupe, 26 November 2018). For others, however, this strategic move of the industry leader was best to be understood as the logical outcome of many prior small-scale developments.

> Lightbox [i.e., De Beers' laboratory-grown diamonds] has been labelled by many as a 'bomb' being dropped on the industry, but I think that is overstating it. It wasn't so much the starting point of the synthetic story, as much as it was the outcome of a large amount of micro developments – originating everywhere in the diamond sector - finally bubbling up after several years. I think it was the big domino, that toppled over after all the small ones had come to hit it. (Expert 6, interview)

Organizational strategy becomes disrupted. In result of such micro-level developments finally emerging in the visible strategy of prominent diamond players, we found many trading organizations to find themselves forced to explicitly reconsider their strategy. As the social system had taken a prominent turn, doing nothing no longer seemed a viable option.

> De Beers Group launched Lightbox Jewelry, a lab-grown fashion jewellery retailer with a new linear pricing model and no grading reports for its products, in September 2018. Along the value chain, companies are evaluating how to strategically respond. (Bain Diamond Report, 2018, p.2)

> Traders are waking up now - they know they are going to have to do something different, strategically, because the social system they were familiar with is no longer there. It makes all of us happy and anxious at the same time: happy that we have broken free from this suffocating lock-in, anxious for what to expect. (Expert 7, interview)

As trading organizations started to effectively reposition themselves strategically, they put increased pressure on other trading organizations to reconsider their own strategic positioning as well.

"Since De Beers has introduced Lightbox and openly accepted synthetics, several traders have 'come out of the closet', or affirmed their connection with synthetics products. It puts increased pressure on the rest to revise their strategy as well." (Expert 7, interview)

Micro developments taking hold in macro context. Eventually, as micro-level developments disrupted the organizational level, they gradually crept up towards more macro levels of analysis. This included inter-organizational networks positively revising their policy towards laboratory-grown diamonds, along with several contextual decisions being made that supported the trade of laboratory-grown stones:

[Given] the decision of the US Federal Trade Commission to drop the word 'natural' from its definition of a diamond, essentially redefining 'diamond' to include non-mined gemstones, distinction between natural and lab-grown diamonds is gradually being erased. (The Diamond Loupe, 14 January 2019)

HRD Antwerp grades world's first wearable lab-grown 'all diamond' ring. (The Diamond Loupe, 7 February 2019)

This weekend, the Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC) will be hosting what it is calling the "first-ever rough laboratory-grown diamonds tender" on its Dubai Diamond Exchange (DDE). (The Diamond Loupe, 8 May 2019)

Hence, as micro developments became too beneficial to ignore and started overwriting top-down constraints, they pushed trading organizations to revise their strategy. As such revisions became increasingly commonplace and legitimized the strategic direction opted for, they gradually ingrained micro-level developments in the macro-level context.

3.4.4 Multilevel disconnect

Finally, top-down influences on strategy desynchronize with the bottom-up influences of some organizations, causing their strategy to become gradually eroded. Eventually, such uncoupling of micro- and macro-level context leads to non-compliant organizations being pushed out, with a more homogenous social system in result.

Top-down processes desynchronize with bottom-up processes. As trading organizations' macro-level context gradually repositioned to "a growing acceptance and expansion of laboratory-grown

diamonds" (The Diamond Loupe, 5 January 2020), diamond traders increasingly found themselves facing a new general setting in which to trade in. For some, micro-level developments soon followed macro-level contextual evolutions, eager as many were to finally get strategically involved in what was formerly known as 'forbidden fruit' (Expert 1). For others, however, micro-level contexts proved much more adamant, with especially individuals minding traditions barring strategic changes from being made.

> In many trading organizations I know, synthetic diamonds are still not being picked up, despite external developments basically urging us to. These are often the smaller, family businesses - the people working at such traders expect different things from their organizations than does the environment. Those people want respect for tradition and original values - they don't want to trade in something their fathers rejected before them. (Expert 8, interview)

For these organizations, what the macro context expected and what the micro context expected proved to be two very different things – hard, if not impossible, to reconcile.

> It is darn hard to change time-honoured conceptions and accept that what was true yesterday is no longer true today. (Diamond Intelligence Briefing, 28(788), p. 8328)

Organizational strategy is eroded. For those organizations that found top-down and bottom-up processes desynchronizing, we marked organizational strategy being increasingly eroded. As such firms found it impossible to comply to both micro- and macro-level influences, many just held firm to the strategies they had long been familiar with. Yet, with these strategies no longer proving as relevant as they had once did, many such organizations found themselves increasingly dislocated from the social system of diamond trade.

> The family background makes it hard for trading organizations to, now, start doing something really new. If the *pater familias* doesn't want to get involved in something, it won't happen - irrespective of the benefits such strategic re-orientation would bring. In result, they become somewhat isolated from the context as developing. Think of it as conservative families, that lock themselves away from a world that is evolving. (Expert 3, interview)

Micro-macro uncoupling pushes out organizations from social system. Eventually, we found several organizations that failed to reconcile micro- and macro-level influences to be ousted from the social system at large – this either because of financial issues, or because of personal preferences to leave.

> Recently, I have witnessed multiple traders disappear, simply because they couldn't adapt their people and way of thinking to the developments of the industry. (Expert 4, interview)

> Even when a business model changes, companies don't always realize that the organization itself needs to change as well, or face being left behind. (Joncheere, as found in The Diamond Loupe, 26 February 2020)

However, while such failures of often long-standing trading organizations sure were deplorable, they did contribute to the harmony as present in the social system as remaining: with only those organizations prevailing that successfully balanced micro- and macro-level context, a new phase of multilevel symbiosis seemed bound to emerge.

> Longer term, the lab-created industry is positioned to fill the pending supply gap of natural diamonds. Yet, high-quality natural diamonds should continue success. (Paul Zimnisky, as found in The Diamond Loupe, 28 August 2018)

> Nowadays, I see many trading organizations rapidly shifting their strategy: they start putting people and business units into the trade of synthetics. I believe we will again have a state of harmony. Just give it some more time, and you will see. (Expert 6, interview)

Hence, as the desynchronization of top-down and bottom-up processes forces organizations to leave the social system, it harmonizes the multilevel influences of those organizations prevailing – nudging them towards a renewed phase of multilevel symbiosis.

3.5 Discussion

3.5.1 Critical reflections

Drawing on a longitudinal study of the diamond trading industry, this chapter looked into the question of how multilevel influences on organizational strategy temporarily develop. Specifically, our findings highlighted four phases of multilevel influence on organizational strategy, each of which implicates a different relation between top-down and bottom-up processes (see Table 3.4). In a phase of *multilevel symbiosis*, top-down and bottom-up processes were found to synchronize, leading up to organizations standardizing their strategy in result. In a phase of *multilevel lock-in*, top-down processes were found to overwrite or trump bottom-up processes, resulting in organizational strategy to become fixated. In a phase of *multilevel knock-on*, bottom-up processes were found to overwrite top-down processes, with a disruption in the strategy of embedded organizations as outcome. Finally, in a phase of *multilevel disconnect*, top-down and bottom-up processes were found to disconnect, causing the strategy of firms to become eroded up to the point of organizational failure.

Table 3.4 How multilevel influences on organization strategy dynamically develop

Form of influence	Multilevel symbiosis	Multilevel lock-in	Multilevel knock-on	Multilevel disconnect
Multilevel processes	Top-down processes synchronize with bottom-up processes	Top-down processes overwrite bottom-up processes	Bottom-up processes overwrite top-down processes	Top-down processes desynchronize with bottom-up processes
Impact on organizational strategy	Organizational strategy is standardized	Organizational strategy is fixated	Organizational strategy is disrupted	Organizational strategy is eroded
Temporal phase in case	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV

These phases of multilevel influence did not occur haphazardly, but were found to be systematically interconnected through time: as each phase was shown to render the very conditions for the next phase to transpire, our findings hint at phases jointly constituting what can be best understood as a circular dynamic (see Figure 3.2). First, as the synchronization of top-down and bottom-up processes implied in symbiosis stimulated trading organizations to standardize their strategy, it gradually engendered an industrial context that was self-evident and axiomatic - thus setting the stage for the macro level to eventually keep organizations' strategic decisions interlocked. Next, while the pre-eminence of top-down processes over bottom-up processes of such lock-in led up to embedded organizations fixating their strategy publicly, it also stimulated micro elements to explore strategic options in a more clandestine way – hence raising the very conditions for a phase of multilevel knock-on to eventually occur. Finally, as the pre-eminence of bottom-up processes over top-down processes caused trading organizations' to increasingly revise their strategies, it eventually altered the very macro-level context in which firms were to operate – hence setting the stage for firms to either disconnect, or re-attach to a new phase of symbiosis. In this way, our findings mark phases of multilevel influence on organizational strategy to jointly constitute a dynamic that is self-sustaining, with each phase of influence forming but the logical onset of the outcomes of a prior one: levels of analysis harmonize, restrain, and break up – to eventually harmonize all over again.

Figure 3.2 Dynamics of multilevel influence on organizational strategy
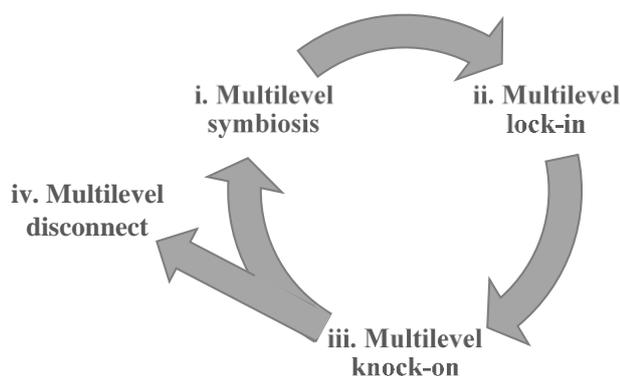
3.5.2 Implications and contributions

First, this chapter contributes to the literature on multilevel inquiry by adding a much called-for sense of temporality to the more static line of research so far established (Cronin & Vancouver, 2019; Hoffman, 2019; S. E. Humphrey & LeBreton, 2019; Kozlowski et al., 2016). Specifically, while it has been argued that top-down and bottom-up processes can "shape, constrain, and influence each other" (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000, p. 56) our findings stipulate such argument through time: although bottom-up and top-down processes can overwrite each other in the short-term, our findings indicate such acts of suppression to - paradoxically enough - create the very conditions for the suppressed process to manifest itself more forcefully in the long-term. In this way, our findings illustrate top-down and bottom-up processes as being largely oscillatory – with the prominence of either process largely fluctuating through time.

Second, combining a hierarchical or cluster approach with a longitudinal approach to multilevel inquiry, this study illustrates how to methodologically ingrain a sense of temporality in the area of multilevel research (Aguinis & Molina-Azorín, 2015; Rousseau, 2011). By doing so, this chapter gives explicit heed to recent calls by multilevel scholars "to emphasize [the] development of new process-oriented theories and methodological approaches to collect and analyse data and test theories related to […] bottom-up, top-down and reciprocal processes" (Eckardt et al., 2019, p. 396). Although we do not mean to claim the approach advanced in this chapter represents the only option for tackling research settings or research problems in multilevel thinking in a temporal way, we do think it offers a rare point of inspiration for those meaning to tackle multilevel questions in a more transient fashion.

Third, this chapter contributes to the literature on organizational strategy by harmonizing the top-down perspective of earlier research (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1969; R.

E. Miles et al., 1978; Pettigrew, 1987) with the bottom-up perspective as having more recently emerged (Foss & Lindenberg, 2013; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Levinthal, 2011; Nadkarni & Barr, 2008). While both perspectives were shown to be most informative when evaluating the strategic direction of embedded organizations, our findings highlighted their prominence to vary temporarily, with neither ever fully according for the strategy of embedded organizations on its own. In this way, our essay offers an important argument for increased interaction between these two subfields of multilevel inquiry on organizational strategy – for without the complementary angle, any multilevel view on strategy proves essentially lopsided.

Finally, by highlighting how phases of multilevel influence on organizational strategy are temporarily interrelated, this chapter adds to the strategic management of actual organizations (Aguinis, Boyd, Pierce, & Short, 2011; Molina-Azorín et al., 2019). Laying bare how to recognize phases of multilevel influence and what can be eventually expected, this chapter helps managers to identify and prepare for the strategic nudges their organization will presumably come to incorporate from its micro- and macro-level contexts. That such more practical implication should not be downplayed, speaks from the following statement by Paruchuri, Perry-Smith, Chattopadhyay, and Shaw (2018): "Managers, who have to deal with the general messiness of organizing across individuals, teams, and departments, may be particularly appreciative of research that helps them to think about the consequences of what they do at one level for outcomes at other levels" (p.797).

3.5.3 Boundary conditions and directions for further research

This chapter drew on empirical material as collected in the Antwerp diamond trading industry, an industry that has been well established for several centuries. While this setting proved immanently useful to address the research question of this essay, it does raise the question of whether multilevel dynamics would be similar in industries that are more nascent. As one can imagine the micro-level context of organizations in nascent industries to consistently trump the still developing macro-level context, we argue it highly interesting to complement the study as here reported on with an inquiry in industries that are still relatively underdeveloped - such as industries dealing with new digital applications.

Next, while we selected the Antwerp Square Mile for representing a methodological 'micro-cosmos' for observing multilevel influences (Baxter & Jack, 2008), the selection of such setting does leave open questions of physical presence or nearness: Would micro and macro influences carry the same weight if levels in the social system finds themselves much more distant from each

another? In this sense, we argue it most interesting to complement this research by looking into industries of which organizations are distinctly scattered geographically, and thus experience significantly higher inter-level distances within the social system at large.

Finally, while this research has been based on data spanning a period of ten years, our findings do not allow us to claim all multilevel cycles necessarily covering an equal period of time. In this regard, we argue additional cross-sectional research looking into the modalities of multilevel transience to be interesting: How fast do phases of multilevel influence on organizational strategy generally follow up on one another; and in which cases are they either moving faster or slower?

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has looked into the temporality of multilevel influences on organizational strategy. Drawing on empirical material as collected in the diamond trading industry, we specifically identified multilevel dynamics as occurring in four consecutive phases. Illustrating each phase as eventually converging in the very conditions that spark the next, we highlighted how organizational strategy finds itself consistently embedded in the cyclical developments of both its micro- and macro-level context. In this way, this chapter marks the diamonds of strategy to find themselves forever pressured – but not, forever, in the same way.

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Chapter 4.

Towards a dualistic understanding of organizations' capacity for change: Bridging the formative-responsive divide[4]

Abstract

While the literature on organizations' capacity for change has brought forth a plethora of formative and responsive constructs, the isolation in which both orientations have developed is remarkable. This detachment seems to rest on the implicit assumption that formative and responsive capabilities are temporally separated. Yet, conceding to their division as processual rather than event-based, it becomes questionable whether we should at all be advancing either of these capabilities independently: may organizations hope to develop formative capabilities for change without simultaneously tapping from responsive capabilities; and can organizations be formatively adaptable without ramping up a responsive counterpart as well? This essay establishes formative and responsive capabilities for change as representing a duality, or interrelated counterparts that are contrasting yet mutually enabling at the same time. Marking distinct tracks as fundamentally interrelated, this chapter advances new ground for scholarly integration, consolidating insights developed for enhanced practical application.

Keywords

Organizational change, Strategy, Organization, Duality, Formative change, Responsive change

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4.1 Introduction

Considering the past decades of scholarly writing, it seems fair to say that talking about organizations' capacity for change – or the ability of organizations to readjust to constantly developing circumstances (S. L. Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997; Reeves & Deimler, 2011; Staber & Sydow, 2002) - has been widely popular. Yet, from a bird's perspective, only two directions generally seem to abide. First, there are those constructs that chiefly deal with organizations' capacity for change from a *formative* outset – considering how organizations can change prior to situations of adversity, working to avoid 'failure or undesirable outcome' (Dahlin et al., 2018, p. 29) before it emanates on the firm at hand. Examples of this orientation would include the dynamic capabilities construct (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece et al., 1997), organizational flexibility (Volberda, 1996), or the notion of (strategic) agility (Birkinshaw, 2017; Doz & Kosonen, 2008). Then, there are constructs that primarily consider organizations' capacity for change from a *responsive* angle - dealing with how organizations can change by working through adversity having materialized. In this line of thought, constructs such as organizational resilience (Hamel & Välikangas, 2003; Linnenluecke, 2017), robustness (Reeves et al., 2016), or the capacity for organizational recovery (Morrow et al., 2007) mark present.

For many, this partitioning might seem hardly remarkable: it represents the logical dichotomy when appreciating adversity as an event – a temporal slice, so to speak, that chops up the organization's capacity of generating response in a strict before, and after (Chia, 2002a; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). However, with scholars increasingly marking adversity as a process of linked occurrences rather than as a one-time happening (Hernes, 2008; Malhotra & Hinings, 2015), we argue the segregation by which both streams of thinking are developed to turn rather startling: for with the barrier between the two interlinking rather than dividing, how to accept the formative and responsive field as remaining inattentive to each other's advances, and refraining from tapping insights as developed in the akin orientation?

It stands to reason that a disconnect between related scholarly fields always holds implications for the development of sustainable insight further on (Alvesson et al., 2017; Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Rousseau et al., 2008; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Yet, considering the interconnection of formative and responsive constructs through adversity, one might wonder whether the partitioning as currently present in the conversation on organizational change is not especially harmful - not simply because of a lack of scholarly synthesis, but because the very essence of both orientations might be inherently contingent on a more profound interweaving between them. In effect: *may*

formative change capabilities be drawn on for the betterment of responsive capabilities - and vice-versa?

Laying bare both contrast and interdependence, this essay rebuts the segregation as currently maintained between organizations' formative and responsive capabilities for change, instead making the case for both as being dualistically interrelated – 'contradictory, but also mutually enabling' (Farjoun, 2010, p. 202). Marking formative and responsive capabilities for change as conversely empowering a shared paradigm while holding their own, this chapter advances the literature on organizational change by highlighting the relevance of integrating disparate streams of thinking, allowing for the creation of more meaningful insight throughout (Alvesson et al., 2017; Astley & Van de Ven, 1983) – to tap from 'complementarity despite disparity' (Gioia & Pitre, 1990, p. 572), and bolster the conversation's inclusive diversity for increased impact on scholarly, as well as managerial practice (Ghoshal, 2005; Rousseau et al., 2008).

In what follows, we will first mark the contrast of formative and responsive capability constructs conceptually. Next, we will set out how each type of construct can be understood as representing a crucial linchpin for upholding the rationale of the other. Finally, we will culminate the paradoxical logic as set out by discussing how the interrelation between formative and responsive capabilities can be conceptually re-appreciated - representing both as part of a duality.

4.2 On the contrast of capability constructs for change

Although having originally sprouted from strategic studies focusing on the importance of 'fit' between organization and environment (Hrebiniak & Joyce, 1985; Levinthal, 1991; R. H. Miles, 1982), the scholarly conversation on organizations' ability to change has over time come to encompass a much wider span of interest. In this chapter, we will distinguish between two types of constructs that can be marked within the conversation on organizations' capacity for change at large: i.e., formative constructs, and responsive constructs. While we position the former as relating to an organizational disposition that is forward-looking and dexterous, we associate the latter with an organizational inclination that is regenerative and learning (see Table 4.1). In what follows, we will briefly mark these contrasting categories in more detail, and consider their current-day dichotomous status in literature.

Table 4.1 Formative vs. responsive change capabilities

Type of construct	Formative	Responsive
Temporal emphasis	Pre-adversity	Post-adversity
Manner of change	Evading adversity	Bouncing back from adversity
Primary rationale for change	Thriving	Surviving
Conceived potential of change	Idealistic	Pragmatic

4.2.1 Formative capability constructs

When relating to what we coin formative capability constructs, organizational value is considered to be generated or protected by pro-acting on adversity manifesting: to be highly perceptive of what is at play, and alter internal affairs before disturbances such as economic downturns, technological shifts, or altered regulations negatively affect the firm as such. While examples of formative constructs span quite widely across the literature (see Table 4.2), we argue four main characteristics to be generally upheld.

Table 4.2 Examples of formative constructs in organizations' capacity for change

Construct	Author(s)	Definition	Posture vis-à-vis adversity
Dynamic capability	Eisenhardt and Martin (2000)	"The firm's processes that use resources - specifically the processes to integrate, reconfigure, gain and release resources - to match and even create market change"	Organization-wide adversity impedes the sustained development of the firm's resource routines, and should thus be avoided. Small-scale mistakes, however, can be productive in terms of learning.
	Teece et al. (1997)	"The firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments"	Organizations should work to sense adverse events, seize the opportunity to circumvent them timely, and reconfigure their assets to sustain and even amplify the resulting evolutionary fitness.
Organizational / Strategic flexibility	Bahrami and Evans (2011)	"Being able to move rapidly, to change course to take advantage of an opportunity or to sidestep a threat"	Adversity marks as a potentiality that is to be bypassed.
	Hitt, Keats, and DeMarie (1998)	"The capability of the firm to proact or respond quickly to changing competitive conditions and thereby develop and/or maintain competitive advantage"	Adverse events' prime impact is in terms of competitive advantage, implicating firms lose out on their rivals when adversity is effectively encountered.
	Nadkarni and Narayanan (2007)	"The ability to precipitate intentional changes and adapt to environmental changes through continuous adaptations in current strategic actions, asset deployment, and investment strategies"	Adversity is characterized as the act of missing out on developments taking place in the organizational environment, making it necessary for the organization to drive up its pace of acting.
Organizational / Strategic agility	Doz and Kosonen (2008)	"To make strong strategic commitments while at the same time remaining sufficiently fleet of foot to manage and adjust to continuous change"	Adversity is present in the notion of threats negatively affecting the firm, as well as in the option of opportunities being bypassed.
	McCann (2004)	"To quickly recognise and seize opportunities, change direction and avoid collisions"	Adversity represents a near tangible catastrophe, with which confrontation should be avoided at all cost.
	Weber and Tarba (2014)	"The ability of management to constantly and rapidly sense and respond to a changing environment by intentionally making strategic moves and consequently adapting the necessary organisational configuration for successful implementation"	To master an agile stance implies for the firm to have a constant ability of changing strategic direction, hereby adapting rather than responding to an adversely disruptive environment – to not only survive, but also thrive in its doing business.

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First, formative constructs call for the organization to enact adaptive action prior to adverse events manifesting – making organizations adjust their course before the need to do so becomes imminently dire (Doz & Kosonen, 2008; Schreyogg & Sydow, 2010; Volberda, Baden-Fuller, & Van Den Bosch, 2001). Second, formative constructs' attitude towards organizational adversity is inherently evasive: the organization is charged to bypass rough goings, rather than withering potential negative effects (Kathleen M. Eisenhardt, 1989). Third, formative constructs' rationale for adaptability is typically one of thriving: by successfully tapping a knack for adaptation, the organization will eventually come to surpass competitors who have not learned to fend off disturbances yet to come (Judge & Miller, 1991; Raisch, Birkinshaw, Probst, & Tushman, 2009). Finally, this thriving rationale converges in what can be conceived as an idealistic apprehension of organizations' potential for adaptability: if the organization is willing to put up with the effort to develop particular formative capabilities, adaptive action is attainable for all (Battistella, De Toni, De Zan, & Pessot, 2017; Morton, Stacey, & Mohn, 2018).

Although we set out these characteristics to mark the general orientation of a formative capability, it should be noted that different constructs advance their own specific emphases. For example, while tapping from the plethora of articles on ambidexterity provides the prospecting scholar a primarily structural take (Raisch et al., 2009), articles on organizational flexibility have balanced out this structural approach with a more pronounced emphasis on managerial input (Bahrami, 1992; Brozovic, 2018; Volberda, 1996). Or, while the well-established conversation on dynamic capabilities has integrated a discourse that is closely related to the scholarly understanding of organizational resources and capacities (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000), the (strategic) agility conversation has redirected the implications of such understanding more explicitly towards the realm of practitioners (Doz & Kosonen, 2008; Weber & Tarba, 2014). In this way, a scholarly field has gradually emerged that seems both rich in nuance and varied in conceptual prominence - to help organizations avoid income blows, and retaliate with vigour.

4.2.2 Responsive capability constructs

For those researchers relating more to responsive capability constructs, on the other hand, organizational value seems best generated or protected by rebounding quickly after adversity has effectively materialized - to be able to "shorten unfavourable aftermaths and maximize the organization's speed of recovery to the original or to a new, more desirable state" (Annarelli & Nonino, 2016, p. 3). While examples of responsive constructs also are varied (see Table 4.3), we argue them to again consolidate on four elementary characteristics.

Table 4.3. Examples of responsive constructs in organizations' capacity for change

Construct	Author(s)	Definition	Posture vis-à-vis adversity
Resilience	Dai et al. (2017)	"The ability of entities to cope with external stressors and disturbances, which depends on impact resistance and recovery speed"	Exposure to adversity enables firms to be better at coping with sudden environmental changes.
	Linnenluecke (2017)	"The inherent characteristics of those organizations that are able to respond more quickly, recover faster or develop more unusual ways of doing business under duress than others – organizational and employee strength, perseverance and recovery when encountering adversity"	Adversity, when encountered, can result either in a sapped organization, an organization that again reaches its pre-adversity performance, or an organization that emerges more performant from the experience.
	Sutcliffe and Vogus (2003)	"The ability to either absorb strain and preserve functioning despite the presence of adversity, or recover and bounce back from untoward events"	Adversity shouldn't be understood all negatively. It merely represents a challenging circumstance, under which firms may still achieve positive adjustment.
Robustness	Evans (1991)	"Being defensive in an ex ante sense – the capability to withstand or deflect the consequences of unanticipated change"	Adversity is marked as taking place unforeseen, making preventive action inherently troublesome. The best defence is standing your ground when impact hits.
	Reeves et al. (2016)	"The ability to withstand or overcome adverse conditions as emerging from a complex environment, in order to survive and persist"	Adversity is an unavoidable byproduct of dealing with a complex environment, that most organizations should buckle up for withering anyhow.
Capacity for organizational recovery	Allen and Toder (2004)	"The ability to recuperate from the disruption caused by a traumatic event – to recover from disaster, while minimizing losses"	Successfully dealing with adversity means to at best curtail negative effects – one shouldn't hope to emerge more performant on top of that.
	Kim et al. (2009)	"To experience extremely poor performance, but to be able to overcome it eventually"	Just as success, adversity represents a powerful performance experience to stimulate survival-enhancing learning for organizations.
	Morrow et al. (2007)	"The ability to again meet the value expectations of investors after having suffered from declining performance"	Adversity can trigger increased market scrutiny, making a firm more liable to opt for risky strategies in order to survive.
Capacity for organizational turnaround	Pearce and Robbins (1993)	"The ability to recover performance after a period of organizational failure"	Adversity as an external factor has remained largely elusive to managerial practice, yet should be forcefully and decidedly tackled when encountered.
	Trahms et al. (2013)	"The firm's capacity to recover towards a more favourable situation, after having seen its performance or resource base deteriorate over a sustained period of time due to external or internal factors"	Most, if not all, firms come to suffer adversity at one time or another – it represents a near fact of organizational conduct.

First, responsive capability constructs propose the brunt of adaptive activities taking place after the organization has encountered adverse circumstances (Annarelli & Nonino, 2016; Downes & Nunes, 2018) - while the organization is bound to prepare itself, the majority of actual change takes place after adversity has been met. Second, responsive constructs do not commonly call for organizations to evade adversity coming in: what they aim at, is conceptualizing an organization that is able to quickly bounce back after incorporating setback (de Oliveira Teixeira & Werther Jr, 2013; Kossek & Perrigino, 2016). Third, this organizational state is first and foremost meant to guarantee the organization's basic survival (Reeves et al., 2016; Vermeulen & Sivanathan, 2017). The organization may hope to rebound from adversity as a stronger, more vital entity – but prime survival always comes first. Finally, this survival logic typically comes to engender a rather pragmatic understanding of organizations' adaptive potential - adaptation is seldom an easy process, and often has to be sparked by adversity necessitating changes aimed for (Ortiz-de-Mandojana & Bansal, 2016; Williams et al., 2017).

While we argue responsive constructs to generally comply to these four general characteristics, the diverse conceptual rooting of constructs has also come to embellish a variety of theoretical nuances. For example, as the construct of organizational recovery finds itself grounded in risk-analysis and organizational failure (Morrow et al., 2007), researchers have directed much of their scholarly considerations to the notion of learning (June-Young Kim et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2017). Or, with the construct of resilience tracing back to both psychological (Coutu, 2002) and ecological studies (Perrings, 1998), insights have come to strongly embed the notion of responsive capabilities for change in a broader micro- and macro-level context. Yet, such variances notwithstanding, we argue responsive constructs to all essentially adhere to the same idea of recuperation in change - to not shy away from incorporating the occasional blow, but to focus on rebounding afterwards.

4.2.3 The dichotomous state of formative and responsive capabilities

Although both conversations on organizations' capacity for change have been relatively well-developed separately, little interaction between the two can effectively be noted. In this sense, the literature strikes as remarkably dichotomous: divided between two ends that are considered opposed or, at the very least, decidedly different. Yet, with both types of constructs essentially contributing to a similar core logic, the rationale behind such stringent segregation seems puzzling at best – for why keep in isolation what is basically tapping from the same vein?

A major reason for this division of the adaptability literature, is what we here wish to mark as the implicitly event-based understanding of organizational adversity – or the assumption that adversity strikes a clear wedge in time, with organizational actions being taken either before, or after such wedge is struck (Williams et al., 2017). In the conversation on (strategic) agility, for example, authors have a tendency to write almost physically on their subject matter (e.g., "the Japanese threat didn't materialize" (Doz & Kosonen, 2008, p. 105), to "look forward and backward" (Lewis & Smith, 2014, p. 60), "to spot a fleeting opportunity" (Sull, 2009, p. 80)), hence relating to the notion of organizational adversity as something tangible and consequently existential – either it *is* at a given moment, or it is not. Similar event-based logic of adversity can also be marked in more responsive streams of thought: for example, with many resilience studies examining firms' responses to instances of clear 'shock' (e.g., Dai et al. (2017); Fiksel et al. (2015); Weick (1993)), adversity often comes to be implicitly marked as a sudden, temporally confined occurrence. As a consequence, we find many authors on organizational change to almost automatically position themselves in one of two temporal segments – either before, or after adversity has marked organizational time.

In reality, however, adversity might be far less dividing than what is often assumed in these articles. Rather than representing a mere event, adversity finds itself increasingly marked as representing a *process*, or a consecutive interlinkage of events that evolves temporally (Hernes, 2008; Hernes & Schultz, 2020; Roux-Dufort, 2009; Williams et al., 2017): "A process extended in space and time, where a triggering event is the result of a long period of incubation – that is, crisis/adversity as occurring in phases" (Williams et al., 2017, p. 737). Yet, when endorsing the idea of such temporal interconnection within adversity, one essentially also has to acknowledge that a strict segregation of the adaptability conversation in either *pre* or *post* constructs might not be very sensible – instead, both types of constructs might be decidedly interlinked, with adversity "serving as a fault line, that hinges between a degenerative organizational past evolution and a future of change" (Roux-Dufort, 2007, p. 106). In the remainder of this chapter, we will work to further advance this conceptual inclination - deducing argumentation that justifies a more interwoven consideration of formative and responsive constructs of organizational adaptability.

4.3 On the interrelation of capability constructs

When conceding to adversity as marking a process rather than an event, one essentially acknowledges the boundary between formative and responsive capabilities for change to no longer be starkly divisive. However, while such reconceptualization of adversity offers a first understanding of *why* capability constructs might be interrelated, it does not suffice for understanding the very *mechanics* that may work to pull contrasting notions together: just how can an organization's ability for changing responsively pass on to it better being able to changing formatively – and vice versa? Hence, having set out what to understand when relating to the notions of formative and responsive capabilities separately, we here develop several theoretical arguments on how each type of construct could be fundamentally enabling to its counterparty – transcendent of intrinsic opposition, by being inherently interdependent at the same time.

4.3.1 How responsive capabilities of change enable formative capabilities

In this first section, we will develop the theoretical case for how responsive capabilities for change can work to enable their formative counterparts. To allow for structure of argumentation, we will build our conceptual reasoning around those capacities generally called for by formative scholars as imperative to develop: i.e., a capacity for sensing, a capacity for collectively committing, and a capacity for flexibly moving organizational means (Doz & Kosonen, 2008; Teece et al., 1997; Volberda, 1996). Guided by such structure, three conceptual arguments will be consecutively set

out - responsive capabilities as (i) offering the experience to recognize adversity; (ii) decentralizing decision-making; and (iii) marking resources as fundamentally mobile.

By offering the experience to recognize adversity. First, drawing from the literatures on (learning from) crises (e.g., Oliver, Calvard, & Potocnik, 2017; Williams et al., 2017) and organizational sensemaking (e.g., Weick & Quinn, 1999; Weick et al., 2005), it should be understood that coming to terms with adversity is certainly not a forthright venture. Rather than representing incidents that are easily perceptible in advance, adversity has been frequently denounced as being both highly subjective and retrospective in nature (Holt & Cornelissen, 2014): through ex-post sensemaking rather than pro-active anticipation, the organization comes to recognize what it needs to critically adjust to (Carroll, 1998; Weick, 1995). Yet, relating such ex-post observability of adversity to the conversation on organizations' capacity for change, formative constructs seem critically hamstrung by their perceptional stance: for how to proactively act on adversity, if such affair is deemed too airy to perceive in foresight – how to avoid impact with something that only exposes itself in retrospect?

It is in this vein of thought that we argue the parallel development of responsive capabilities to prove potentially supportive: by being able to successfully bounce back from situations of hardship, organizations can gradually become more proficient in proactively recognizing what spells misfortune further on. Note that this does not mean that having successfully rebounded from - for instance - the adverse impact of a unanticipated substitute product will help the organization to better recognize regulatory modifications eventually turning awry: in all cases, some similarity of events seems necessary, allowing the feedback from a first experience to remain instructive when prospecting a second (Dahlin et al., 2018; D. Smith & Elliott, 2007; Stouten et al., 2018). Yet, while the responsively adaptable organization might not find itself more capable to recognize adversity in general, it *can* be expected to find itself more wary of adversity through similar events. Or, to quote one of the CEOs interviewed by Cannon and Edmondson (2005, p. 304), asked for his reasons for broadcasting a critical error company-wide: "You can bet no one makes that mistake anymore!". By helping to keep the entity afloat throughout its coming to terms with what does and doesn't work, responsive capabilities for change can thus allow organizations to establish a more formative sense throughout - by investing in its proficiency of overcoming painful setbacks, the firm can come to appreciate what not to do in future discourse. In this way, we argue responsive and formative capabilities to be intricately interlinked through experience and learning from failure – to actively encounter adversity, and better pick up on related events further on.

By decentralizing decision-making. Second, while the act of sensing adversity represents an important first step for any organization to adapt, it is not a sufficient one: before an organization can effectively adjust to what it recognizes as being amiss, several authors have marked it vital for the firm to also be represented by a unified decision-making body - a supportive coalition, that collectively backs the change in question (Bowler, 2006; Lechner & Floyd, 2012; Man Zhang & Greve, 2019). That such unified coalition might be hard to assemble in a purely formative manner, should be well understood: with change amending the status-quo through which decision-makers find themselves legitimized, individual interests may block the adaptation proactively envisioned – either watering down its intensity, or doing away with the need to opt in altogether (Doz & Kosonen, 2007; Stieglitz, Knudsen, & Becker, 2016). In this respect, should an organization look to work exclusively on formative capability constructs, we expect long-term outlooks to repeatedly clash with the short-term interests of a dominant decision-making entity.

However, should the organization concurrently align its formative aspirations with a more responsive capability set, we argue it to have much better prospects of curtailing such back-office power plays. The reason for this relates to responsive capabilities' broad hierarchical roots: given the constructs' survivalist aims, responsive capabilities essentially rely on the involvement of all people closely related to potential points of critical failure – irrespective of what those people's hierarchical statuses may be (Carroll, Rudolph, & Hatakenaka, 2002; Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). By tapping into the point of view of all who can help to keep the organization afloat, responsive capabilities safeguard the organizational course from being predominated by the vested interests of a small group of individual top players (Hamel & Välikangas, 2003; Roberts, 1990a). While such broadening of people brought into the change equation serves the responsive process first and foremost, it stands to reason to assume its implications for a more formative stance to be no less significant: for if decision-making is broadened on account of something as crucial as the organization's bare survival, who is to again constrain such decentralization for prospects less dire and immediately critical? As such, we argue the introduction of responsive capabilities to liberalize an organization's decision-making processes beyond elitist associations – eventually allowing the organizational entity to also relate to formative capabilities of change in a more objective, and less politicized way.

By marking resources as fundamentally mobile. Having both identified adversity and committed to changes for dealing with it, there is one final bottle neck by which authors have marked formative changes to find themselves halted all too often – that is, by not being allocated the necessary means for making commitments happen (Herold, Jayaraman, & Narayanaswamy,

2006; Klingebiel & Rammer, 2014; Noda & Bower, 1996). Drawing from the literature on organizational resources, several authors have noted redistributions to be surprisingly difficult, with managers typically 'escalating commitment' to an appropriation already in place (Brockner, 1992; Staw, 1981). We quote Sleesman, Conlon, McNamara, and Miles (2012, p. 541): "One of the most robust and costly decision errors addressed in the organizational sciences has been the proclivity for decision-makers to maintain commitment to losing courses of action, even in the face of quite negative news – [to keep] throwing good money after bad". Resource allocation schemes are thus marked as startlingly rigid, even when their benign purposes for the organization's future course can be effectively put to question (Vermeulen & Sivanathan, 2017). From this outset, those looking to exclusively opt in for more formative forms of adaptability again seem up for quite the challenge – for if prospects of potential wins or losses do not suffice to move resources into new directions, how is a formative shift to be effectuated at all?

It is in this vein of thought that we again argue responsive capabilities to work as facilitator to their formative counterparts. Facing adversity in a responsive mode, losses cannot be done off as potentially non-consequential – all too often, they endanger the very survival of the firm (Reeves et al., 2016). Conceived from a responsive angle, it is therefore reasonable to assume the question of resource reallocation to be far less deadlocked than when considering that same issue from a purely formative point-of-view: when drawing up resource contingency plans in the spirit of responsive adaptability, the firm cannot afford to keep any resource irrevocably fixed - either the resource serves to protect organizational survival, or it perishes along with the entity as a whole (Roberts, 1990b). What is more, however, is that we argue such prying-loose of resource allocation through responsive adaptability to potentially extend well beyond the responsive occasion at hand: for by conceptualizing hypothetical 'if-then' scenarios, the responsively adaptable organization inadvertently introduces new ways of thinking about resources and their allocation - their appropriation demonstrably not set in stone (Vermeulen & Sivanathan, 2017), but dynamically attuned to the wants and needs of both present and future states-of-play. By finding itself forced to reallocate means out of necessity, we argue the responsively adaptable organization to grow gradually accustomed to the notion of organizational means being essentially versatile; by acting responsively, the firm can nurture the more flexible stance to resource allocation a formatively adaptable form fundamentally requires - yet stumbles to provide on its own accord.

4.3.2 How formative capabilities of change enable responsive capabilities

Next, turning the conceptual tables, we theoretically consider how formative capabilities of change can in turn enable the effectuation of responsive capabilities. To structure such discourse, we will

arrange our argumentation on the basis of those elements raised most determinative for successful responsive adaptation: i.e., the impact of adversity, the frequency of adversity, and the duration of adversity (Linnenluecke, 2017; Morrow et al., 2007; Williams et al., 2017). Doing so, three specific arguments will be developed - formative capabilities as (i) dampening adverse impact through anticipation; (ii) providing time for regeneration; and (iii) cutting short adversity from growing worse.

By dampening adverse impact through anticipation. First, although both responsive and formative capability constructs generally relate to the notion of being sensitive to adversity, it is notable that the levels of premonition implicated in both are significantly different. Responsive constructs, for their part, implicate little conscious premonition: only when things have already taken a turn for the worse is the organization expected to pick up on them (Annarelli & Nonino, 2016; de Oliveira Teixeira & Werther Jr, 2013; Van Der Vegt et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2017). An important consequence of such *ad hoc* approach, however, is that the organization fundamentally aspires to respond to something it has not been specifically preparing for: operating primarily on organizational reflexes, responsive capabilities allow little to no time for case-specific preparation. In this way, to be able to change in a primarily responsive mode demands from the organization to expeditiously distill a tailor-made response from what is essentially general preparation - leading up to a state in which the organization can only hope for its responsive actions to suffice in the particular case at hand.

This approach for picking up on adversity is significantly different from the one operated by more formative constructs: in these outsets, the organization aims to map out specific occurrences that can potentially go amiss, implicating more elevated levels of premonition (Nadkarni & Narayanan, 2007; Volberda, 1996). While such prospective thinking can always turn out to be incomplete or include evaluations that will not be as dire or as modest as initially believed (Battistella et al., 2017; Eppink, 1978; Vecchiato, 2015), it does provide the organization with some preliminary notion of which events will potentially backfire on the entity in question. In this sense, while geared to evade adversity incoming, the organization's formative capabilities may also come to inform a more responsive stance throughout: should the organization fail to avoid an adverse event, its formative notion still works to inform the organization of what it is to react to - by anticipating what punches are coming in, the organization may find itself better able to wither them should they eventually make contact. As such, we argue formative capabilities of change to enable their responsive counterparts by visualizing what may go awry: by broadly exploring those events that

can cause future hardship, the organization may find itself better prepared to deal with adversity in case evasion proves unsuccessful.

By providing time for regeneration. Second, for many adherents of responsive capabilities of change, ultimate intentions typically resonate some form of 'zero-trauma' (Coutu, 2002; Kossek & Perrigino, 2016; Linnenluecke, 2017; Williams et al., 2017): to ensure an organization smoothly adapts to challenges presented, experiencing 'no calamitous surprises, no convulsive reorganizations, no colossal write-offs, and no indiscriminate, across-the-board layoffs' (Hamel & Välikangas, 2003, p. 53). While such intentions of impact-free responsiveness are admirable, one always has to remain aware that they represent the idealized version of responsive adaptability – the perfect state, in which the organization has come to master the idea put forward. For most organizations in practice, however, such state of mastery has been noticed not to materialize straight away: for many organizations, responsive capabilities need to be intensively practiced before they are eventually comprehended (Fiksel et al., 2015; Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003). In this respect, when most real-life organizations react to things going awry, they do not yet fully succeed in accomplishing a painless response to adversity – limiting, rather than fully dismantling the trauma in question (Ortiz-de-Mandojana & Bansal, 2016).

One important consequence of such reactivity of restricted rather than zero trauma, is that most organizations will not be able to continuously wither adversity popping up: for the majority, some respite after having bounced back seems necessary before being able to rebound again (Annarelli & Nonino, 2016; Kunisch, Bartunek, Mueller, & Huy, 2017; Lord, Dinh, & Hoffman, 2015; Staudenmayer, Tyre, & Perlow, 2002). It is from this angle of timing and regeneration that formative capabilities for change may prove rather essential to the sustainable performance of the organization's responsive capacities: by working to avoid the occasional adverse event, formative capabilities may offer the organization time to recover after having reacted to a state of adversity materializing. Formative capabilities, as such, might not necessarily represent vital elements for the one-time display of its responsive counterpart, as much as that they might represent crucial facilitators for keeping up such responsive composure sustainably. In this way, we assert formative capabilities to be facilitating to the responsive capabilities of an organization for reasons of regeneration: by allowing to occasionally evade adversity altogether, formative capabilities support the organization's recovery in the aftermath of dealing with incoming hardship - relieving the burden put on changing responsively.

By cutting short adversity from growing worse. Finally, when considering adversity as a temporally delineated event, the question of organizations' capacity for change always seems strictly binary: either the firm is able to successfully evade adversity upcoming, or it is not – either the firm is able to successfully recover from adversity, or it is not. However, when appreciating adversity not as a singular event but as a chain of interlinked (small) instances (Hernes & Schultz, 2020; Roux-Dufort, 2007; Williams et al., 2017), such binary interpretation no longer suffices: if adversity is not simply understood as a circumstance that either *is* or *isn't,* the organization's capacity to address such adversity will also no longer be a mere question of either success, or failure – of either black, or white. Instead, both formative and responsive adaptability will logically come to span many different shades of grey: *how well* has the organization's formative capabilities allowed it to side-step instances of adversity materializing – and *how deep* a trench will the organization's responsive capabilities have to pull out from in consequence?

From this angle, the potency of the organization's responsive capabilities seem intricately associated with the aptitude of its more formative capabilities: for while the organization might not be able to bypass all instances amounting to the eventual harm, it might be successful in evading some – cutting short the adverse process that the organization will need to responsively overcome in consequence. In this way, being formatively adaptable might render the task the organization faces responsively less arduous: by working to avoid some events that would otherwise have chained up adversity all the more forcefully, the organization might see its capabilities of bouncing back less strained. Relating to the scholarly insight on recovering from organizational setback, we argue this to be no minor feature to accomplish. While bouncing back from adversity is always the aim, being able to effectively do so has been repeatedly marked as strongly related to the severity of the adverse circumstances faced (Morrow et al., 2007; Pearce & Robbins, 1993; Trahms et al., 2013) – trying to work the organization back from a near-bankruptcy experiences is evidently not the same as recovering from a minor slump in sales. As such, should the organization wish to improve its outlook on adapting responsively, we argue it to find its efforts facilitated by working on its formative capabilities in parallel – to cut short adversity from growing worse, and curb the downward spiral the organization may need to recover from.

4.4 Discussion

In a first section, this chapter has marked the contrast of formative and responsive capability constructs conceptually, grounding the terms in extant change literature. In a second section, we have set out how - despite such noted contrast - each type of construct can also be understood as

essentially enabling to the rationale of the other. In this discussion section, we will culminate such paradoxical logic by discussing how the interrelation between formative and responsive capability constructs can be conceptually re-appreciated - representing both as part of a *duality*.

In what follows, we first delve into the ramifications of a dualistic perspective for the field of organizations' capacity for change, setting out what to expect when deciding to talk duality in this context. Next, we mark how the views as set out in this chapter come to advance the field of organizational change theoretically, as well as practically. Finally, we conclude this chapter by setting out avenues for further research.

4.4.1 Towards a dualistic view on organizations' capacity for change

In the first half of this chapter, we have marked formative and responsive capability constructs as being decidedly oppositional, contrasting each other on elementary features such as temporal emphasis, primary rationale, and conceived adaptability potential. In the second half, however, we have highlighted that this state of definite contrast does not bar both types of constructs from being mutually enabling as well: through multiple mechanisms have we shown the organization to find its formative capabilities for change facilitated by it simultaneously pursuing responsive capabilities, and vice versa. Given this peculiar combination of contrast concurring with facilitation, we argue that formative and responsive constructs cannot simply be interpreted as dichotomous choices – either one, or the other. Instead, we mark it more in line with organizational reality to appreciate both from an inherently dualistic outset – "stressing their interdependence, without merging them" (Farjoun, 2010, p. 204). Figure 4.1 illustrates such perspective noted.

Figure 4.1 Harmonizing formative and responsive capabilities for change
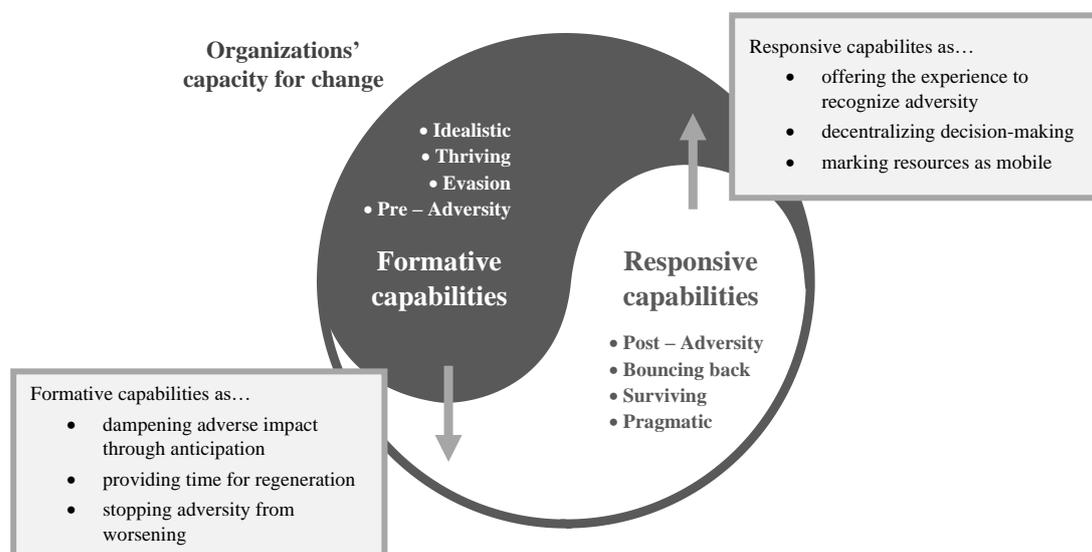
Pitching organizations' change capabilities as a duality, it is crucial to understand that formative and responsive constructs are jointly constitutional: as the various arguments developed in this essay highlight, working but either side of the organizational capability spectrum separately would deprive the organization of the strong enabling forces offered by its counterpart. In this way, formative and responsive capacities seem inherently tied in, to 'gradate and fold into one another' (Farjoun, 2010, p. 216). They represent capabilities that are distinct in temporal contrast, yet unified in effectuation – existing, thus, as interrelated sides of a banded whole (Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016; W. K. Smith, Erez, Jarvenpaa, Lewis, & Tracey, 2017). Yet, while a dualistic perspective of organizational change capabilities emphasizes tie-in, we argue that it does not mean for formative and responsive categories to be best dissolved in total unison (Dittrich, Jaspers, van der Valk, & Wynstra, 2006; Fairhurst et al., 2016): characterized by their own particular set of qualities, formative and responsive capabilities are, and should always be, essentially distinct. Should we blend them together without paying heed to their peculiar features, we risk to 'oversimplify the complications of organizational life' (Lewis, 2000, p. 774), draining paradoxical forces from spurring any progress whatsoever (W. K. Smith et al., 2017). As such, the distinction between both types of capabilities for change is no less important to acknowledge than is their mutual interconnection: for it is this disparity that defines both sides in essence; that solidifies their ceaseless correspondence; and that bounds both together in coupled captivation (W. K. Smith et al., 2017).

To exemplify the dualistic reconceptualization here advanced, one conversation we consider as coming rather close to the logic of balancing both formative and responsive capabilities for change is that on the so-called 'high-reliability organization' (HRO), developed primarily in the 1990s and 2000s (Roberts, 1990a; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2008). While having been chiefly advanced in relation to safety-related issues of highly complex work environments such as aircraft carriers or nuclear power plants, it is worth acknowledging the HRO conversation to inadvertently compress the very insights that later came to imbue the literature on organizational change in different tracks (Christianson, Sutcliffe, Miller, & Iwashyna, 2011, p. 2) – namely, to sidestep adversity before it escalates ('problem detection'), and to rebound quickly in case it does ('problem management'). One of the conversation's most explicit examples of dualistic thinking can be found in the five processes of 'mindful organizing', as advanced by Weick and Sutcliffe (2001): by being *preoccupied with failure*, *reluctant to simplify*, and *sensitive to operations*, managers are called to escort their organization sensibly around adversity materializing; yet by being *committed to resilience* and *deferent to expertise*, Weick and Sutcliffe (2006) also stimulate the organization to

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work on its responsive disposition in parallel. Hence, when delving in the HRO logic, one can appreciate the contrasting qualities of being either formatively or responsively adaptable, yet – at the same time - also feel the conversation to explicitly 'recognize countervailing symbiotic influences' (Farjoun, 2010, p. 218) – to pull together, what is concurrently noted as distinct.

Note that this does not imply that we here call for all conversations on formative and responsive constructs of change to suddenly be mashed together, compensating for an extant state of segregation. In fact, when re-evaluating organizations' capacity for change from a dualistic perspective, we argue it should be neither unity nor contrast that comes to claim attentional dominance: rather, it is precisely the balance between these two that we mark as potentially enriching (Fairhurst et al., 2016; Farjoun, 2010; Schad, Lewis, Raisch, & Smith, 2016). Bringing together the conceptual logics of formative and responsive capabilities while keeping them apart, we argue both the literature and the dualistically inspired organization to best advance the capacity for change through unified contrast – to build on paradoxical tensions, and consolidate different sides of what is, essentially, the same coin.

In the same disclaiming vein, by no means does the dualistic view here advanced implicate that all organizations focusing either on formative or responsive capabilities for change will necessarily find their intentions failing, nor does it mention that organizations picking up on both simultaneously will outperform their peers per se: it merely marks it reasonable to expect the former group will have a significantly harder go at being adaptable than will the latter. While the mechanisms here marked make the theoretical case for formative and responsive change capabilities as enabling each other through contrast, the specific conditions of practice need always be considered. For example, it can be expected that not all organizational leaders can successfully combine the somewhat different focus required by formative and responsive capabilities. Or, should the organizational context be ambiguous to the extent that hardly any adverse incident can at all be foreseen (Carroll, 1998), it stands to reason that responsive capabilities will only marginally support such organization's formative capacities. Finally, should the organizational configuration be set up strictly divisive between units focusing on crisis resolution and those focusing on business-as-usual (Williams et al., 2017), one can again expect the general mechanisms noted here to be hardly poignant – not because they do not have the potential to, but because their interrelation is severed by the reality of the organization in particular. As such, while the dualistic take on organizations' capacity for change calls for a decisive rethinking away from dichotomy, it cannot be expected to overrule an organizational context supporting such dichotomy by design. The dualistic view displays potential - not dogma, or foregone conclusion.

4.4.2 Implications and contributions

On a theoretical note, by advancing a perspective that can be marked as inherently integrative (Farjoun, 2010; M. I. Reed, 1997), this chapter works to explicitly bridge formerly disparate bodies of knowledge. While the most evident of linkages established relates to that developed between different types of change capability constructs – namely, formative and responsive constructs – we also wish to mark this chapter as constructively linking each type more thoroughly together in its own respect – either solidifying them as formative, or as responsive terms of organizational adaptability. Laying bare how streams of interest contrast one another, enable one another, and are essentially interrelated, this chapter offers directions for both scholars and managers on how to make sense of the wildly proliferate field of organizations' capacity for change – adding structure to a conversation of astonishing breadth and diversity. Next, by relating constructs on change capabilities both within and between their distinctive categories, this chapter does not so merge as much as that it cross-fertilizes extant streams of scholarly thinking on organizational change (Alvesson et al., 2017; Rousseau et al., 2008). Reconceiving formative and responsive capability constructs as dualistically interrelated, this chapter shapes related streams of thinking into a meta-theoretical framework: an overarching perspective or paradigm (Lewis & Smith, 2014) that acknowledges rather than erodes the distinctive value of contrasting construct types - allowing extant research tracks to empower each other in unison, while also holding their own. Finally, by marking formative and responsive constructs as essentially interdependent, this chapter highlights both the relevance and implications of reframing the notion of adversity within the change literature from event, to process (Hernes, 2008; Williams et al., 2017). Re-appreciating adversity faced by adaptable organizations as a fundamentally dynamic phenomenon, this chapter showcases how a shift in the literature's baseline assumptions works to reconfigure insights established – adding new knowledge, and revaluing those insights already established.

From a more practical point of view, by indicating how change capabilities can work to enable one another, this chapter reinforces the actual development of change capabilities for contemporary firms. Highlighting a successful implementation of formative and responsive capabilities to be inherently mutual, this chapter offers managerial practitioners an integrated outlook on how to make use of insights developed: rather than committing their organizations to the development of either formative or responsive capabilities, this chapter marks the simultaneous consideration of both capability types to be especially pertinent – to build on the complementarities of knowledge established, and solidify change in real-life applications. Pinpointing this statement more concretely by means of example, we argue organizations should not aim to work, for

instance, on agile capabilities - such as anticipating trends, dialoguing amongst managers, or modularizing business systems (Doz & Kosonen, 2010) – if not simultaneously opting for the development of more responsive capabilities as well – such as working through improvisation (Coutu, 2002), or appreciating variation (Hamel & Välikangas, 2003): for while putting up the effort to develop along both lines can be more intensive to bear, this chapter marks the return of such simultaneous development to be disproportionately larger than when addressed in isolation. Practically, hence, we argue formative and responsive capabilities for change are to be taken up in parallel – for without one, we assert the other will be considerably more difficult to work with.

An important implication for managers, however, is that they in essence will need to display the prowess to harmonize the at times different requirements of both formative and responsive capabilities. In terms of people, hence, a dualistic interpretation of formative and responsive capabilities for change puts increased emphasis on the need for organizational managers to step up as actual 'leaders' – for without sensible guidance, we expect it will prove fairly difficult for organizations to fully capitalize on any dualistic synergies aimed for.

4.4.3 Directions for further research

Linking up with a dualistic perspective of unified contrast, this chapter offers new outsets for the scholarly development of organizations' capacity for change, supporting the sustainable advancement of a body of knowledge that has been raised as vital to the tenable performance of contemporary firms (Birkinshaw & Ridderstråle, 2017; Reeves et al., 2016). In this paragraph, we highlight the tracks of further research considered most opportune.

First, having marked the literature as fragmented, we would like to decidedly call out for literature reviews that span multiple constructs of organizations' capacity for change: what do constructs hold in common, and how do they differ? What common ground, for example, does the literature on flexibility share with that on ambidexterity – and where do insights potentially collide? How different is our scholarly thinking on the concepts of resilience and agility – and just how similar are they when juxtaposed? While the conversation on organizational change is admirably rich in publications and terminology, its sense of common ground seems surprisingly small. Should we intend to brace the conversation for tenable advancement, we argue it critical to step beyond extant boundaries of segregation, and harmonize insights as developed in isolation.

Next, while this chapter has mainly worked to introduce the dualistic notion to the field of organizations' capacity for change in general, we argue it would be interesting to advance conceptual efforts that would operate more specifically on these groundworks – indicating how a

construct can, in its own respect, benefit from the logic it inherently contrasts. How can the formative emphasis of constructs such as flexibility, agility, or ambidexterity be specifically understood from responsive insight; and how can the responsive emphasis of constructs such as resilience, robustness, and recovery benefit from a more formative rationale as well? As we have indicated most of these constructs to place particular nuances within the larger change category they adhere to – either formative, or responsive - we argue such act of specification to be inherently valuable. For example, tapping from the structural emphasis of ambidexterity, how to alter the organizational configuration fit for proactive exploration to also be capable of picking up on a trend completely missed at first? Or, relating to the more psychological rooting of the resilience construct, how to make managers not only ready for failure, but also cognitively cautious vis-à-vis success? Shifting to the construct of dynamic capabilities: how to supplement the routine-based learning emphasis with an angle that is inherently failure-driven? Rather than marking this avenue as a stringent call for re-conceiving those constructs already developed, we wish to position it as an act of tapping synergies long-since present: to further strengthen and appreciate the distinct logic of each particular construct, by juxtaposing it with a rationale of contrasting inspiration.

Finally, although this chapter has delivered on the dualistic notion from a theoretical outset, we deem it highly relevant to corroborate, sharpen, or even rebut the ideas developed here by means of empirical observation: do organizations opting in on formative capabilities effectively have an easier go at responsive capabilities; and do responsively adaptable organizations prove to be more effective when looking into more formative constructs as well? While cross-sectional studies could offer preliminary insights in this respect, we consider longitudinal, in-depth cases to be most relevant – potentially setting out the nuance and depth that less temporally embedded studies would, in our view, fail to provide.

4.5 Conclusion

That the conversation on organizational change is to endure in secluded fragmentation, does not stand the test of reason. Advancing formative and responsive change capabilities as dualistically interrelated, this chapter offers new prospects on how to meaningfully harmonize the various insights as presently available in the conversation on organizations' capacity for change. Doing so, this chapter hopes to open up a way forward for scholars that is decidedly multi-modal, and interweave insights developed to a more practical whole for managers in the field – supporting the sustainable further advancement of organizational change as a field of research, and allowing practitioners to solidly make use of it.

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Chapter 5.

On the dynamics of failure in organizational change: A dialectical perspective [5]

Abstract

How does failure emerge and develop during organizational change? As organizations are pushed for change, the notion of failure that relates to change becomes gradually ingrained in contemporary research. However, with studies having primarily added to the conversation from a static outset, extant scholarly work might not fully capture the transience that marks change in essence. This chapter contributes to the literature on failure in change by advancing a dialectical perspective, offering the scholarly community insight in the emergence and development of failure as happening in three processes: a retentive process, a reactive process, and a recursive process. Marking failure's emergence and development as a dialectic, this essay notes failure in organizational change to be as generative as it is deteriorating, paving the way for both success and failure to continuously remit.

Keywords

Failure, Success, Change, Dynamics, Dialectics, Organization

5.1 Introduction

Although organizations are increasingly pushed for change (Birkinshaw & Ridderstråle, 2017), the rate at which change programs succeed remains notoriously low (Palmer et al., 2016) - with the majority of initiatives not reaching goals intended, it is failure, not success, that seems to reign supreme. 'Simply put, change often leads to failure' (Mellahi & Wilkinson, 2004, p. 26). Given this reality, the scholarly community has increasingly started to pick up failure as a research subject: with topics ranging from causes of failure (Sheppard & Chowdhury, 2005), to implications of failure (Anheier, 1999; Wilkinson & Mellahi, 2005), and strategies to develop from failure (Edmondson, 2011; Shepherd & Cardon, 2009), research on failure no longer marks as 'secondary to the study of organizational success' (Wilkinson & Mellahi, 2005, p. 531) - it is increasingly validated for its instructive capacity. 'A closer understanding of […] failure has as much to contribute to the understanding of strategy as the continued study of success' (Sheppard & Chowdhury, 2005, p. 239).

However, despite the developing body of knowledge on failure, it is notable that the majority of extant empirical publications has studied the construct from a static, cross-sectional perspective (Haunschild, Polidoro, & Chandler, 2015). 'Most studies on failure have adopted a fairly static orientation, rather than a time-sensitive, processual perspective' (Heracleous & Werres, 2016, p. 491). As a result, while the scholarly community has developed significant insight on failure as a potential *state* of organizational change, there is only limited understanding of how the *dynamics* of failure are to be apprehended in such context. That such time-sensitive perspective is crucial for the development of our theoretical understanding of failure has long been noted. We quote Anheier (1999, p. 14): 'We have to differentiate between failure as a process and failure as an outcome. Then we will be in a better position to understand how some failures become successful and how some initial successes can turn into failures.' Yet, with calls of striking similarity still being raised almost two decades later, it seems that scholarly inquiry on the dynamics of failure has not lost pertinence: 'To better understand failure […] we must decouple processes and outcomes' (Dahlin et al., 2018, p. 30). With time being an inescapable part of the reality that organizations face, studies that hinge on a transient perspective can offer insights to the conversation on failure that are by definition excluded by static orientations – contributing to our understanding of the film in motion, rather than its momentary snapshots (Langley, 2009; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Furthermore, with organizations increasingly pressed for change that proves to be failure-prone (Birkinshaw & Ridderstråle, 2017; Kotter, 2014), we argue the act of gathering insight on how failure plays out dynamically is vital for the continued survival of contemporary firms (Langley,

2009). Therefore, this chapter addresses the following research question: how does failure emerge and develop during organizational change?

Based on an in-depth case study in the container handling industry, this chapter contributes to the literature on failure in change by advancing a dialectical perspective, offering the scholarly community insight in the emergence and development of failure as happening in three processes. In a retentive process, lack of deviation from a change approach causes organizational tensions to build. In a reactive process, tensions flare up and incite a change approach antithetical to the one initially adhered to. Finally, in a recursive process, synthesis is induced through the positively framed recollections of failure by the organization's members. Marking failure to animate a continuous interweaving of both success and further failure in organizational change, this essay notes failure's emergence and development to be as generative as it is deteriorating, adding dynamic nuance to extant scholarly insights.

In what follows, we briefly review the literature on failure, introducing a dialectical perspective to the conversation. After setting out our methodology, we present the main findings of our study, depicting the way in which the organization changed and failed to do so in three processes. We reflect on our findings' implications in the discussion section, after which we conclude by linking the limitations of our study to tracks for further research.

5.2 Theoretical background

5.2.1 On failure

In taking up the issue of failure, it is important to note that conceptual clarity is not evident (Mellahi & Wilkinson, 2010). As initial strands of literature on failure developed from studies of bankruptcy and life-cycle analysis, early scholarly work came to refer to failure as a synonym for terms such as organizational mortality, organizational death, exit, and decline (D'Aveni, 1989; Hambrick & D'Aveni, 1988; Mellahi & Wilkinson, 2004). Yet, as research gradually pushed into manifestations of failure that were less threatening to the immediate survival of the firm – think, for example, of project failure (Shepherd & Cardon, 2009; Shepherd, Patzelt, & Wolfe, 2011), strategy failure (Hughes, Hughes, & Morgan, 2010), and innovation failure (S. Collinson & Wilson, 2006) -, the definition of failure gradually developed to encompass a much broader conceptual span: 'Failure, in organizations and elsewhere, is deviation from expected and desired results' (Cannon & Edmondson, 2005, p. 300). Similar broadening took place in the notion of measurements related to the construct: while early studies focused primarily on monetary measures to label organizational endeavours as failed (Wholey, Christianson, & Sanchez, 1992), later scholarly

publications designated the way in which failure was to be evaluated as highly dependent on the context studied, calling for research to be developed through both 'economic and non-economic performance measures' (Anheier, 1999, p. 14). From this perspective, defining clear levels of analysis came be noted as vital for the correct interpretation of any study conducted within the field. 'Organizations are rarely monolithic entities, and their success and failure implies an underlying question that analysts must bring upfront: successful for whom, or a failure for whom?' (Anheier, 1999, p. 14).

While extant literature has been marked as focusing largely on failure as a potential outcome (Heracleous & Werres, 2016) - or an organizational state that is identifiable at a fixed moment in time (Anheier, 1999) -, it would be incorrect to state that a dynamic study of failure finds itself entirely bereft of scholarly grounding. One literature stream that offers relevant hinging points vis-à-vis the emergence of failure is the work that has been delivered on 'the Icarus paradox' (Miller, 1990) or 'the paradox of success' (Audia, Locke, & Smith, 2000): as organizations come to achieve notable success, they are inclined to persist in similar strategic behaviour later on (Westphal & Bednar, 2005), up to the point where their commitment can turn them blind to external developments that necessitate an alternative course of action (Baumard & Starbuck, 2005; Brockner, 1992; Miller & Chen, 1994). In this body of work, the difference between adhering to a static and dynamic perspective becomes starkly apparent – while a cross-sectional interpretation could mark an organization as inherently successful, a more longitudinal evaluation might note the same instance of success as the very antecedent of the organization's eventual downfall (Amason & Mooney, 2008; Burke, 2017). Another literature stream that sets outs building blocks for a dynamic reappraisal of failure, is the currently emerging body of work on how organizations actively develop or learn from failure (Dahlin et al., 2018). While some authors have not advanced a particular connotation when referring to such organizational developments (e.g., Amburgey, Kelly, & Barnett, 1993; Starbuck, 1983), others have marked them more explicitly with a positive interpretation (e.g., Cannon & Edmondson, 2005; Khanna, Guler, & Nerkar, 2016), setting forth failure as paving the way towards an organization's eventual success. Similarly, while some authors have limited their account on learning from failure to *ad hoc* developments (e.g., Edmondson, 2011; Eggers & Song, 2015), others have associated learning from failure with an organization's more deep-rooted historical past (Muehlfeld, Rao Sahib, & Van Witteloostuijn, 2012). That such differences between scholars on the topic of learning from failure abide, should not obscure one particular commonality - namely, that failure is noted as a starting point, from which further organizational development might ensue (Shepherd et al., 2011).

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While these scholarly contributions on antecedents and consequences do provide some touch points for a dynamic understanding of failure, we argue them to lack joint cohesiveness. To this end, we introduce a dialectical perspective – to 'complement, join, and impregnate other process-oriented theoretical approaches' (Langley & Sloan, 2011, p. 272).

5.2.2 On dialectics

Originally conceptualized in the philosophical work of Socrates, Hegel and Marx (Benson, 1977; Langley & Sloan, 2011; Putnam et al., 2016), the notion of dialectics has been aptly used for the advancement of a wide variety of organizational theories, such as complexity theory (Eisenhardt & Brown, 1998), strategic planning theory (Denis, Langley, & Rouleau, 2007), institutional logics theory (Seo & Creed, 2002), and actor-network theory (D. Collinson, 2005). In dialectical thinking, reality is considered to be socially constructed (Schneider, 1971), giving rise to a social order that is consequently marked by tensions and incompatibilities (Benson, 1977). These frictions ceaselessly push-pull in dynamic interplay (Putnam et al., 2016), generating 'a continuous state of becoming' for the social sphere they represent (Farjoun, 2019, p. 136). In this sense, dialectical thinking can be considered as explicitly processual (Langley & Sloan, 2011), focusing attention on how particular social arrangement within organizations develop, are maintained, and - eventually – come to be supplanted (Benson, 1977; Grimes & Cornwall, 1987). This tension-based reconfiguration does not become manifest in isolated phenomena, but is built up across multiple levels and sources, necessitating the researcher to consider the organization studied as an integrated conjoint of social occurrences (Benson, 1977; Nonaka & Toyama, 2002). In organizational studies, dialectical principles have been most often affiliated with the classic Hegelian model (Langley & Sloan, 2011), in which a thesis and an antithesis develop confrontational to one another, to be eventually reconciled in transcendent synthesis – inspiring a new cycle of contestation to ultimately ensue (Hegel & Sibree, 2004). As dialectical thinking has been advanced as 'particularly relevant for comprehending and navigating a world in flux' (Farjoun, 2019, p. 134), we argue it highly suitable to introduce as a theoretical perspective to the conversation on failure in change. Marked by explicit concern for an organization's social sphere and its interdependent fluctuations (Seo, Putnam, & Bartunek, 2004), the theory has been labelled as eminently potent both for the empirical explanation (Benson, 1977; Morrell, 2012) and critical reappraisal (Langley & Sloan, 2011) of organizational processes, opening up new scholarly ground for researchers to explore. Hence, fully recognizing the complexity of change in the social structure that organizations essentially consist of (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995), dialectical thinking offers a

theoretical lens that we consider most apt for tackling the leading research question of this chapter – how does failure emerge and develop during organizational change?

5.3 Methodology

The methodology of this chapter has progressively materialized concurrent with insights from the case unfolding. In what follows, we take up the research design and research context, how the data was collected, and how the collected data was subsequently analysed.

5.3.1 Research design

Guided by the epistemology of social constructivism as inherent within a dialectical perspective (Benson, 1977; Farjoun, 2019), this chapter is based on an abductive qualitative case study of a business-to-business company. Given the literature on failure's dynamics in change to be relatively nascent, we opted for an exploratory case design of instrumental purpose (Edwards, 2010). As we were interested in laying bare dynamics, we adhered to a longitudinal research design, monitoring the gradual development of one focus company over time (Putnam et al., 2016). Building on Langley (2009)'s recommendations on temporal orientation, we decided to combine two approaches: 'tracing backwards' (p.11) into the past through retrospective inquiry, and 'reconstituting the evolving present' (p.14) through real-time involvement for a sustained period of time (i.e., from January 2016, to June 2018).

With design choices having important implications on our conceptual demarcation, we wish to explicitly set out how this chapter will further operationalize key constructs put forward. First, when talking about 'organizational change', we inherently refer to the longitudinal act through which the organization becomes different (Burke, 2017) as evaluated by its own members (Tsoukas, 2000). Second, when referring to 'failure in organizational change', we relate to the firm deviating from a desired setting of supportive social behaviour vis-à-vis the change in question (Cannon & Edmondson, 2005; Gergen & Thatchenkery, 2004) - with 'success in organizational change' hence relating to the firm effectively retaining such desired social behaviour (Cannon & Edmondson, 2005; Gergen & Thatchenkery, 2004). Finally, when talking about 'dialectics', we will consider the objects of opposition as being the different social orders present within the organization at large (Putnam et al., 2016).

5.3.2 Research context

This study was conducted at a major unit of a prominent container handling firm, operational across the globe. For reason of not disclosing sensitive information, we will consistently refer to

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the unit in question as 'BusinessCo', with references to the overarching conglomerate being marked as 'BusinessGroupCo'. As one of the researchers had enjoyed steady professional relations with the firm's head of HR for a period of six years prior to the time of study, we had been allowed a preliminary view on how the organization had rapidly developed since the dawn of the new millennium - and how it had consistently struggled to do so. Based on this understanding and sound relational access point, we considered the firm to offer an excellent setting to study the dynamics of failure in organizational change. For additional contextual information about the company, the industry, and the temporal developments observed, we refer to Appendix 5.1.

5.3.3 Data collection

Empirical material consists of five sources of data, of which Table 5.1 provides an overview.

Table 5.1 Overview of data collection methods used

What	1. Individual interviews	2. Group interviews	3. Projection exercise	4. Archival data – Qualitative surveys	5. Insider validation
Why	Identification of most salient organizational changes encountered	Solicitation of in-depth social experiences throughout changes noted	Solicitation of in-depth social experiences missed out on with interviewer-led methods	Triangulation of verbal responses by means of social tendencies present in the organization at large	Validating insights established by means of insider feedback
Who	Three interviews • Regional Head HR & Corp. Comms. • Manager Dispatch & Confidential Adviser • Head of Operations	Six sessions • Five business units, one union unit • 12 participants of managerial level, 11 of sub-managerial level	One session • Mixed business units • Two participants of managerial level, three of sub-managerial level	Three consecutive surveys • 2013: 373 participants (i.e., 168 man., 205 sub-man.) • 2015: 590 participants (i.e., 233 man., 357 sub-man.) • 2017: 422 participants (i.e., 201 man., 221 sub-man.)	Four sessions • Three provisional meetings with HR (i.e., four man., five sub-man.) • One concluding meeting with chief executives (i.e., 21 man.)
How	• Semi-structured • Interviewer-led • One to two hours duration • On location • Recorded and transcribed verbatim	• Semi-structured • Interviewer-led • One to two hours duration • On location • Recorded and transcribed verbatim	• Unstructured image selection • Respondent-led • Two hours duration • On location • Recorded and transcribed verbatim • Photographed outcome	• 11 open-ended questions • Designed by BusinessCo • Digitally administered	• Interactive • One to two hours duration • On location • Recorded and transcribed verbatim
Bias control	• Multiple researchers reviewing questionnaire • Interviewer as independent from BusinessCo • Reflective notes made directly after each session	• Multiple researchers reviewing questionnaire • Interviewer as independent from BusinessCo • Tapping prior interviews to inquire about salient events • Field notes made on intra-session social interaction • Inter-session cross-check of recollected data	• Non-involvement of interviewer • Interviewer as independent from BusinessCo • Randomized selection of participants • Reflective notes made directly after the session	• Participant threshold (70%) • Same survey conducted over three consecutive editions • No hand in question design: question design as additional source of data	• Insider validation as a means to corroborate both interim and final research findings

Individual interviews. First, to identify those instances of failed change most salient in the organization's developmental track and limit recall bias, we conducted three semi-structured interviews with employees of elevated tenure - i.e., between 13 and 42 years of employment - and different business unit. During explorative accounts, interviewees were asked to reflect on the organization's major developments – present, past, and future -, invited to share any remarks on

when they had considered the organization to be failing, and when not. These one to two hour reflective associations culminated in the identification of organizational change events that had generated considerable friction amongst employees, hence setting the stage for further inquiry on failure. Interviews were recorder verbatim, with reflective notes being made directly after each session.

Group interviews. Next, to gather data on how employees had socially experienced events as marked during individual interviews, six semi-structured group interviews were organized. For reason of mitigating sampling biases, groups were constructed without former knowledge of potential participants, with one researcher novel to the organizational context selecting two to seven employees from a list of names and positions for each business unit. To enhance intra-group social interactions, we opted for groups to be non-mixed in terms of business unit. Whilst three groups were constituted with participants occupying relatively similar hierarchical positions, the remaining three groups were created with participants of both managerial and non-managerial level. As a guide to interviews, a general questionnaire was prepared by one of the researchers, supplemented with unit specific questions based on the quantitative results from three company-conducted surveys researchers were given access to. To improve the validity of questionnaires, all were reviewed by the two other researchers, of which one knew the organization, and one did not. Interviews were conducted by a researcher previously unknown to the organization, with anonymity of respondents being guaranteed. During each session, participants were probed about change events noted to be most salient in individual interviews, asked to set out their view on how the company developed or had been developing throughout these changes, as well as whether or not one approved of such developments. Interviews were recorded in full, with notes being made during the sessions to capture tacit social information such as body language, laughing, raising of voices, group interactions, or notable silence of respondents. To corroborate insights delivered, inter-session cross-checks were conducted as interviews proceeded, with statements made in prior sessions being put up for reflection in later sessions. In addition, three of the groups were re-assembled afterwards to check whether researchers had correctly interpreted statements made.

Projection exercise. To circumvent potential biases by researchers leading respondents in terms of questions, we complemented data as solicited through group interviews with a respondent-led projection exercise. Five participants were selected at random, with researchers again focusing their selection within one business unit to tap more deeply vested social interactions. During this exercise, 50 images were distributed on a table, varying in representation from a depiction of dollar bills to a cartoon on organizational structure. From these images, participants were asked to select

the illustrations that best represented their perceptions of how the organization had managed throughout changes noted, with the positive (success) or negative (failure) interpretation of such events left open. Participants were encouraged to verbally motivate their selection, with researchers only intervening in case of ambiguities. Motivations were recorded verbatim, with notes capturing more tacit information such as body language, etc. The resulting collage was photographed.

Archival data – Qualitative surveys. To triangulate verbal responses with social tendencies as present in the organization at large, we secured access to the qualitative results of three bi-yearly employee opinion polls (i.e., 2013, 2015, 2017), covering the answers of over 70% of BusinessCo's active workforce on 11 open-ended survey questions. Questions all related to particular aspects of potential discontent, with topics ranging from general feel, to specifics on communication, recognition, work-life balance, work environment, etc. While surveys had not been intentionally administered on the topic of how the organization had failed throughout changes conducted, they did address many similar aspects. In addition, as the survey had been conducted analogously in three consecutive editions, we considered survey results to be particularly valuable in terms of longitudinal comparison.

Insider validation. Finally, to validate insights established, three feedback sessions were conducted with people from the HR department at various stages throughout the analysis, allowing us to cross-reference intermediate results with four staff members of managerial level, and five staff members of non-managerial level. These intermediate validations were further complemented with a feedback meeting with the local unit's executive management, organized upon research conclusion. Sessions varied between one and two hours in duration: all consisted of an introductory part in which we briefly presented our provisional thoughts, after which organizational insiders were invited to comment on insights presented and point out potential lapses in judgement. All validation sessions were recorded verbatim. Reflective notes were taken throughout to adequately capture reactions provided.

5.3.4 Data analysis

Empirical material was analysed in a process of abductive theorization, in which 'data and existing theory are considered in tandem' (Dennis A Gioia et al., 2013, p. 21). Throughout the process of data collection, several anomalous or surprising findings came to draw our attention (Van de Ven, 2007), all relating to the same notion of organizational change continuously rebalancing between a state of failing and non-failing, with lessons-learned being latently transmitted. These initial

hunches sowed the seeds for the 'uncodifiable creative leaps' of our analysis (Langley, 1999, p. 691), which were iteratively held against the backdrop of various existing organizational perspectives (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Moving 'back and forth' (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 555) between empirical data and the theoretical outsets of i.a. self-determination theory, framing theory, process theory, and dialectical theory, we eventually came to mark dialectical theory as the conceptual lens most apt for coming to terms with empirical observations made.

Prior to actual analysis, a preparatory step involved the systematization of all available data (Cooper, Schindler, & Sun, 2006). Verbatim transcripts were made for recordings; references to persons, objects or places were anonymized; and all data was uploaded in NVivo software, providing us with a platform to keep track of codifications, queries, and strands of theory developed.

In a first analytical step, data was set out as a narrative, offering a chronology that could serve subsequent analysis (Kathleen M Eisenhardt, 1989; Langley, 1999). In this thick description, one field researcher drew up a portrayal of the (failed) developments that BusinessCo had gone through, focusing predominantly on the social interactions in which these developments took place. This report was put up for check in plenary session, in which both researchers and the organization's HR executives presided to account for the report's accuracy, refining the record by working out inconsistencies marked.

Next, the temporal development of BusinessCo as described in this report was evaluated from an explicitly dialectical lens. To do so, two of the researchers separately scoured the report as crafted, marking the development of the organization in terms of dialectical moments - i.e., thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Both researchers individually noted down: (i) a detailed justification for why they believed particular temporal segments were dialectically interrelated, and (ii) the crux of such temporal segments in particular *leitmotifs* – e.g., 'efficiency-focused', 'family-feel', 'holistic', etc. In a follow-up discussion session, both researchers explicitly compared dialectical moments identified, engaging in constructive dialogue in case of opposing views (Goranzon, Ennals, & Hammeron, 2006). A third researcher, most intimate with the organizational context, took up the role of devil's advocate, pushing the dialogue to remain both critical, as well as conform to organizational reality as observed.

Finally, in order to lay bare the actual dynamics of failing at BusinessCo, we coded empirical material according to the evolution in between dialectical moments identified (see Appendix 5.2; Bryman & Burgess, 2002; Dennis A Gioia et al., 2013). While the informed dialogue had provided

us with a detailed outset of dialectical moments exhibited throughout the organization's ordeals with failure, it did strike us as retaining a largely static quality. Hence, in a first level of coding, we assigned descriptive codes to statements specifically related to semantic cues indicating temporality, such as comparison – e.g., 'compared with', 'rather than', 'as opposed to', etc. –, or chronological reference – e.g., 'now', 'before', 'later', etc. Next, descriptive codes were clustered in a higher level of abstraction, or axial codes – for example, 'feelings of frustration', 'negative voice', and 'active resistance' came to be jointly labelled as 'tensions erupting'. These clustered labels eventually came to be theoretically coded in three leading processes. It is this set of results that provides the basis of this chapter's framework, and which will be set out in the remainder of this text.

5.4 Findings

In this findings section, we set out three processes of failure as identified from a dialectical perspective: (i) a retentive process, in which a change approach is stringently adhered to in spite of alternatives emerging, causing tensions to build within the organization's social atmosphere; (ii) a reactive process, in which tensions looming are externally affirmed and flare up, instigating the advancement of a new change approach that is antithetical to the one initially upheld; and (iii) a recursive process, in which organizational members jointly recollect the positive aspects of prior failure, smoothening tensions experienced in re-combinatory synthesis.

5.4.1 Towards a thesis of failure: Retentive process

In this paragraph, we take up how BusinessCo typically came to a thesis of failure. Constituting what we mark as a retentive process, three developments will be set out: (i) change agents strictly committing to an approach found to be successful, disregarding alternative points of view; (ii) change recipients losing touch with the approach advanced, with tensions covertly building in the organization's social fibre; and (iii) the organization dismissing the notion of failure, causing emerging tensions to gradually fester.

Commitment to realized success. As the organization came to encounter success in organizational change, change agents' common reaction was found to be one of commitment to the approach deemed inherently rewarding. For example, in recollecting the efficiency focus upheld during an acquisition, Employee Group IT 2 noted the approach as being 'omnipresent' for several years: 'With the acquisition, management started to emphasize efficiency – and initially, it worked. Some of us thought this would be just some fading fad, but it proved not to be'. Or, consider the following quote by Employee Operations 2, who marked success as the leading rationale behind agents'

change commitment during downscaling: 'They have been holding true to this idea of broadening up our perspectives for quite some time. It generated enthusiasm initially, and that was enough to keep at it, I guess.' One side-effect of such retained attention for 'successful' change approaches was that those meaning to do things differently were found to be inherently impeded – not because their approach was deemed inappropriate for reasons of content, but because they faced up to an alternative that executives believed had already been proven by merit. 'The approach of retaining efficiency long appeared to be sacred. Only numbers seemed to have voice, at the time' (Employee Finance 3, as commented during the projection exercise). Similar remarks of the organization impeding alternative change approaches were noted in the 2017 qualitative survey: 'People of all levels should be more receptive for alternatives. Only then will we be able to move 'outside-of-the-box', and succeed sustainably.'

Tensions building. In consequence of retaining commitment to approaches deemed inherently successful, we found BusinessCo's change agents to stir tensions inherent in the organization's social sphere to a state of building agitation - inadvertently pushing change approaches well beyond their effective delivery of success. The comments of Manager HR 2, as provided during a feedback presentation, are highly illustrative of this point of tensions building: 'It often goes well initially, after which we begin to hear the first disgruntlements. Then, as we proceed, these initial grumblings pick up and become increasingly noisy. It bubbles, beneath the surface, rumbling for those willing to listen.' As change agents gradually came to be perceived as stringent and unidimensional, employees consistently reported feeling disconnected. 'As change proceeds, it so often turns into a sense of 'they' versus 'us'. 'They' can be supervisors, other departments, customers… you name it – but it's simply a feeling of not relating anymore, of no longer meeting eye-to-eye' (Employee Local IT, marked in the 2015 company survey); "Executives should listen more to people with experience during change" (Employee Engineering, marked in the 2013 company survey). This affective unhinging was often found to be expressed in terms related to doubt (Employee HR 3: 'Initially, I thought that pushing for a more integrated perspective would certainly help us forward […]. But as we keep pushing that same button, I have to confess I'm not so sure anymore'), and was materially manifested in a sense of passive resistance (Employee Group IT 1:'My advice: participate in the façade, say yes to everything, and see what you will do later on'; Employee Corporate Communications 1: 'I don't argue, but I also don't try to excel anymore.').

Dismissive attitude to failure. Covering these tensions building beneath the surface, we marked the process as culminating in an inherently dismissive attitude to failure in general. During periods

of retaining success, all focus was found to be directed at generating outcomes that were in line with prior results. That such focus often proved to be futile, did not appear to curb the fervor of agents' intentions. The following quote by Manager Operations 2, generated in interview regarding a post-acquisition period, is illustrative of this point: 'They wanted to continuously recreate that sense of clarity that was noticeable when we first opted for efficiency after having been acquired. But to me, that seemed impossible to resurge.' Similar remarks were noted during a feedback presentation with Manager HR 2: 'Recreating the conditions that made people enthusiastic about something – we always try to do that, possible or not'. In periods dawning from initial change success, a distinct muteness was found to be lingering about the topic of failure in general - eventually stimulating tacit frictions to further stack. We quote an employee from the HR department, noted in the 2015 company survey: 'Executives should be communicating more intensely, even when they think there is nothing to be said. In my experience, silence generates rumour, with people getting anxious and picking up on banter.'

Hence, by stringently retaining commitment to prior success, we found BusinessCo to stir frictions looming in the organization's social fibre, causing tensions to eventually build up underneath a general inclination of dismissing failure as a possibility.

5.4.2 From thesis to antithesis: Reactive process

In this second paragraph, we consider how BusinessCo generally came to set out an antithesis of response to a thesis of failure unfolding. Constituting what we coin to be a reactive process, three developments will be consecutively covered: (i) indications of failure manifesting in tangible outcomes, legitimizing tensions as covertly present; (ii) tensions erupting in explicit malcontent; and (iii) change agents combating failure with a response that is oppositional to the one initially adhered to.

Failure manifesting in tangible outcomes. While discontent with particular change approaches was often noted to be quite widespread, we found BusinessCo to generally keep its course unaltered until being sparked by a tangible occurrence. A comment by Manager Engineering 1 captures this notion quite well: 'Apparently, they [executives] need something of a wake-up-call before they will get the message. It must explode in their faces before they will be dealing with it.' That sparking events did not seem bound by any particular quality, speaks from the variety of turning points employees came to specify, with both disappointing performance results, bad employee opinion polls, and the shutdown of as sister venture being noted. Yet, what all events did hold in common, was that they rendered explicit tensions long since looming beneath the

surface – collectively affirming employees in a feeling they had previously done off as a nonsensical, private issue. A feedback presentation comment by Manager HR 2, addressing the bad outcome of the 2015 employee opinion poll, is illustrative of this sense of deliverance: 'It was as if it was finally out in the open – that this feeling of things not really being right amongst the people at BusinessCo was finally affirmed. To me, it was something of a relief'. Or, consider the interview statements of Employee Operations 3, reflecting on the company's bad performance after a merger: 'The bad performance results were a sign, for many of us: it wasn't going as well as executives claimed – it was as slumped as many had already felt it to be'. In this sense, while employees' disconnect with organizational change was often found to be endemic for BusinessCo as a whole, we marked the tangible manifestation of failure in particular events to be crucial for branding these feelings as socially legit – setting the fuse for discontent to eventually discharge.

Tensions erupting. With particular manifestations of failure having rendered collective discontent with change salient, we marked tensions erupting within the organization's social sphere to eventually push this nascent saliency to unneglectable levels. As employees noted tangible confirmation for a sense of disconnect they had long since tacitly accumulated, many converted their feelings of doubt into feelings of outspoken frustration. Examples of such frustrations can be found i.a. in the remarks of Employee Operations 2 on the closure of a sister venture ('Enough was enough. We had been messed with long enough!'), in the comments of Employee Engineering 2 on the delayed construction of a new terminal ('See? We told executives from the start it wouldn't fly – and still they pushed ahead!'), or in the recollections of Employee Finance 1 on performance dragging after a conducted merger ('It was maddening, how they [i.e. executives] fumbled away the potential we had'). As feelings of frustration roared about, they inspired a voice of negativity relating to the conduct of the organization in general (Employee Finance – 2015 company survey: 'BusinessCoGroup is a suspicious company, that doesn't trust the people it employs'), eventually engendering a state of active resistance to the way in which the organization addressed its change trajectory. 'They don't have to approach me anymore. I'm done with this' (Manager Engineering 2, marking his disillusion with executive management for not picking up on his grievances throughout the development of a new terminal); 'There was a limit to what we could take. And that limit had been reached' (Employee Group IT 1, highlighting his resentment of management's persistent emphasis on cost-cutting, after having been acquired).

Combative attitude to failure. In result of these social tensions being put out in the open, we found executives to cultivate a combative attitude to failure, instigating a reactionary response to failure as noted. One building block of such attitude was a general longing for rectification, that seemed

to consistently arise among executives when confronted with failure openly notable. 'We have to acknowledge it – we were making big mistakes in the way we dealt with this change of being acquired. We were losing touch with one another. I say, no more!' (Manager Operations 1); 'It had become overpowering, all these initiatives, and we are aware of that now. We tried it – and now we will do better' (Manager HR 1, commenting on the broad change perspective retained throughout the closing of a sister venture). What is more, however, is that this eagerness for rectification was often quite abruptly put to practice, with executives pivoting the organization towards approaches that appeared remarkably antithetical to the ones previously adhered to. Consider the following remark by Employee HR 3, provided when asked to reflect on what a bad employee opinion poll had meant for the organization: 'Confronted with this disappointing poll, executives seemed to suddenly cut all cords with their former approach to change. Breakfast events, innovation contests,… all seemed determined to cut prior problems short.' Similar indications of consecutive change approaches being oppositional to one another can be found in the collage as rendered in the projection exercise, which participants laughingly described as 'the picture of BusinessCo's change trajectory bouncing from left to right'.

Hence, as failure came to be manifest in tangible events, tensions looming in the organization's social fibre flared up for executives to notice, culminating in a response that was highly reactionary and combative to the deemed causes of failure experienced.

5.4.3 Synthesizing from failure: Recursive process

In this final paragraph, we portray how BusinessCo systematically picked up from the act of failure in organizational change, synthesizing insights from prior periods of failure and response. Three developments will be subsequently considered: (i) employees spontaneously recollecting successful aspects of past failure; (ii) prior tensions inspiring a sense of empowerment and positivism; and (iii) employees affirming failure in change as a neutral fact, revitalizing aspects considered sensible.

Recollecting failure's successful aspects. As employees accumulated experience with instances of failed change, we found them to often spontaneously reminisce on these experiences with colleagues of similar tenure. In such occasions, while employees did note instances as failed, we found them to press on the positive aspects related to the change in question – looking for the silver-lining in a situation often considered inherently negative. One such example can be found in the remarks as articulated by Manager Operations 2, spontaneously remarked to his colleagues during a group interview: 'Do you remember those Friday after-work sessions we used to organize

here at the time of the merger? What great times we had!' For this manager, the act of dealing with change in a spirit of kinship had retained an ambience of exceptional virtue, overwriting the more negative connotations previously linked to the change's acclaimed lack of focus. Similar spontaneous remarks were noted by i.a., Employee Finance 2 ('We used to work towards being a family') and Employee Group IT 1 ('It was very pleasant, that atmosphere of kinship that used to vibrate here'). Another example can be found in the comments of Manager Group IT 1 to one of his long-standing peers: 'You remember, right? During the aftermath of the acquisition, we used to orient ourselves in a very commercial way – razor-sharp in our competitive advantage'. Again, rather than stipulating the sense of control that was often related to the acquisition, this manager primarily recalled the positive elements of advancing an efficiency mindset. Important to note during such instances of shared recollection, is that we consistently found employees able to take a step back from their usual position, acknowledging the part they had played in a change's eventual failure. 'I think we can all agree that the efficiency approach had reached its limits, and that we as a team were becoming worked up because of that – effectively making it even worse' (Employee Finance 3, commented during the projection exercise); 'We were fed up with not knowing where to go – but at the same time, our behaviour also encouraged not giving too much direction, I guess' (Employee Local IT 1, reflecting on BusinessCo's merger).

Tensions inspiring empowerment and positivism. Stimulated by this sense of candid recollection, we marked employees to generally express feelings of empowerment, with many labelling their experiences as useful for the organization to develop from. 'I might not know everything about big-wig strategy, but I do know a thing or two about the screw-ups we made. In that sense, I can do something' (Employee Finance 2); 'We've obviously seen a thing or two, being around here. Actually, why won't it be up to us to do something?' (Employee Operations 3, generating affirmative nods of others present in the group interview). In this sense, frictions as once experienced now seemed to stimulate a sense of positivism and constructiveness. 'As a company, we do have our issues. But that also offers stuff to tap, and develop from' (Employee Operations, 2017 company survey); 'We were so frustrated with executives' approach, at the time. But I think we can now honestly see what did work – and pick up on that' (Manager Finance 2, commenting on the change of being acquired, as provided during the projection exercise). Hence, as employees shared positive recollection, they seemed to arouse a sense of energetic activism within each other – now utilizing the frictions they had jointly experienced to generate, rather than tear down.

Affirmative attitude to failure. This positive voice eventually culminated in several instances of grassroots activism, in which employees hinged on their recollection of prior failure's silver-

linings to make a difference for BusinessCo in the present. One such example could be found amongst the white-collar workers of the finance department, who had decided to congregate on a weekly basis to 'bring back the social atmosphere that had brought the company closer together in earlier days' (Employee Finance 2). By tapping back into the positive facets of past change periods, the finance employees tailored the way in which the currently outlived change of upscaling was tackled. Another example could be noted in a feedback presentation with Manager HR 3: despite having expressed her reservations on account of the strict efficiency focus as upheld during a prior acquisition, we now found the manager herself suggesting such operational focus could be virtues to uphold. 'We are an operational business – we need to excel in our process. Maybe our company just needs to become a tat more honest on where our home base is. I'm going to work on that.' Or, consider the spontaneous arrangement of a hotdog booth, which offered free snacks to operational personnel that finished their shift during the change of upscaling. 'Getting everyone back together again, like we used to – that's what we mainly aim to do' (Manager Operations 1, commented in group interview). In this way, we found initiatives sparked by reminiscence to allow organizational members to tinker the overall direction of change to be less stark, and more nuanced to the social and historical idiosyncrasies of the local work environment. 'We, from the fourth floor, are maybe a bit different than the others, I don't know. Sometimes we just have to do something with what we know, with what we have experienced – and go for it!' (Employee Finance 3, commented during the projection exercise).

Hence, by sharing recollection of failure's silver-linings, we found organizational members to tap prior tensions in a constructive way, leading up to a revitalization of beneficial aspects through grassroots activism.

5.5 Discussion

5.5.1 Critical reflections

Considering failure in organizational change from a dialectical perspective, this essay extends extant scholarly insights with an inherently dynamic view (see Figure 5.1): as the findings of our study push the construct of failure beyond the connotation of an isolated event, they highlight a model in which failure unfolds (thesis); is reacted to (antithesis); and eventually stimulates development (synthesis). Marking retentive, reactive and recursive processes to unravel failure in ongoing interaction, this chapter sets out a dynamic in which organizational change comes to 'ebb and flow' with the tensions that systematically underlie it (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 102). While dialectical moments at BusinessCo could be marked as inherently determinative of one another -

up to a state in which 'one thing cannot exist without the other, with one acquiring its properties from its relation to the other, and with the properties of both evolving because of their interpenetration' (Levins and Lewontin, 1985, as found in Farjoun, 2019, p. 136) – none were found to be permanently coherent: as BusinessCo came to fail in change, it invariably paved the way for future success, yet – at the same time - also inspired new cycles of failure to eventually remit. In this way, rather than highlighting failure as imbued with either negative (Anheier, 1999; D'Aveni, 1989) or positive connotation (Bennett & Snyder, 2017; Cannon & Edmondson, 2005), this essay marks the dynamics of failure to be embedded in a set of processes that are as generative as they are deteriorating. Interesting to note, however, is that the temporal development of these dialectical processes seems highly paradoxical: although thesis, antithesis and synthesis came to construct and deconstruct one another in singular instances of BusinessCo's change, they also appeared ceaselessly embedded in a broader cycle, during which tensions built, manifested, or stimulated – but never quite completely dissolved (Mumby, 2005; Neimark & Tinker, 1987). Should the observer focus attention on but one instance of the change trajectory, it will appear as if thesis and antithesis consecutively challenge one another, up to the point at which synthesis will eventually ensue (Benson, 1977; Langley & Sloan, 2011). Yet, should that same observer focus attention on the continuum of change that the organization committed to, it will be most difficult - if not impossible - to strictly disentangle such dialectical moments sequentially: for when approaching change as a continuum of activities rather than as an isolated event, both thesis, antithesis, and synthesis all seem to consistently infuse parts of their logic in each shackle of the temporal chain - not interacting consecutively, but rather in 'ongoing dynamic interplay' (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 74). In this way, this study argues for the dynamics of failure in organizational change to be best reflected by the notion of 'hyperdialectics' (Calori, 2002; Merleau-Ponty, 1964; Seo et al., 2004; W. K. Smith & Tushman, 2005) - combining ongoing transcendent progress with incessant harmony between tensions staged.

Figure 5.1 A dialectical understanding of failure in organizational change
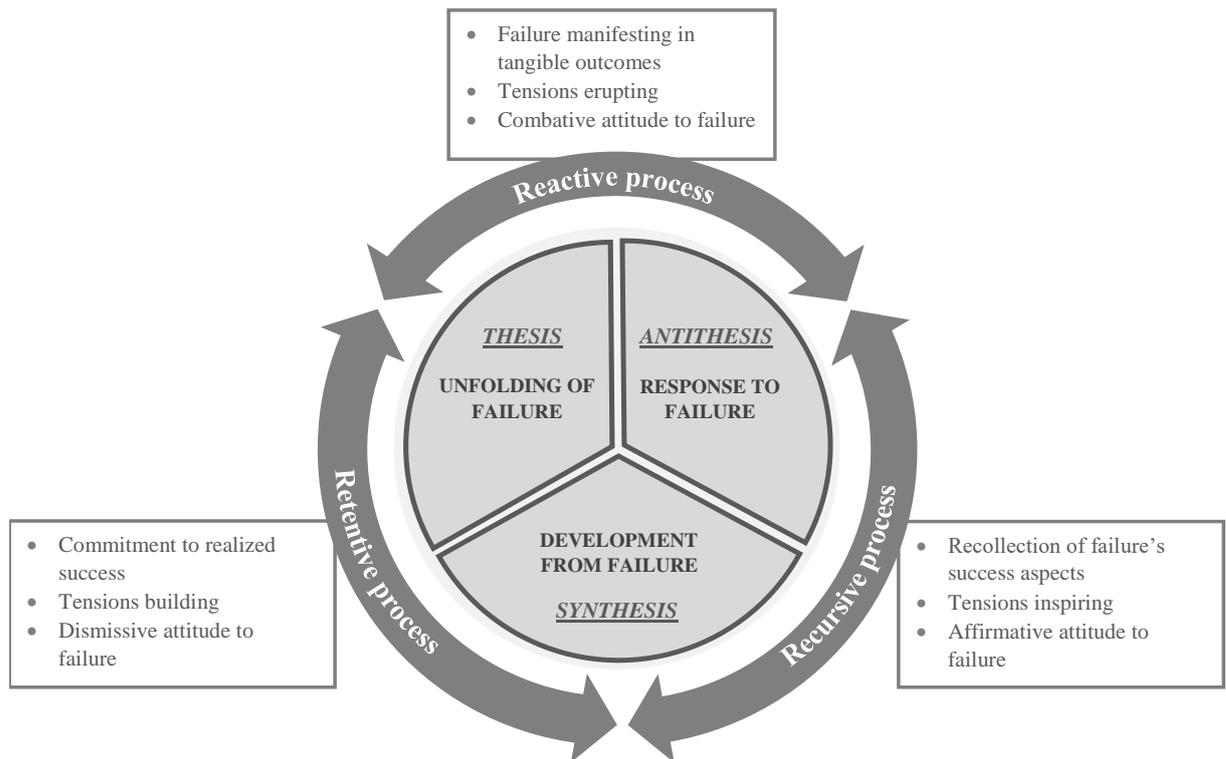
5.5.2 Implications and contributions

First, although the findings of this essay affirm the paradox of success to hold true in a setting of organizational change (Amason & Mooney, 2008; Audia et al., 2000; Miller, 1990), our observations add an internal angle to the rationale underlying such emergence of failure. While authors such as Brockner (1992), Miller and Chen (1994) and Westphal and Bednar (2005) have emphasized strategic persistence to engender failure by turning the organization unresponsive to external developments, the findings of this study highlight such failure to also be potentially brought about by tensions building within the organization itself –marking the organization's atmosphere just as viable a ground for failure, as the developing environment in which that organization presides. Lowering the level of analysis from the organization to the individual decision-maker, similar internal extensions can be noted. While authors such as Burgelman (2002) and Koch (2011) have emphasized strategic persistence to be the result of decision-makers being locked-in on account of ongoing external commitments – leading them to a state in which 'the regime takes over' (Schreyögg & Sydow, 2009, p. 5) - we add to such accounts by emphasizing decision-makers' internal convictions: at BusinessCo, decision-makers were found to persist in a particular approach not because external factors forced them to, but because alternative approaches did simply not accord with gradually conditioned opinions of what engendered success. As such,

in considering failure and its emergence, this chapter calls for a reconsideration of the organization's internal sphere – locking-in decision-makers through conditioned beliefs, and toppling eventual success by the tensions that the organization's social setting generates in response.

Second, by focusing on failure from a dialectical perspective, we note an important time gap in between the moment in which failure emerges or builds (thesis) and the moment in which the organization responds antagonistically to things going awry (antithesis). While we found BusinessCo to effectively act in line with the problems it faced (Amburgey et al., 1993; Anheier, 1999; Eggers & Song, 2015), it is important to note that this response only materialized as frictions became highly pressing, and had culminated to a state of explicit malcontent. That this state found itself invariably preceded by a period in which problems were gradually accumulating, characterizes much of the responsive capacity of the failing organization in question: it is problems manifesting to which BusinessCo responded – not problems building. In this sense, while this study corroborates Amburgey et al. (1993)'s statements of organizations changing 'in response to problems' (p.54), our findings nuance this response in terms of salience: although an organization does respond to problems, it seems to bypass the period during which outright failure can still be avoided – this not because problems are absent during such periods, but because they are not yet salient.

Third, the findings of this study add to the literature on learning from failure in terms of both temporality and agency (Bennett & Snyder, 2017; Muehlfeld et al., 2012). While authors such as Khanna et al. (2016) have highlighted the frequency of missteps to represent an important qualification for an organization's capacity for developing from failure, this chapter adds a sense of temporal processing to such regularity of occurrence – namely, that instances of failure take time to be learnt from. Although BusinessCo was found to effectively pick up on failure through its reactive process, this response could be considered as highly *ad hoc*, with little conscious learning being effectively conducted. Only as the instance of failure had been allowed time to be digested by the organization's social atmosphere, did we find members to spontaneously reflect, and distill genuine insight – candidly acknowledging the elements that had led up to the failure as such, and rejuvenating potential silver-linings. Interesting to note, however, is that this recursive process was found not to be directed by change agents, but rather seemed sparked by the joint recollections of those who had come to experience failure as change recipients: by crystalizing failure through conversation with people of similar experience, change recipients seemed to draw themselves into helicopter view, thus gaining new perspective on current conduct. In sharing

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experiences of failure, employees set out historical hinging points to latch onto – milestones, made tangible through joint experience, and marking both past, present, and even future relationships with the organization. In this sense, while extant literature on learning from failure marks the importance of executive evaluation in post-failure situations (Mellahi & Wilkinson, 2010; Muehlfeld et al., 2012; Shepherd et al., 2011), this essay adds a more spontaneous and hard-to-control grassroots outset to the matter, noting employees to synthesize from failure through the recollection of jointly experienced tensions.

5.5.3 Boundary conditions and directions for further research

As with all research, this study is not free of limitations. In this final paragraph, we would like to be reflexive of these restraints, offering tracks for further research.

Keeping in mind this study's specific research design, theoretical developments tap from the data of one target company. While we argue this focus on a singular case to have been most crucial given our intentions of conducting dynamic research, we would also like to raise awareness of the particular boundary conditions that such design inherently imposes on theory developed (Busse, Kach, & Wagner, 2017). First, considering the condition of 'who', we deem it relevant to mark employees as studied to all adhere to a large multinational organization. Whether organizations of different configuration - e.g., family-businesses – confront similar dialectical dynamics in failure, remains a question we most eagerly see answered in follow-up research. Second, regarding the condition of 'where', as we have noted this study to have been conducted in a western European context, we call for caution when generalizing theoretical insights towards a cultural context that is innately different. Finally, addressing the condition of 'when', we mark this study to have been conducted at a period in organizational history during which many employees had come to achieve elevated tenure, and had thus accumulated significant background on failure to tap from. Yet, whether the processes as identified in this chapter are analogously present in contexts of less extended tenure profiles – e.g., in start-ups – seems an interesting question to ask - again offering an outset we consider most valid for follow-up research.

In terms of onto-epistemological choices, given our study to hinge on a dialectial perspective, this chapter inherently operates from an epistemology of social constructivism. While we argue this epistemological choice to offer an outset on failure in organizational change that is both highly relevant and currently underrepresented, we do not wish to claim this theoretical angle to be the only valid option – other epistemological outsets may be equally relevant to contribute to our understanding of failure's dynamics in organizational change. For example, by opting for the

critical realist perspective of postmodern thinking, scholars could sharpen the findings of this study from the outset of groups feeling restrained, thus addressing research questions of opposition - how do blue collar workers integrate in the dynamics of change and eventual failure; how do groups not relating to organizational headquarters come to understand failure vis-à-vis groups that do relate to headquarters; etc.

5.6 Conclusion

With change being an inherent aspect of organizational reality, scholars should do well as to come to terms with the failure that is so often related to it. This chapter contributes to the literature on failure in change by advancing a dialectical perspective, offering the scholarly community insight in the emergence and development of failure as happening in three processes. By marking failure's emergence and development in change as a dialectic, this essay notes failure in change to be as generative as it is deteriorating: propulsive to future success, while also inspiring new cycles of failure to continuously remit. 'Success is stumbling from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm' (Winston Churchill, as found in Cobb, 2015, p. 289). Let us not be afraid to stumble, but let us look for the energy that failure can spark – both academically, and practically.

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Appendix 5.1. Case context

Company context

BusinessCoGroup. At the time of study, the BusinessCoGroup was amongst the largest container handling companies in the world. Vested in 18 countries, the BusinessCoGroup was managing 50 coastal, rail, and inland terminals, employing over 30 000 people and moving over 200 000 containers on a daily basis. Headquartered in Asia, the BusinessCoGroup centralized its organizational conduct, with local managers all strictly reporting to Asian executives.

BusinessCo. The BusinessCo unit represented the second largest unit of the BusinessCoGroup portfolio. Located in a western European context, the unit dominated the container handling business of the port in which it was located, managing three terminals and handling over 80 per cent of all containers passing through. BusinessCo employed over 3000 people, who were structured in six functional divisions: operations, engineering, finance, human resources management, local IT, and group IT.

Industry context

Upstream. While much of the industry's bargaining power had gradually come to reside with container handling companies, most container liner companies had reclaimed much of their historical influence by joining forces in one of three major shipping alliances: i.e., THE Alliance, Ocean Alliance, or 2M Alliance. Hence, should a container handling company forfeit to handle the orders of one particular shipping company, it risked to lose business with all shipping companies allied to the one forfeited.

Downstream. Given the very nature of the industry – i.e., handling goods as required by other companies downstream the value chain –, it is evident that the container handling business was highly dependent on the global economic conjuncture, reflected in more or less goods being in need of handling. In addition, with the rise of commercial trends such as e-commerce, the demand for rapid handling had come to put increased pressure on the operational capacities of many container handlers.

Internal rivalry. As the infrastructure of handling operations required severe capital investments, the competition between handling companies within any one port could be noted as fairly stable. However, in between different ports, handling companies were engaged in intense rivalry, soliciting volumes of shipping companies by promoting either lower rates, or faster turnover times.

Supportive and related parties. As container handling companies were strongly dependent on the state of the general infrastructure in which their operations found themselves embedded, governmental endorsement was vital. Providing work opportunities and boosting general economic performance were often raised as arguments to solicit for increased investments in roads and port expansions.
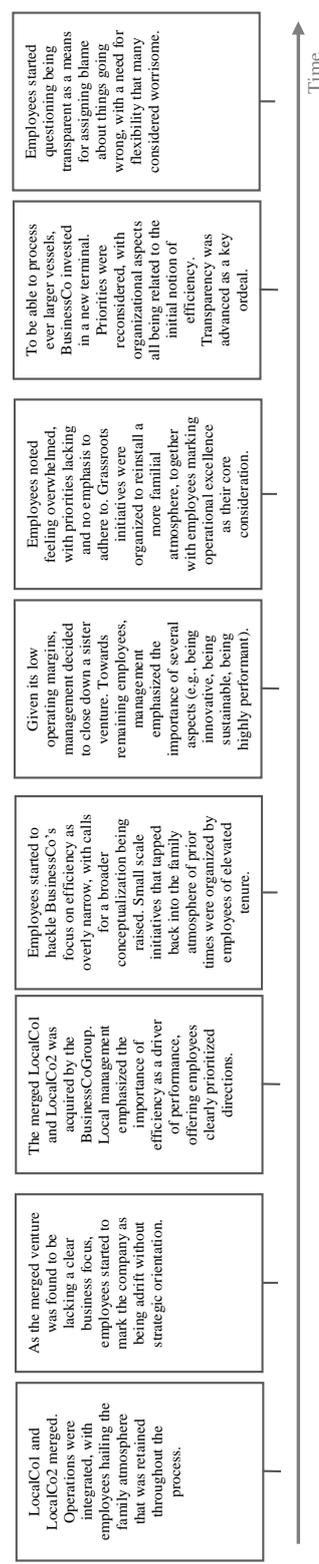
Temporal context

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Initially, the local market place was dominated by two renowned competitors, referred to as LocalCo1 and LocalCo2. However, as container liner companies increasingly collaborated in order to ramp up economies of scale, handling companies lost much of their bargaining power, putting profit margins under pressure. Hence, in an effort to turn the tables, LocalCo1 and LocalCo2 decided to merge, integrating physical assets into one venture. To retain a sense of shared identity, the integrated management teams of LocalCo1 and LocalCo2 emphasized the mutual background that both ventures had ramped up in parallel. No employees were made redundant – instead, all became part of the same employee pool, to be tapped as operations required.	With competitive pressure steadily ramping up, having merged the local companies was found not to suffice in terms of scale benefits sought for. As other container handling firms in the local context represented only marginal volumes, management accepted an acquisition bid issued by one of the largest international container handlers, operational around the globe. As such, the previously merged LocalCo1 and LocalCo2 became part of the BusinessCoGroup. The local unit, BusinessCo, was placed under centralized directions, with both European and global headquarters surpassing local management's decision-making capacity. Business offerings considered redundant were eliminated, with the local unit soon finding itself focusing exclusively on container handling.	After a period of relatively stable business conduct, the global economic downturn as ensuing from the financial crisis of 2008 drove container volumes to startling lows. While this situation was coped with for quite some time, BusinessCo's management eventually opted to size down: the decision was made to close down a sister venture, resulting in the loss of 47 full-time equivalents. For 60 staff members remaining, jobs were sought at the company's local unit, eventually leading up to 45 employees being effectively integrated. To keep spirits up, local management launched various initiatives for employees to relate to, ranging from innovation contests, to breakfast meetings and anniversary events.	With the economy picking up again in due time, BusinessCo's local unit eventually reached its maximum handling capacity: outperforming local competitors, demand for its services was soaring. In response, the decision was made to scale up again, this by building a new container handling terminal in closer proximity to extant operations. Hoping to keep everyone on the same page, local management opted to communicate as transparent as possible about ongoing developments to employees. For example, while employees were encouraged to switch to the new terminal, they were free to decide whether or not to actually do so, with remaining vacancies being filled with new hires.

Timeline of events

LocalCo1 and LocalCo2 merged. Operations were integrated, with employees hailing the family atmosphere that was retained throughout the process.	The merged LocalCo1 and LocalCo2 was acquired by the BusinessCoGroup. Local management emphasized the importance of efficiency as a driver of performance, offering employees clearly prioritized directions.	Given its low operating margins, management decided to close down a sister venture. Towards remaining employees, management emphasized the importance of several aspects (e.g., being innovative, being sustainable, being highly performant).	To be able to process ever larger vessels, BusinessCo invested in a new terminal. Priorities were reconsidered, with organizational aspects all being related to the initial notion of efficiency. Transparency was advanced as a key ordeal.
As the merged venture was found to be lacking a clear business focus, employees started to mark the company as being adrift without strategic orientation.	Employees started to hackle BusinessCo's focus on efficiency as overly narrow, with calls for a broader conceptualization being raised. Small scale initiatives that tapped back into the family atmosphere of prior times were organized by employees of elevated tenure.	Employees noted feeling overwhelmed, with priorities lacking and no emphasis to adhere to. Grassroots initiatives were organized to reinstall a more familial atmosphere, together with employees marking operational excellence as their core consideration.	Employees started questioning being transparent as a means for assigning blame about things going wrong, with a need for flexibility that many considered worrisome.

Time →

Appendix 5.2. Coding table (1)

Theoretical process	Axial coding	Descriptive coding	Extract of empirical material	Contextualized illustration: Exemplary vignette
Retentive process – Towards a thesis of failure	Commitment to realized success	Spurred to inactivity by internal validation of success	*"They had been holding true to this idea of broadening up our perspectives for quite some time. It generated enthusiasm initially, and that was enough to keep at it, I guess."* (Employee Operations 2 – Int.) *"When we do something well, we become very much attached to that idea. It makes us slower than we ought to be."* (Employee Operations, Surv.)	Having steered the rather disoriented LocalCo1 and LocalCo2 into a clear focus on efficiency, the BusinessCoGroup initially found its acquisition to take place with surprising ease: as employees noted BusinessCo to take a much more apparent stand in the competitive landscape, many came to approve of the change in general. Yet, as managers came to inherently accredit the efficiency focus as the prime reason for the change program's (initial) success, they eventually held onto the efficiency notion to steer through all aspects of organizational reality: opportunities for training non-core skills were pruned, expenses were rigorously monitored, etc. In this respect, alternative approaches for maintaining the initial virtues of the acquisition were increasingly withheld as irrelevant: either an approach was geared towards cost-cutting – or it was overthrown as folly.
		Impediment of alternative approaches	*"The approach of retaining efficiency long appeared sacred. Only numbers seemed to have voice, at the time"* (Employee Finance 3, Proj. Ex.) *"People of all levels should be more receptive for alternatives. Only then will we be able to move 'outside-of-the-box', and succeed sustainably."* (Employee Engineering, Surv.)	
	Tensions building	Feelings of disconnect	*"As change proceeds, it so often turns into a sense of 'they' versus 'us'. 'They' can be supervisors, other departments, customers… you name it – but it's simply a feeling of not relating anymore, of no longer meeting eye-to-eye."* (Employee Local IT – Surv.) *"Executives should listen to people with experience during change."* (Employee Engineering, Surv)	In consequence of BusinessCo's stringent commitment to efficiency as the acquisition program's presumed cause of success, tensions came to gradually build beneath the surface. As efficiency was ever more dogmatically pronounced in the organizational discourse, employees started to increasingly disconnect with the organization's way of working – considering themselves to be odd individuals within the efficiency-minded group. This sense of disconnect eventually coincided with expressions of doubt and ambiguity, in which people questioned the organizational efficiency approach just as much as they questioned their personal position in it. Unsettled by such questions, employees increasingly resorted to a form of passive resistance, in which the organization's acquisition change program was not intently undermined, but rather tacitly avoided. Examples of such implicit manifestations of tacit resistance included camouflaging the true nature of a desired training session in efficiency-related terms, embellishing expected operational performance, or feigning respect for hierarchy and authority.
		Doubtful voice	*"Initially, I thought that pushing for a more integrated perspective would certainly help us forward – it was no longer only about the money. But as we keep pushing that same button, I have to confess I'm not so sure anymore."* (Employee HR 3 – Int.) *"I don't know of this approach will keep paying off."* (Employee Local IT –Int.)	
		Passive resistance	*"My advice: participate in the façade, say yes to everything, and see what you will do later on."* (Employee Group IT 1 – Int.) *"I don't argue, but I also don't try to excel anymore."* (Employee Corp. Comm. – Int)	
	Dismissive attitude to failure	General muteness on failure	*"Executives should be communicating more intensely, even when they think there is nothing to be said. In my experience, silence generates rumor, with people getting anxious and picking up on banter."* (Employee HR – Surv.) *"Communication is crucial, and often lacking when we think we are on a roll. To executives, failure seems impossible then, I guess."* (Employee Finance 2 – Proj. Ex.)	On a broader organizational level, the tensions that had increasingly come to mark the individual level throughout the acquisition's integration efforts were not explicitly addressed: while many employees individually made note of something being off, no collective statements on the possibility of the change program failing to generate support were issued. In fact, on the rare occasions in which the acquisition program's capacity to generate employee support was raised as potentially floundering, most managers argued this to be caused by the efficiency emphasis losing austerity, rather than it being too stringently applied. As a result, many managers sought to continuously revive the efficiency approach's initial effect of providing orientation – only to exacerbate tensions that had gradually come to emerge.
		Aim for outcomes in line with recent success	*"They wanted to continuously recreate that sense of clarity that was noticeable when we first opted for that approach of efficiency. But to me, that seemed impossible to resurge."* (Manager Operations 2 – Int.) *"Recreating the conditions that made people enthusiastic about something – we always try to do that, possible or not."* (Manager HR 2 – Feedb.)	

Appendix 5.2 Coding table (2)

Theoretical coding	Axial coding	Descriptive coding	Extract of empirical material	Contextualized illustration: Exemplary vignette
Reactive process – From thesis to antithesis	Failure manifesting in tangible outcomes	Spurred to action by events laying bare inherent tensions	*"Apparently, they [executives] need something of a wake-up-call before they will get the message. It must explode in their faces before they will be dealing with it."* (Manager Engineering 1 – Int.; Commenting on executives shifting change approach when confronted with the closure of a sister venture) *"The bad performance results were a sign, for many of us: it wasn't going as well as executives claim – it was as slumped as many already felt it to be"* (Employee Operations 3 – Int.)	As the global economic downturn of 2008 and 2009 drove demand for goods to startling lows, the BusinessCoGroup saw itself forced to close down a sister venture of the BusinessCo unit. This crisis laid bare the tensions that had long since slumbered within BusinessCo's social fiber – for many, shutting down the sister venture was but another manifestation of BusinessCo's overly stringent efficiency focus. That this interpretation did not take into account the overall slump in demand that the economy was going through, was largely minimized. In this regard, while the need to shut down the sister venture was not so much an outcome of the company's efficiency focus as it was a valid argument to persist in it, the event itself was seized as a catalyst for individual malcontent, legitimizing personal anxieties within the context of a broader whole.
		Tangible events of failure as legitimizing social malcontent	*"It was as if it was finally out in the open – that this feeling of something not being right was finally affirmed. To me, it was a relief."* (Manager HR 2, Feedb.; Commenting on the bad outcome of the 2015 employee opinion polls).	
	Tensions erupting	Feelings of frustration	*"I think everybody could understand the logic of efficiency and initially endorsed it, all the more since we came from a period of total bewilderment regarding business objectives. But when it started to pervade all aspects of what we did, that very same change focus became incredibly tedious – the approach had its limitations, and these became very apparent over time."* (Employee Finance 1 – Proj. Ex.)	Once legitimized, tensions that had previously been building within separate individuals collectively erupted. Feelings of frustration with the long upheld efficiency focus were fiercely vocalized, this both in unit-wide conducted surveys, group interaction sessions, and individual feedback meetings. While discourses of doubt had come to mark individuals' expressions throughout the acquisition, such doubt now found itself replaced with explicit negativity. This negativity extended to all aspects of the organizational conduct, and did not restrict itself to the acquisition change program as such: remuneration schemes, control mechanisms, social relations – all were vehemently criticized for being commandeered by a dominant efficiency approach. As vocalized tensions became increasingly common, many employees even started to resort to forms of active resistance, openly renouncing further conformance with organizational guidelines, and calling others to do so as well.
		Negative voice	*"BusinessCoGroup is a suspicious company, that doesn't trust the people it employs"* (Employee Finance – Surv.) *"When we perform badly, the company stretches us to all ends. Too little, too late."* (Employee Operations – Surv)	
		Active resistance	*"They don't have to approach me anymore. I'm done with this."* (Manager Engineering 2 – Int.; Marking his disillusion with executive management for not picking up on his grievances throughout the development of a new terminal) *"On the barricades, for what we believe is right – that's where we find ourselves in cases of failure"* (Employee Local IT – Int.)	
	Combative attitude to failure	General reclamation of failure	*"We have to acknowledge it – we were making big mistakes in the way we dealt with this change of being acquired. We were losing our touch with each other. I say, no more!"* (Manager Operations 1 – Int.) *"It had become overpowering, all these initiatives, and we are aware of that now. We tried it – and now we will do better"* (Manager HR 1, commenting on the broad perspective retained throughout the closing of a sister venture)	To counter such uproar, management explicitly marked previous efficiency-based conduct as having failed: several division heads addressed their employee base with statements in which the efficiency-orientation was done off as outdated and inadequate for future challenges. In addition to such acts of public penance and admission of failure, managers exhibited their intentions to make a full-scale turn-around: no longer committing themselves to focus on but one aspect of organizational reality – i.e., the monetary aspect - but instead, opting for a wide range of elements that would embed the upcoming change of downscaling in a more holistic setting. In this regard, elements such as innovation, sustainability, and sociality were explicitly marked as necessary for a successful turnaround.
		Aim for approach opposite to one previously adhered to	During the projection exercise, participants laughingly described the organization as "bouncing away" from noted instances of change failure, illustrating consecutive periods of development as oppositional to one another. (Proj. Ex.)	

Appendix 5.2. Coding table (3)

Theoretical coding	Axial coding	Descriptive coding	Extract of empirical material	Contextualized illustration: Exemplary vignette
Recursive process – Synthesizing from failure	Recollection of failure's successful aspects	Spurred to action by shared recollection	*"Some of us still recall going through the merger with this primary sense of family, of all belonging to the same group. However different that situation was, I feel like it is this kind of atmosphere that we are to kindle again nowadays."* (Manager Operations 2 – Int.) *"To truly understand how we go about this new container terminal, let me tell you something about how things went down during the acquisition [...]".* (Manager Finance 1 – Proj. Ex.)	While the efficiency approach was branded by BusinessCo's members as having been the interlude to a highly challenging period in organizational history, the recollection of such failure seemed significantly less austere when reflected upon in collectivity. Laughingly telling each other stories of excesses one had one time come to suffer due to the firm's severe efficiency focus, it was not uncommon for colleagues to gradually start tapping into the approach's silver-linings as conversation continued. In terms of the stringent efficiency approach, this related both to the strong competitive position that the company had occupied by constantly looking into the notion of being efficient; and the clear emphasis on operational performativity that the approach had consistently advanced.
		Emanation of positivism	*"You remember, right? During the aftermath of the acquisition, we used to orient ourselves in a very commercial way – razor-sharp in our competitive advantage."* (Manager Group IT 1 – Int; Commented to a colleague) *"We used to work towards being a family."* (Employee Finance 2 – Proj. Ex.; Comment met with affirmative nods by everyone present)	
	Tensions inspiring	Feelings of empowerment	*"I might not know everything about big-wig strategy, but I do know a thing or two about the screw-ups we made. In that sense, I can do something."* (Employee Finance 2 – Proj. Ex.; Marking his experience of failure as useful for the company's further development) *"We've obviously seen a thing or two, being around here. Actually, why won't it be up to us to do something?"* (Employee Operations 3, Int; Comment met with affirmative nods by everyone present)	Sparked by such recollection of the efficiency approach's successful aspects, employees started to mark themselves as being empowered to actually make a valuable contribution to the company based on their experience – acting as confidants, who found themselves familiarized with some level of personal added value. This sense of personal added value, surprisingly tapped from prior failure, led many employees to reconsider the efficiency-period in a much more positive light – an organizational lapse of judgement, rather than an irreversible mistake. This positive voice extended towards all aspects of recollected organizational conduct, and was not limited to the efficiency approach as such: for example, recollections of formerly hackled procedures involving remuneration and control also lost much of their sharpness. During such instances of shared recollection, employees were found to again express themselves as part of the organization as a whole, rather than as disapproving bystanders – acknowledging the contradictions between different positions and outsets as something they themselves had also come to engender.
		Positive voice	*"As a company, we do have our issues. But we also have great potential – stuff to tap, and develop from."* (Employee Operations, Surv.)	
		Intragroup acknowledgement of prior contradictions	*"I think we can all agree that the efficiency approach had reached its limits, and that we as a team were becoming worked up because of that – effectively making it even worse."* (Employee Finance 3 – Proj. Ex.); *"We all have our part in past hardships."* (Employee HR – Surv.)	
	Affirmative attitude to failure	Grassroots activism for failure's success	As the projection exercise came to an end, participants invited me to stay for their weekly 'Royco soup moment', an initiative set up by long-tenure employees to *"bring back the social atmosphere that had brought the company closer together in earlier days"* (Employee Finance 2 – Proj. Ex.)	This sense of former tensions inspiring culminated in an affirmative attitude towards the efficiency approach for change: while employees remained firm about the approach having effectively failed, many suggested to resuscitate the approach's silver-linings in personal conduct. Examples of such grassroots activism included employees noting to go soliciting for the re-instalment of weekly operational meetings; to rekindle the use of formal charts to plan their weekly schedule; or to prioritize their upcoming work in light of the efficiency notion. Hence, by candidly affirming how the organization had formerly failed to use efficiency in its change considerations, organizational members revitalized those aspects they considered to still have value.
		Aim for revitalization of sensible aspects of prior approaches	As interviews proceeded, a hot dog booth was set up on the quay, offering a free snack to heavers switching shifts. *"Getting everyone back together again, like we used to – that's what we mainly aim to do."* (Manager Operations 1 – Int.) *"We are an operational business – we need to excel in our process. Maybe our company needs to become a tat more honest on where our home base is. I'm going to work on that."* (Manager HR 2 – Feedb.)	

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Chapter 6.

Talking Through Transformation: How Organizations Discursively Relate Strategy and Identity in Change [6]

Abstract

While the relation between strategy (what organizations intend to do) and identity (who organizations believe themselves to be) has been recognized as an important concern for organizations in the context of change, little research has focused on the discursive work organizations may engage in when such relations are potentially challenged. Drawing on an 80-year magazine archive of a financial cooperative, this paper identifies five tactics through which organizations may discursively relate strategy and identity in moments of change: denying dissonance, acknowledging dissonance, framing, rationalizing, and reconciling. Highlighting the dynamic complementarity of discursive tactics available for relating strategy and identity through change, this paper offers an integrated perspective on how organizations may project a sense of advancing strategically, while maintaining their identity – constructing their future, while keeping in touch with their past.

Key words

Change, Cooperative, Discourse, Identity, Organization, Strategy

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[6] This chapter is based on an article as written in collaboration with prof. dr. Ann Langley and which is currently in the second round of revisions at the Journal of Management Studies.

6.1 Introduction

When organizations contemplate strategic change, the relation between *strategy* - what we intend to do (Michael E Porter, 1996) – and *organizational identity* - who we believe ourselves to be (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Blake E. Ashforth & Mael, 1996) – seems an important concern (Ravasi et al., 2020). On the one hand, organizational identity may act as a cognitive filter inhibiting consideration of otherwise attractive strategic alternatives (Blake E. Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Tripsas & Gavetti, 2000). On the other, when strategic change is believed to be essential, misalignment between strategy and identity may potentially spark "conflict and dysfunction" amongst organizational members (Anthony & Tripsas, 2016, p. 418; see also Nag, Corley, & Gioia, 2007).

Previous research has considered various approaches to dealing with strategy and identity alignments or misalignments in contexts of change (Ravasi et al., 2020). For example, some scholars have examined how organizational identity may be purposefully adapted to realign with a new strategy (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton, & Corley, 2013; Ravasi & Phillips, 2011; Schultz & Hernes, 2020). Others have considered ways in which organization members may resist, adjust to or cope with misalignment through their cognitions or practices (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2020; Hoon & Jacobs, 2014; Nag et al., 2007; Wenzel, Cornelissen, Koch, Hartmann, & Rauch, 2020).

Yet, while these studies have offered insight into how organizations may relate strategy and identity in contexts of change, there has been relatively little consideration given to how senior leaders may draw on *discourse* in such situations - influencing stakeholders' understandings of the relation between strategy and identity in communications such as speeches, newsletters, strategic plans, etc. (Anteby & Molnár, 2012; Ravasi et al., 2020). Still, with both strategy and organizational identity having often been described as constituted through narrative (Barry & Elmes, 1997; Humphreys & Brown, 2002; Langley, Oliver, & Rouleau, 2020), a discursive approach seems particularly appropriate to understand how the relation between strategy and identity can be constructed in times of change – when the two might potentially be seen as at odds with one another, with possible consequences for the acceptability of change initiatives among stakeholders. Building on this, we ask: *How do organizations discursively relate strategy and identity in moments of change?*

To address this question, this article draws on textual data from the Desjardins Group, a financial services cooperative founded in Quebec, Canada in 1900. Tapping into an organizational magazine

database that spans a period of 80 years, our findings delineate five tactics by which organizational leaders discursively connect strategy and identity during moments of change: denying dissonance, acknowledging dissonance, framing, rationalizing, and reconciling. By examining the evolution over time for a series of six critical change events, we highlight the complementarity of discursive tactics in sustaining linkages between new strategic initiatives and a deeply held identity. Doing so, this paper illustrates how discourse can be a powerful means for relating strategy and identity during change - enabling an organization to project itself into the future, while maintaining links to the past.

Before presenting the methods and findings of our study, we review the literature on the strategy-identity nexus, zooming in on strands of research relevant to our discursive perspective.

6.2 Theoretical background

6.2.1 Strategy-identity (mis)alignment

In general, the concept of strategy refers to a consistent pattern of actions and activities that an organization proposes to undertake in order to position itself advantageously within its environment (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985; Michael E Porter, 1996). Hence, strategy is explicitly oriented towards action and future – towards "doing" (D. Mackay & Zundel, 2017; Michael E Porter, 1996; Sillince & Simpson, 2010). Organizational identity, on the other hand, moves the focus from "doing" towards "being" and from "what" to "who" (Anthony & Tripsas, 2016, p. 418). Specifically, organizational identity is defined as those attributes organizational members consider to be central, enduring, and distinctive (Albert & Whetten, 1985). While organizational identity may be partly aspirational, it also tends to be deeply grounded in the past, with a definition that implies invariability over time (Schultz & Hernes, 2020; Sillince & Simpson, 2010). However, many scholars have argued that the term "enduring" may be too strong, and that the term "continuity" better expresses the way in which identity persists over time - maintaining links to the past, while subject to ongoing adjustment and adaptation.

Looking at the relationship between strategy and identity, Ashforth and Mael (1996, p. 19) describe their interconnection as reciprocal and symbiotic, implying ongoing coherence: "Identity can serve as a wellspring for strategy, although identity and strategy are reciprocally related such that identity is enacted and expressed via strategy, and inferred, modified, or affirmed from strategy." Yet, precisely because of these interlinkages, organizational identity may sometimes blind organizations to strategic opportunities or threats. Tripsas (2009), for example, highlighted how organizational identity may serve as a cognitive filter for external stimuli, causing firms to

miss out on changes that are inconsistent with established routines, procedures and beliefs. Hoon and Jacobs (2014), for their part, showed that strategic directions that are considered 'taboo' in identity terms significantly influence the judgment of organizational actors, making them favor changes that are consistent with the firm's established identity, but that might be contrary to market demands.

Although an organization's strategy and its identity are thus generally perceived as intertwined, situations of change may disrupt these connections, making members question whether 'what we do' still accords with 'who we are' (Ravasi et al., 2020; Schultz & Hernes, 2020; Sillince & Simpson, 2010). In response to such situations of disruption, different approaches may be used. For example, in their seminal study on the Port Authorities of New York and New Jersey, Dutton and Dukerich (1991) highlighted how a debased image might spur organizations to push for strategies that are consistent with the organizational identity as currently upheld. In this case, identity leads strategy in recapturing alignment. However, the reverse is also possible, notably when organizations become engaged - often for competitive reasons - in important strategic decisions that challenge their established identity. This is the context, for example, in Ravasi and Phillips' (2011) study of how managers at Bang & Olufsen actively reassessed, refocused and retuned organizational identity when confronted with strategic directions that were perceived as "drifting" or "blurring" (p.111). For others, the question is not how organizations can sustain alignment between strategy and identity, but rather how they can deal with misalignment when it occurs (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dennis A. Gioia et al., 2013). For example, Wenzel et al. (2020) examined how employees of a public broadcasting company coped with strategy-identity misalignments, using the cognitive framing approaches of contextualization, abstraction, or fatalism to assuage their concerns, without necessarily resolving them.

Although the studies mentioned above offer useful insight on how organizations can interrelate strategy and identity in moments of change, it should be noted that they all build on the assumption of strategy and identity as "distinct phenomena", that exist in a material world as mutually influencing but clearly "separable entities" (Ravasi et al., 2020, p. 15). An alternative perspective based on a *narrative or discursive* view, however, would see both these phenomena as constructed through language (Barry & Elmes, 1997; A. D. Brown, 2006; Langley et al., 2020). In other words, strategy-identity relations may be subject to discursive sensegiving in which some organization members (e.g., senior management) might engage in "influencing the meaning construction of others towards a preferred redefinition of organizational reality" (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 442), including the degree to which strategic initiatives align or not with organizational identity.

This argument leads us to a deeper consideration of discursive perspectives on strategy and identity.

6.2.2 Discursive perspectives on strategy and identity

Discourse studies focus on the way in which language and communications occurring in talk and text "construct organizational reality rather than simply reflect it" (Hardy, Lawrence, & Grant, 2005, p. 59). Over time, such studies have become increasingly prominent in the managerial field (Boje, Oswick, & Ford, 2004; Logemann, Piekkari, & Cornelissen, 2019; Rhodes & Brown, 2005; Vaara, Sonenshein, & Boje, 2016). In particular, the two research domains of strategy and identity have both given rise to multiple contributions drawing on a discursive or narrative perspective (Vaara et al., 2016).

In the conversation on strategy, for example, Barry and Elmes (1997) highlighted the use of discourse or narratives as particularly relevant for "capturing the diversity and complexity" (p.431) of strategic decisions. Fenton and Langley (2011) reviewed the role of narrative in talk and text in organizational actors' strategic sensemaking. Relatedly, Heracleous and Barrett (2001), and Vaara and Tienari (2011) examined the way discourse can influence actors' interpretations of organizational change processes, and Hardy, Palmer, and Phillips (2000) referred to discourse as a "strategic resource" (p.1227).

In the scholarly conversation on organizational identity, Fiol (2002) highlighted how language can guide people through identity transformation, managing the paradoxical requirements imposed on them. Indeed, for several scholars, discourse is central to organizational identity construction. For example, Brown (2006) argued that collective identities are constructed through the layering and accumulation of individual narratives by organization members, and Ybema et al. (2009) considered identities to be largely articulated through conversations that distinguish 'self' from 'other.' Rather than focusing on member conversations, other scholars have examined how top management discourses (such as those presented in documents such as reports, bulletins and other communications) can be seen as forms of "organizational identity work" oriented towards influencing stakeholder understandings of the nature of organizational identity (Anteby & Molnár, 2012; Chreim, 2005; Golant, Sillince, Harvey, & Maclean, 2015).

However, while research adopting discursive perspectives has been prominent in the scholarly conversations on strategy and identity separately, there has been little research that brings a discursive lens to bear on the relation between these two phenomena (Langley et al., 2020; Ravasi et al., 2020). An exception is a recent historical study by Sasaki, Kotlar, Ravasi and Vaara (2020)

that considers how centuries old Japanese firms discursively sustain continuity in identity despite strategic change over time. The authors show that ancient identity statements and mottos may be either remembered (preserved in their ancient form), elaborated (embroidered over time to include new elements), recovered (reinterpreted in the present), decoupled (allowing parallel partly contradictory statements to emerge) or replaced (reformulated without reference to the past). Based on interviews with current leaders of a sample of firms, the authors argue that competitive conditions might explain the different ways in which identities come to be reformulated. Still, this study does not analyse the ongoing co-construction of identity and strategy within the same discourses over time, as we propose here.

Overall, given the problematic concerns that may be raised when identity and strategy are stirred by change, there is value in considering how organizational-level discourses might be mobilized to construct their ongoing inter-relations. This theoretical backdrop motivates our research question, reiterated here: *How do organizations discursively relate strategy and identity in moments of change?*

6.3 Methodology

6.3.1 Research context

This study considers written discourses generated by senior leaders of one organization over a sustained period of time. The organization in question is the Desjardins Group ("le Mouvement Desjardins" in French), a cooperative financial institution founded in 1900 in Quebec, Canada. Aware of the problem of loansharking that drove many of his fellow French-Canadian citizens into poverty, founder Alphonse Desjardins began to create small savings and loans cooperatives (known as "caisses populaires"), which were owned and operated by members themselves. Although offering services similar to those of a bank, these organizations were founded with a strong social mission and cooperative identity, aiming to promote the economic emancipation of working-class French Canadians. To quote Alphonse Desjardins, cited in Lévesque (1997): "A 'caisse populaire' is not a business - a discount counter, if you will, a money mockery - but is above all a social and parochial undertaking."

A particular feature of the Desjardins Group relevant to this cooperative identity is its democratic bottom-up governance structure. Each individual caisse has a Board composed of Officers elected from among its members (i.e., its users; until 2003, these were unpaid volunteers). Officers are involved in strategic decision making, and they in turn elect the Board and the President and Chief Executive of the "Federation," the organization's Central Office that establishes policy and

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provides common services. The original Federation was created in 1932 as a coordinating structure by the four Regional Unions (regional groupings of the approximately 200 caisses existing at that time). Since then, the Federation has taken on an increasingly significant role as banking operations have become more standardized. The Federation also oversees the Group's substantial Insurance, Trust, Brokerage and Investment Banking arms.

While the roots of Desjardins' cooperative identity go back over 100 years, the Group still defines itself using the language of cooperation – broadcasting itself on its website as "the leading financial cooperative in Canada" (Desjardins Group, 2020). This explicit cooperative identity notwithstanding, it has been noted that the Desjardins Group has over time shifted towards a more business-minded outlook (Lévesque, 1997), thus rendering an inquiry into strategy-identity relations during moments of change particularly relevant. At time of writing, the Desjardins Group was the financial institution with the largest regional presence in Quebec, with 313 billion CAD in total assets, over seven million members, and 47,849 employees (Desjardins Group, 2020).

6.3.2 Data sources

The main source of data for this study was *La Revue Desjardins*[1], an internally distributed organizational magazine of the Desjardins Group. The *Revue* was directed at officers, managers and employees of the various entities within the larger Desjardins Group. Articles were written by Desjardins' leaders and members for a consecutive period of 80 years (1935-2015), with yearly volumes ranging from 4 to 10 issues. All copies of the *Revue* as published during this timeframe were digitally downloaded, resulting in a total of 606 documents. Internal newsletters and reports have been argued to reflect the intentions of senior management (Anteby & Molnár, 2012; Barry & Elmes, 1997; Chreim, 2005), and were therefore considered an ideal source to assess the ways in which managers constructed strategy-identity relations in their communications with key stakeholders. In particular, elected officers of the caisses seem *a priori* to have a particular interest in questions of strategy and identity given their commitment to the organization as manifested by their volunteer involvement in administering the caisses.

While *La Revue Desjardins* was the prime source of data for our discursive analysis, other sources were gathered in order to appreciate the organizational context. This included books focusing on the history of either the organization or its main leaders (Béland & Corbo, 1998; Croteau, 2004; D'Amours, 2019; Giroux, 1993; Lévesque, 1997; Poulin, 1990, 1994, 1998; Poulin & Tremblay, 2005), annual reports, other magazines intended for members of Desjardins available for certain years (e.g., *La Caisse*), and newspaper articles.

6.3.3 Data analysis

Data analysis involved four stages: (i) identifying relevant instances of change in the Desjardins Group's history; (ii) identifying what discursive tactics the organization used to relate strategy and identity during those changes; (iii) identifying how discursive tactics were juxtaposed within articles; and (iv) identifying how discursive tactics were interrelated over time.

In a first stage, we set out to identify relevant instances of change in the Desjardins Group's history. As we were most interested in how the organization discursively related strategy and identity, we primarily focused on those instances of change that potentially created some form of controversy or ambiguity concerning their inter-relationship. To do so, we started by scanning the milestones and corporate timeline published on the organizational website, thus identifying instances that the organization itself considered most salient. Next, to complement the subjective colouring of this mnemonic – or the organization's collective memory as rhetorically constituted (Anteby & Molnár, 2012) - we consulted more formal historical sources (e.g., Lévesque, 1997; Poulin, 1990, 1994, 1998; Poulin & Tremblay, 2005), cross-referencing instances as highlighted on the website and identifying instances that were underplayed by the Group. Finally, we looked for any relevant instance of change during our analysis of the textual data themselves. These efforts eventually resulted in the identification of six major changes in the Desjardins Group's organizational history considered relevant for our research question (see Table 6.1).

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Table 6.1 Overview of Changes Examined at Desjardins Group

#	Year	Event	Summary	Evidence exemplifying strategy-identity ambiguity
1	1944	**Foundation of an insurance subsidiary**	Desjardins creates a General Insurance Company, the 'Société d'assurance des caisses populaires' (SACP), offering contracts for the coverage against fire, hold-ups, burglaries and write-offs.	"The great period of post-war economic boom prompted the development of the consumer society. New needs emerged and the caisses were faced with the challenge of adapting to change while remaining true to their values." (Desjardins Group, 2020b)
2	1963	**Greater acceptance of 'consumer credit'**	Desjardins relaxes the conditions for extending credit towards consumer goods (e.g., cars), countering the founder's philosophy of only extending "productive credit" – or credit which allows one to acquire goods for professional use, pay cash for basic consumer goods, renovate a home or building, or acquire property.	"What to say of the way in which credit companies not only spread a sense of extravagance, of pure vanity… This kind of credit is killing us all. Easy credit for consumption is a trap to which every year thousands fall victim […]We should avoid this kind of credit at all cost – the harm it does is too great for us to mitigate." (Alphonse Desjardins, Founder, undated citation in the *Revue Desjardins*, 1963, 29(4), p.63)
3	1981	**Introduction of credit card usage**	Desjardins purchases the Visa franchise, offering its members the possibility of buying consumer goods on credit.	"NO to the credit card! […] The caisses, as cooperative institution, cannot accept certain practices of a consumption society that favors the indebting of people at excessive costs." (*Revue Desjardins*, 1975, 41(2), p.38)
4	1988	**Integration of financial services (i.e., 'de-compartmentalization')**	Allowed to do so by a revision of Canadian financial laws, Desjardins brings itss financial services together under one roof – i.e., savings and credit, trust, insurance, and securities brokerage - aiming to create synergies in the process.	"Over the last two days, we have seen that the caisse is, in certain ways, an enterprise like any other – bound by the profitability imperative, whatever the economic context." (Alban D'Amours, President of the Caisse populaire des fonctionnaires du Québec, *Revue Desjardins*, 1988, 54(1), p.26)
5	1995	**Reengineering of organizational processes**	Desjardins reengineers business processes used in the different caisses with the objective of improving competitive performance and profitability.	"The changes that our leaders are in the midst of taking originate from multiple sources… It seems that these changes have less and less to do with the foundational issues of the institution." (Yves Laurin, Director of cooperative development, *Revue Desjardins*, 1997, 63(5), p.18)
6	2001	**Revising organizational structure**	Desjardins moves away from a decentralized to a centralized structure, eliminating an entire hierarchical level ('la Fédération').	"A cooperative heritage disfigured and denatured." (Title of a book published by René Croteau, a former executive at Desjardins, in which the author critiques the group's move towards a more centralized structure, and argues that it threatens the cooperative identity)

In a second stage, we worked to identify what discursive tactics the organization used to relate strategy and identity when changes were being carried out. To this end, we first marked all issues of *La Revue Desjardins* that were published in the year in which a change had been pinpointed. To be able to grasp both anterior context and temporal evolutions, we extended this sampling to respectively include up to five pre- and post-instance years. Once issues had been selected, we then put together a list of terminology related to the concepts of identity and strategy (see Table II). To identify terminology related to Desjardins' specific cooperative identity, we consulted various volumes discussing the organization and its origins (Lévesque, 1997; Poulin, 1990, 1994, 1998; Poulin & Tremblay, 2005), paying particularly close attention to a list of original definitions, values and principles as reprinted in Croteau (2004, pp. 7-9). To identify terminology related to

Desjardins' strategic changes, we examined (auto)biographies and volumes that discussed the organization's developments through history (D'Amours, 2019; Lamarche, 1997; Poulin, 1990, 1994, 1998), as well as published work that specifically focused on instances of change marked as relevant (Croteau, 2004; Giroux, 1993; Poulin & Tremblay, 2005). These efforts eventually resulted in the terminological list as displayed in Table 6.2. Next, based on this list, we systematically scanned the full texts of highlighted *Revue* issues for excerpts in which the organization's strategy and identity were both discursively featured. To avoid missing out relevant excerpts, we complemented our manual scanning of each issue by conducting a digital query for terminology marked in our list. Eventually, 402 excerpts were identified. Excerpts were inserted into an Excel file, with each being marked in terms of: (i) year, volume, issue and page; (ii) spokesperson and function; (iii) change addressed; and (iv) way in which strategy and identity were interrelated in discourse. Inductive coding of these excerpts resulted in the identification of five discursive tactics (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.2 Identity and Strategy Terminology Used at Desjardins

Terminology related to identity
General identity-related terms: Identity, personality, value(s), principle(s), spirit, mission, vision, calling, visage, goal(s), culture, purpose, history, soul
Terms related to Desjardins' general identity: The Movement, founder (Alphonse Desjardins), 'Caisses populaires', cooperation, co-operator, collective
Terms related to Desjardins' identity dimensions: Democracy, mutuality, solidarity, collaboration, community, equality, decentralization, autonomy, transparency, altruism, social responsibility, regional development (of Québec), prudence
Terminology related to strategy
General strategy-related terms: Strategy, direction, distinction, plan of action, future plan, adaptation, change, transformation
Terms related to Desjardins' general strategy: Financial institution, profit, profitability, competitive advantage, sales
Terms related to change 1 – 'Foundation of an insurance subsidiary':   Insurance society, insurance, the Society
Terms related to change 2 - 'Greater acceptance of credit':   Consumption credit, credit, loan(s), consumption, capitalist, economic necessities
Terms related to change 3 - 'Introduction of credit card usage':   Credit card, payment card, plastic money, VISA
Terms related to change 4 - 'Integration of financial services':   De-compartmentalization, deregulation, integrated services
Terms related to change 5 - 'Reengineering of organizational processes':   Reengineering, work processes, technology, modernization
Terms related to change 6 - 'Revising organizational structure':   Restructuring, consolidation, the Federation, the Confederation, representative councils (CORE)

Table 6.3 Typology of Discursive Tactics with Coded Examples

| Discursive tactic	Examples from the empirical material
1. Denying dissonance Neglecting or denouncing strategy-identity misalignment	"People will tell us perhaps that we have let go of our cooperatives principles. Not at all; each member of a Caisse populaire who takes insurance will in turn become a shareholder; at the general meeting, he will have the right to vote like everyone else." (Addressing change 'Foundation of an insurance subsidiary'; *Revue Desjardins*, 1944, 10(8), p.157) "These elements [just listed] are essential to the credibility of the cooperative because they reflect our values and distinctive principles. Is this cooperative distinction contradicted by the changes Desjardins is now undertaking? Absolutely not!" (Addressing change 'Reengineering of organizational processes'; *Revue Desjardins*, 1999, 65(3), p.15)
2. Acknowledging dissonance: Acknowledging potential for strategy-identity misalignment	"IS OUR APPROACH A WISE ONE? Members of the Caisses populaires, and even people that are not members, have come to say us that, according to certain rumours, the Caisses populaires are controlled by bourgeois […]" (Addressing change 'A greater acceptance of consumer credit'; La Revue Desjardins, 1966, 32(3), p. 47) "[Growth enabled by integration of financial services] modifies the internal and external environment of the caisse. For example, consider the recent trend towards paying more attention to our 'corporate' members than to our individual members, because the former are more profitable. [This] throws up a first challenge: that of serving individuals equally well, because that is the raison d'être of the caisse." (Addressing change 'Integration of financial services'; *Revue Desjardins*, 1988, 54(6), p.2)
3. Framing: Reformulating strategy in conformity with identity	"Contrary to the current trend towards centralizing monetary and financial means, the Caisses populaire – relying on its principle of providing autonomy to the local level– will thus [i.e., by extending more credit] permit a better distribution of capital, extending the responsibility of managing it to thousands of our citizens." (Addressing change 'A greater acceptance of consumer credit'; *Revue Desjardins*, 1963, 29(4), p.62) "The establishment of the new federation has provided an opportunity to redefine and enrich the great forums of consultation and exchange existing within the Movement. Regular meetings have been added to the schedule with the goal of allowing wide participation concerning the direction of the Movement. [In this and other measures], we certainly find a beautiful promise for revitalizing our internal democracy, that is really up to us to render fully concrete." (Addressing change 'Revising organizational structure'; *Revue Desjardins*, 2001, 67(5), p.4)
4. Rationalizing: Inflating (the need for) strategy or deflating (the need for) identity	"Cooperatives will have to do all they can to adapt and implement the change in the best possible way […] We can be sure at least of one thing: the cooperatives will be obliged to function in a world that, for the most part they did not create. (Addressing change 'Introduction of credit card usage'; *Revue Desjardins*, 1981, 47(2), p.34) "The financial results of the last quarter clearly show that the Desjardins network gravely needs a new impulse if the Movement as a whole does not want to be marginalized. (…) New financial actors, equipped with solid technology, are courting our members. The competition is merciless and we feel its impact every day." (Addressing change 'Reengineering of organizational processes'; *Revue Desjardins*, 1996, 62(4), p.2)
5. Reconciling: Emphasizing the importance of balance or revising identity with (elements of) strategy	"We must balance the competitive capacity of the caisse, over the middle and long term; *and* its importance as an instrument of local development and as a democratic institution in service of the collective. To evaluate the situation well, we must take into account these two dimensions and not only one." (Addressing change 'Reengineering of organizational processes'; *Revue Desjardins*, 1999, 65(4), p.3) "While providing itself with the right means to become an efficient and competitive financial institution, the Desjardins Movement invests equally in nurturing and reinforcing its cooperative distinction." (Addressing change 'Revising organizational structure'; *Revue Desjardins*, 2001, 67(5), p.4)

In a third stage, we set out to determine how discursive tactics were juxtaposed within articles to refine our understanding of how discursive tactics were related to as well as were different from each other. To this end, we revisited our empirical material based on our established file of excerpts, color-coding excerpts within articles according to the discursive tactic they represented. Excerpts were traced back to a total of 116 articles, all of which were digitally extracted and uploaded in a separate database. Having this color-coded database at hand, we again read through all the articles, marking how excerpts of each discursive tactic thematically contributed to the article's overall message (as flagged in either title or lead paragraph). Next, to complement this visual method with an approach that allowed for systematic comparison across articles, we marked all excerpts as noted in our Excel file with the title of the article they were featured in. We then scanned this list for patterns (e.g., discursive tactics being consistently used concurrently in articles, or discursive tactics typically featuring solo) and for particularities standing out. Based on both this visual and list-based analysis of tactics used in article context, we returned to our understanding of the tactics as identified, refining the relationship between them.

Finally, in a concluding stage of analysis, we examined the evolution of discursive tactics over time. For each instance of change, we chronologically traced the number of excerpts identified per tactic, generating bar charts to summarize these data. We then scanned the collection of bar charts for patterns, focusing initially on patterns occurring *between* different instances of change. This led to the identification of two main temporal patterns: a proactive pattern in which discursive tactics were mainly featured in the early stages of change (instances 1, 4, 5, and 6), and a reactive dynamic in which discursive tactics were most evident after the change had long been introduced (instances 2 and 3). Next, we scanned for patterns over time *within* each instance of change, using temporal bracketing to make sense of underlying dynamics (Langley, 1999). For both proactive and reactive dynamics, three relevant phases were identified, which were cross-referenced with contextual data to give theoretical meaning to the temporality highlighted (see Figure 6.1).

In the findings below, we present the results of these analytical steps in two sections: (i) discursive tactics relating strategy and identity; and (ii) discursive dynamics relating strategy and identity (tracing how tactics play out over time).

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Figure 6.1 Temporality of Discursive Tactics To Relate Strategy and Identity in Change

(a) Example of Proactive Dynamic – Visualizing the Discourse of 'Revising Organizational Structure' (Number of References / Issue)
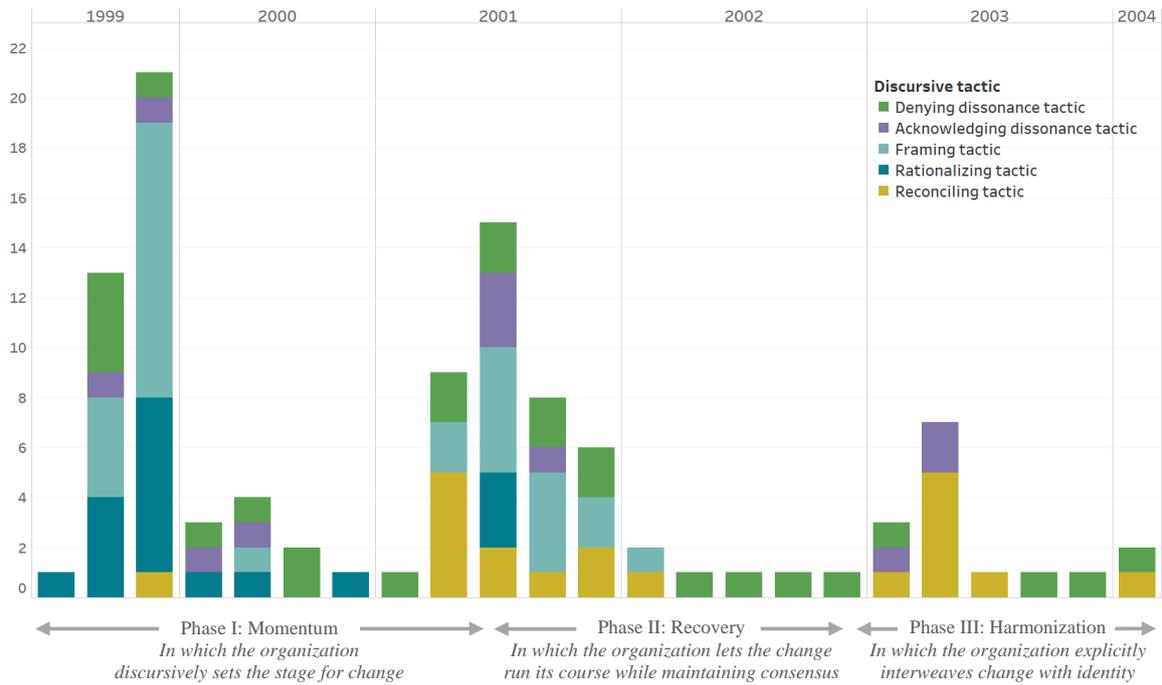
(b) Example of Reactive Dynamic – Visualizing the Discourse of 'A Greater Acceptance of Credit' (Number of References / Issue)
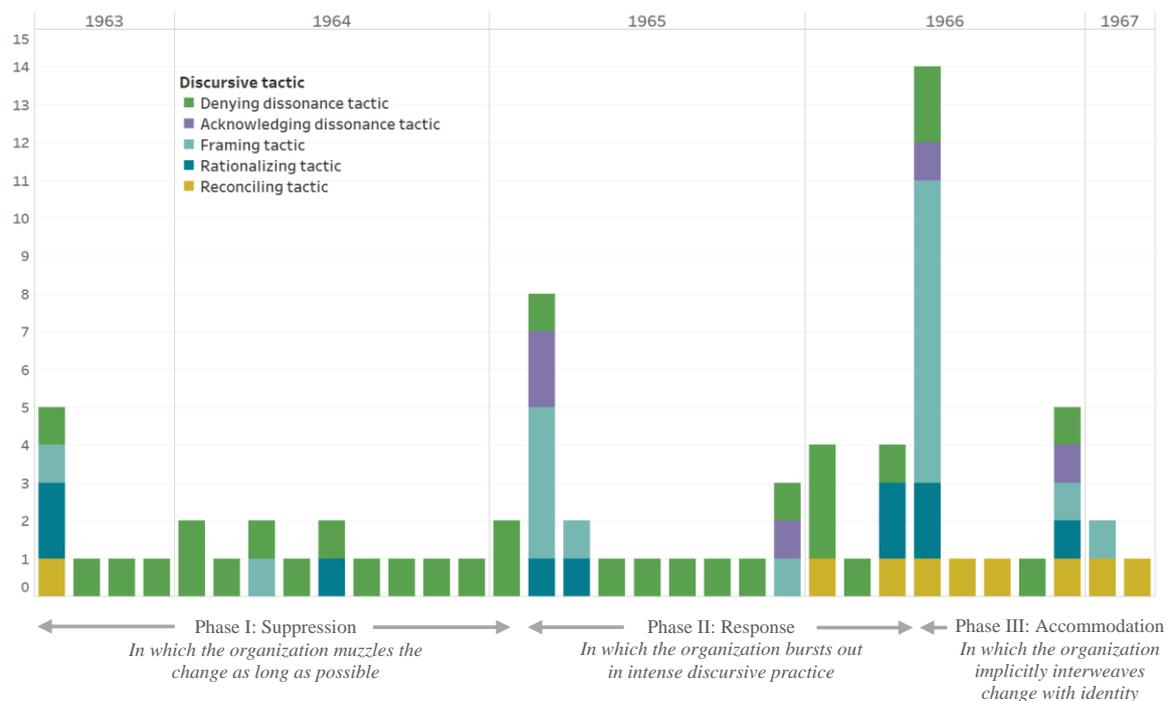
6.4 Findings

6.4.1 Discursive tactics relating strategy and identity

In this first findings section, we examine the range of discursive tactics Desjardins was found to draw on to relate strategy and identity in moments of change. Five discursive tactics were identified: denying dissonance, acknowledging dissonance, framing, rationalizing, and reconciling. For an overview of discursive tactics, we refer to Figure 6.2 - highlighting how the five tactics place more or less emphasis on strategy, identity or both.

Figure 6.2 Discursive Tactics for Relating Strategy and Identity in Change
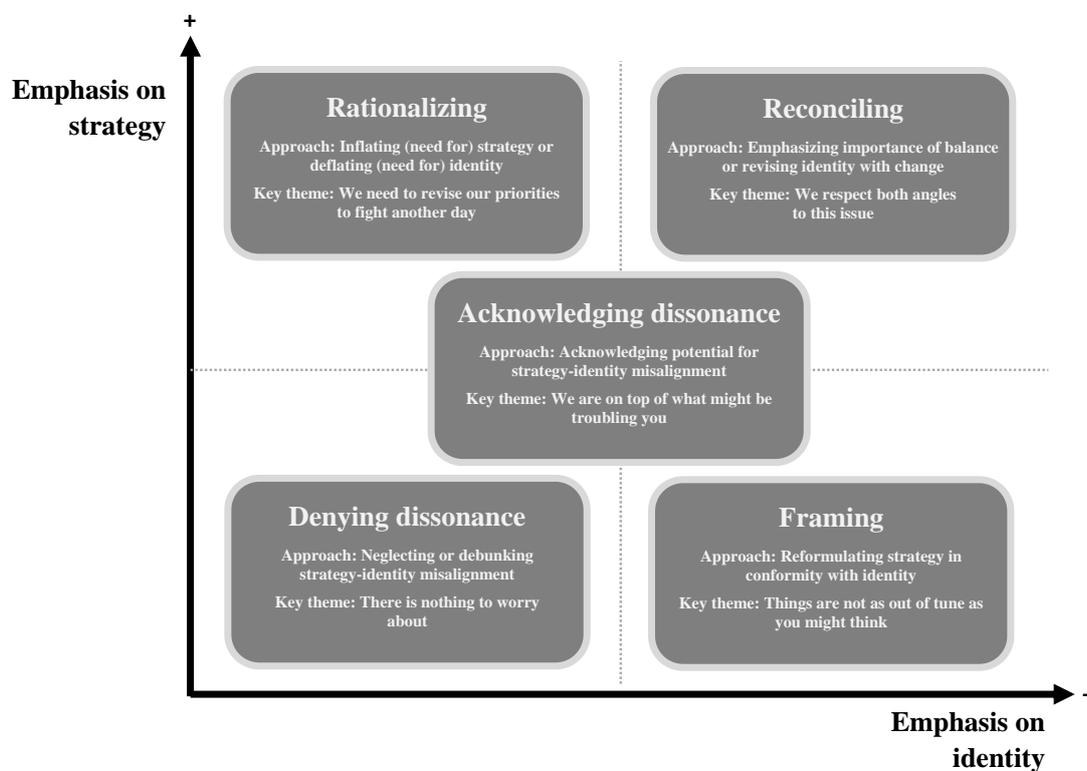
Denying dissonance tactic. In the denying dissonance tactic, the organization discursively minimizes any potential misalignment between strategy and identity. Downplaying both strategy and identity in discourse – i.e., bottom-left corner of Figure 6.2 – the organization seems to imply that the strategic change is identity neutral, and not to be worried about. This may be achieved in two different ways.

A first approach of denying dissonance involves naturalizing the change by not mentioning its potential conflict with identity, or sometimes by hardly mentioning the change at all. A good example of this concerns the moment in which the Desjardins Group decided to loosen up credit.

As the Desjardins Group had always identified itself with prudent parochial values, carelessness with money had long been harshly condemned. In 1963, however, the Group allowed credit to be extended for the purchase of consumer goods - such as cars, or washing machines – giving in to increasingly firmer calls for doing so. However, despite this change representing a major disconnect between the Group's strategy and identity, references to the loosening of credit were remarkably scarce: in fact, in the issues of the *Revue* that were published in the two years directly following the change implementation, hardly any reference to the credit extension was at all identified. In addition, when scarce references to the change were eventually tracked, the Group's discourse could be noted as remarkably descriptive, with little indication of any strategy-identity misalignment being given. In this way, the organization appeared to downplay the impact on identity that the change initiative might have – implicitly denying potential dissonance, while strategically moving on.

Another, more direct approach to the muffling of strategy-identity misalignments concerns discourse which explicitly dismisses the possibility. In an article headed by the question "How often have we heard people say that one of our actions was anti-cooperative?", the following excerpt by Desjardins' director in the Lanaudière region provides a good indication of how organizational leaders at times firmly rebutted the suggestion that strategy might be growing out of tune with identity.

> Let us stop flaying ourselves! The Desjardins Movement works on its reengineering in line with who it is, but with an implementation process that ensures that we will adapt the caisses for the members, and not for the structure. No, there is nothing that contradicts our cooperative distinction in these changes… (Bertrand Laferrière, *Revue Desjardins*, 1999, 65(3), p.15)

Produced during the final stages of the reengineering change project, note that the director here explicitly addresses the headline question by denying any misalignment between the Group's strategy and identity being present ('let us stop flaying ourselves', 'there is nothing that contradicts our cooperative distinction in these changes'). Such denials of strategy-identity misalignment are often associated with calls for calmness and serenity amongst organizational members - urging groups and individuals 'Don't panic' (*Revue Desjardins*, 1989, 55(2), p.31) when dealing with a change at hand. While there may be strategic change, the discourse thus suggests the organization's identity is not touched by it. Yet, one might wonder why it was felt necessary to make such a statement at all – for paradoxically, the denial itself suggests that in some quarters, there have indeed been questions about the compatibility with identity.

Acknowledging dissonance tactic. Alternatively, in the acknowledging dissonance tactic, the organization discursively affirms the pertinence of both strategy and identity – i.e., central position in Figure 6.2 – yet admits these logics to be potentially conflicting in change. Conceding in text what may concern its membership base, the organization flags itself as being on top of any observed dissonance, thereby apparently keeping concerns from getting out of control.

While the discursive tactic of denying dissonance consists of rejecting the possibility of potential misalignment, the tactic of acknowledging dissonance consists of recognizing the possibility rather openly. An example of this approach can be found in the following excerpt on the integration of financial services.

> It [i.e., the integration of financial services] would require us to develop teams of counsellors, but it is very costly to do this. So we would have to limit access to counsellors to wealthy people […] For Desjardins, this is where the issue lies. Because of its cooperative character, the Desjardins Group exists at the grace of and for the benefit of its members who, for the most part, are small investors. We therefore need to ask ourselves whether we face the following dilemma: either we become a financial supermarket and respond mainly to the needs of the most richly endowed; or, we refuse to follow the trend of financial integration and let ourselves be supplanted by our competition… (*Revue Desjardins*, 1985, 51(1), p.11)

Note that the organization here publicly expresses the change as representing 'a dilemma' – either to be solved in terms of identity, or to be dealt with in terms of strategy. Another illustration in which the organization recognized the possibility of misalignment between strategy and identity can be observed in the following excerpt, printed immediately after the Group had decided to reengineer its business processes by leveraging new technologies. In this excerpt, note that the changes selected are explicitly marked as challenging ('much more profound'), with in particular the organization's 'philosophy' being potentially confronted.

> The revision of all our work processes and the modernization of technology essentially represent changes that are much more profound: that is, changes in the way we approach our members as well as in the way we approach our philosophy. (*Revue Desjardins*, 1995, 61(2), p.11)

When looking at the general rationale behind the acknowledgement of strategy and identity as potentially misaligning, we note that many of these excerpts imply a need to assure that any misalignment remains within bounds. By explicitly addressing in discourse concerns that might be worrying its membership base, we saw organizational managers signalling that the organization

is on top of the problem – and is ready to address any lingering doubts. Consider, for example, the following excerpt from a statement made by the president of the Montreal region, produced during Desjardins' change involving the opening up towards consumer credit:

> Some pretend, without knowing too much of what is going on within, that the Caisse has frozen up, that it is staying too attached to the doctrine of our founder. Others reproach us for an evolution that is too rapid, that would risk losing the cooperative character of our Movement. How to reconcile these remarks, and apply them to the whole? […] Let us reread with attention the wishes of the congress; which we summarize as follows… (Emile Girardin, *Revue Desjardins,* 1965, 31(12), p.187)

Note that, in this excerpt, Girardin signals awareness of a possible confrontation between the organization's identity ('the doctrine of our founder', 'the cooperative character of our Movement') and strategy ('an evolution'). However, in doing so, Girardin also sets the stage for resolving such apparent troubles ('how to reconcile those remarks', 'let us reread the wishes of the congress'). Hence, by openly acknowledging how change may potentially misalign strategy and identity, we found the organization to set the stage for resolution – easing potential scepticism by situating itself as on top of the issue at hand.

Framing tactic. When using the framing tactic, organizational managers reformulate strategic change in ways that express clear conformity with the organization's identity. By drawing on identity-related elements to drive the discourse on strategic change – i.e., bottom-right corner of Figure 6.2 - the change is marked as not being so out of tune with organizational values as one might think, and indeed as being a quite natural extension of the existing identity.

A good example of framing can be found in Desjardins' discourse on the introduction of credit cards. When announcing the decision in favour or such cards, it can be noted that the Group put up quite some effort to consistently address credit cards as really representing 'payment cards' or 'plastic money' (*Revue Desjardins*, 1981, 47(3), p.5), offering as many as seven reasons why such terminology would in fact be more apt than the notion of 'credit card' ('because the exchange function is inherent in such cards', 'because in its use, the payment function has generally trumped the credit function', etc.). While these semantics may seem irrelevant for organizational outsiders, it should be noted that they mattered a great deal to the cooperative identity as upheld within the Group. As the founding father's initial intentions had been to safeguard the French-Canadian community from loan-sharks and high interest repayment schemes, frivolous spending and financial interests were seen as concepts that did not match well with Desjardins' organizational

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identity. By framing 'credit cards' as representing 'payment cards', the organization thus positioned the change in terms that did not confront the values of prudent spending and social responsibility – bringing the strategy in closer correspondence with who the organization's managers and members ultimately believed themselves be.

> As approximately 80% of transactions do not imply any payment of interest, the credit card has been transformed into a payment card. […] In conclusion, by saying YES to the 'credit card', the Movement is, in fact, saying YES to a payment card. (*Revue Desjardins*, 1981, 47(3), p.8)

Another example of the framing tactic can be found in the following excerpt on the creation of an insurance subsidiary. In this excerpt of an article titled 'What is insurance?', note that director Roby formulates the new insurance company as being an almost natural extension of the Group's cooperative identity ('the application in a different field of the principles that inspire the cooperative movement of savings and credit'), even to the extent that he advances the change as having sprouted from the Group's founding figure ('Commander Desjardins' motto', 'the idea of our founder has become reality').

> This insurance group is, in a way, the final part of Commander Desjardins' motto, "All for one", because it is from the collectivity of premiums received that unfortunate individuals are compensated. […] Our founder's idea of organizing an insurance group, has now become a vibrant reality. It is the application in a different field of the principles that inspired the cooperative movement of savings and credit. This insurance group relies on the active participation of the savings and credit cooperatives, on their members, and on all those that understand the vital necessity for people to organize themselves economically." (Joseph Roby, *Revue Desjardins*, 1945, 11(5), p.99)

Hence, as a common theme guiding the framing of change in identity-related terminology, we found quotes noted as framing to imply that the proposed change is not as out of tune with identity as one might think, and is in fact fully aligned with it. By discursively bringing the change in strategy close to the organization's identity, the Group smoothed over the edges of the change advanced – making major transformations appear more acceptable as a result.

Rationalizing tactic. In the rationalizing tactic, the organization's managers emphasize rational arguments over value-based arguments, arguing that a revision in priorities is required to remain viable as an organization. By emphasizing strategy over identity – i.e., top-left corner of Figure 6.2 - the organization asserts survival considerations, providing a credible reason for moving forward.

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Indeed, while the cooperative identity was often put forward as a guide in advancing the Desjardins Group in many situations, in the rationalizing tactic, its pertinence is deflated in discourse. In such instances, the need to adapt strategically was given prime consideration, in the face of which identity had to take a back seat if the Group wanted to remain relevant. One example of this can be observed in the following excerpt, in which Desjardins' president D'Amours is 'casting some light on the integration of financial services' (p.19) by justifying the need for a revision in priorities:

> The emphasis on sales effectively constitutes a new culture at Desjardins. The history of Desjardins has been constructed around the notion of owner-user and those who built the caisses did not have any difficulty in offering their services; the owner-user gave himself the services that he needed. But with the rise of competition, with the increase in the number of members, we find ourselves in a situation in which members - whose loyalty now is relative - are solicited by other financial institutions. Now, the caisses must actively push sales and not wait for members to request its services. (Alban D'Amours, *Revue Desjardins*, 1990, 56(5), p.20)

By setting out how Desjardins' context had shifted ('with the rise of competition, with the increase of the number of members'), D'Amours makes a clear case for why a change in strategy may be crucial, even if this means that 'attitudes' formerly shied away from must now be integrated into the Group's identity or 'culture'. Another example of the rationalizing tactic can be found in the following statement by president Béland, addressing the change of restructuring the Group towards a more centralized approach:

> We have to act in order to face a threat appearing on the horizon: that is, the diminishing of our caisses' competitiveness and their capacity to respond adequately to the financial needs of their members. These important decisions [i.e., restructuring] significantly strengthen the commercial dimension of the caisses. (Claude Béland, *Revue Desjardins*, 2000, 66(1), p.2)

Referring to a 'threat appearing on the horizon', Béland discursively constructs a tangible reason for why the change will have to happen. That such a change will water down the cooperative identity by strengthening the 'commercial dimension', seems an inevitable fact of life. Or, to quote Béland again, when addressing the change of financial integration:

> By definition, an organism cannot grow without shedding things. That holds equally true for organisms as it does for organizations. (Claude Béland, *Revue Desjardins*, 1988, 54(6), p.2)

Hence, as key theme embedded in acts of rationalization, we noted references in which strategy is emphasized over identity to generally call for a revision of priorities to ensure the organization's

survival. By hinging on terminology related to the notion of sustaining viability, the organization discursively provides support even for the most controversial of changes - offering members a credible reason for pushing forward.

Reconciling tactic. Finally, when opting for what we coin the reconciling tactic, the organization actively makes strong use of both elements of strategy and identity – i.e., top-right corner of Figure 6.2. Discursively tailoring the organization's identity with features as introduced by strategic change, the organization reunites the values of its past with directions for the future.

In the most basic form of reconciling, the organization emphasized strategy and identity as being balanced through change. An illustration of this can be found in the following statement by Desjardins' president, offered shortly after the reengineering of organizational processes had been implemented to boost the Group's profitability. Using words such as 'reconcile' and 'two axes', D'Amours indicates that neither the organization's increased focus on profitability nor its identity would be given prime importance – in fact, both would be equally respected.

> What I have said regarding profitability, is that it must reconcile our financial activities and our mission. For a cooperative, profitability isn't just about a return 'X' on the balance sheet, that results in an enrichment of stakeholders. […] Profitability must be based on two axes: the satisfaction of members, and the contribution it delivers to the well-being of our regions. (Alban D'Amours, *Revue Desjardins*, 2000, 66(3), p.2)

Another, more active approach to reconciling is the tailoring of organizational identity to incorporate elements of change. One of the most consistent illustrations of such revising at Desjardins was the way in which the cooperative identity – ironically enough - gradually became referred to as a means for standing out competitively. Consider, for example, the following reference, published shortly after Desjardins had restructured its operations:

> […] All companies in the world are looking for what can distinguish them from others. At Desjardins, we do not have to look for that very long: we have the cooperative distinction in our DNA. (Bertrand Laferrière, *Revue Desjardins,* 2004, 70(4), p.3)

Although the notion of being a cooperative is clearly emphasized in this fragment, note that its meaning shifts from an ideology to an image or brand – as representing a means for standing out competitively ('distinguish'), as much as depicting a sense of identity ('our DNA'). In this sense, while the cooperative identity is certainly not undermined, it is discursively revised to include elements of the new strategic direction (i.e., increasing competitiveness by restructuring). Another

example of such discursive tailoring can be found in the following statement by president Béland, stated during the change involving the integration of financial services:
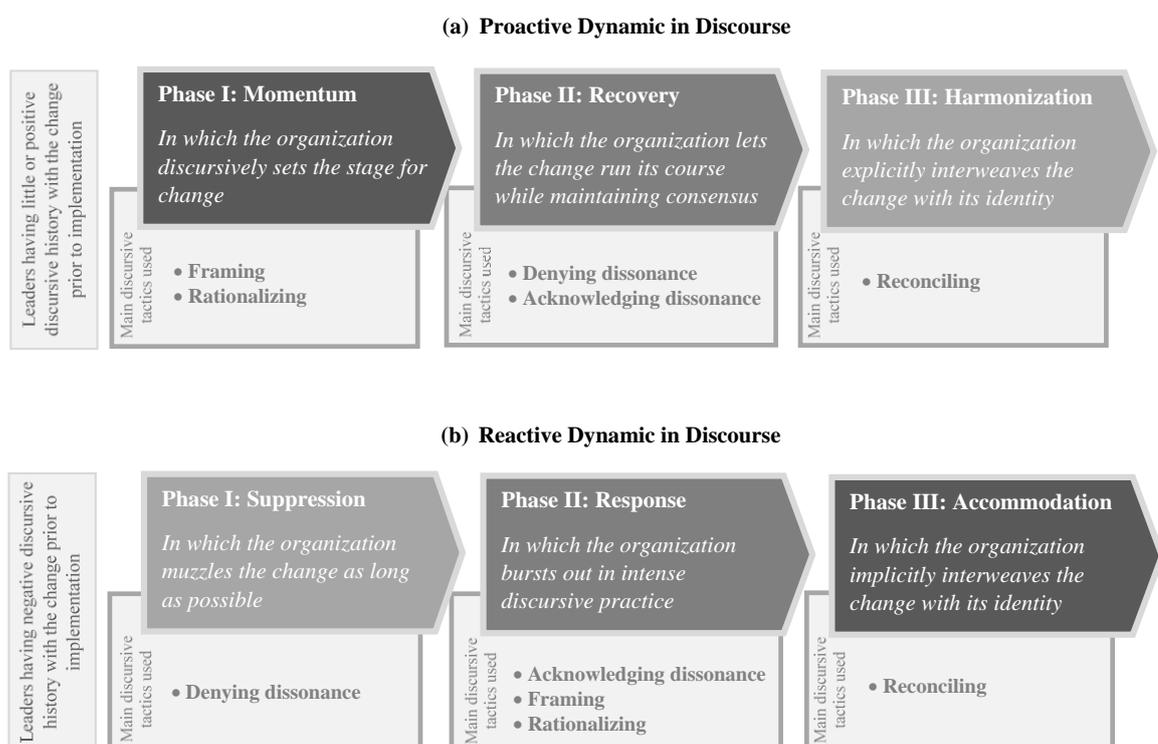
> With the financial integration, Desjardins will pass from adolescence to adulthood, meaning its face as a 'savings and credit cooperative' will transform little by little into that of a 'financial cooperative'. (Claude Béland, *Revue Desjardins*, 1988, 54(6), p.2)

In this excerpt, Béland explicitly puts into words how the cooperative identity ('face') will find itself incrementally altered by the change in strategy as introduced ('transforming from a savings and credit cooperative, to a financial cooperative'). By reconciling strategy and identity in discourse, we found the organization pushing for change while still keeping in touch with its original sense of being – to start working on a future, while also paying homage to its historical and ongoing identity.

6.4.2 Discursive dynamics for relating strategy and identity

In this second subsection, we delve deeper into the temporal stories of two changes at Desjardins, illustrating the main dynamics by which discursive tactics were found to be interlaced over time: a proactive dynamic and a reactive dynamic. For an overview, we refer to Figure 6.3. For an additional example of each dynamic, we refer to Appendix 6.1.

Figure 6.3 The Dynamics of Relating Strategy and Identity in Discourse

(a) Proactive Dynamic in Discourse

Leaders having little or positive discursive history with the change prior to implementation

Phase I: Momentum
In which the organization discursively sets the stage for change

Main discursive tactics used
- **Framing**
- **Rationalizing**

Phase II: Recovery
In which the organization lets the change run its course while maintaining consensus

Main discursive tactics used
- **Denying dissonance**
- **Acknowledging dissonance**

Phase III: Harmonization
In which the organization explicitly interweaves the change with its identity

Main discursive tactics used
- **Reconciling**

(b) Reactive Dynamic in Discourse

Leaders having negative discursive history with the change prior to implementation

Phase I: Suppression
In which the organization muzzles the change as long as possible

Main discursive tactics used
- **Denying dissonance**

Phase II: Response
In which the organization bursts out in intense discursive practice

Main discursive tactics used
- **Acknowledging dissonance**
- **Framing**
- **Rationalizing**

Phase III: Accommodation
In which the organization implicitly interweaves the change with its identity

Main discursive tactics used
- **Reconciling**

Proactive dynamic in discourse. In the proactive approach, managers promoting change discursively set the stage for it to happen through framing and rationalizing. Once the change had been introduced and was being generally rolled out, managers then maintained consensus by tapping into the discursive tactics of acknowledging and denying dissonance. Finally, after implementation, the change was ratified by means of explicit reconciliation, with organizational identity being openly revised to include new strategic elements.

For Desjardins, one of the most challenging changes involved the act of restructuring at the start of the new millennium, which implied moving away from a decentralized to a more centralized design. For president Claude Béland (Lamarche, 1997), who had shown himself in previous and contemporaneous statements to be very attached to the cooperative identity, restructuring proved to be a vital strategic move: in later years, he became explicitly referred to as one of the change's most prominent supporters. Driven by his initiative to make the Group's restructuring happen, we found the company's discourse to be distinctly proactive - with the vast majority of references to strategy and identity expressed during the change's initial stages. Overall, this proactive discourse emerged in three main phases.

First, we found the organization to initially build momentum for change by tapping into the discursive tactics of framing and rationalizing. In the early days of the restructuring initiative, over 60 percent of all references were found to use either a framing or rationalizing tactic, with president Béland at times combining both as in the following excerpt:

> I have the profound conviction that Desjardins will be able to put in place the actions [i.e., restructuring] that will allow our great Movement to enter the new millennium as a modern financial cooperative, better adapted to the new realities of the market and better geared to contribute to the rise of Quebec. (Claude Béland, *Revue Desjardins*, 1999, 65(4), p.2)

Note how, in this excerpt, Béland uses framing by formulating the upcoming change in terms related to the cooperative identity ('our great Movement', 'financial cooperative', 'contribute to the rise of Quebec'), as well as rationalizing by hinting at a pressing need to engage with the change envisioned ('to enter the new millennium', 'modern', 'new realities of the market'). By drawing on both the framing and rationalizing tactics, the organizational leader thus uses discourse to set a tolerable stage for change to take place.

Later, once the change was being operationalized, we found the organization's discourse to grow remarkably quieter, with less references being made concerning the initiative. When restructuring was mentioned, managers tended to draw more on the tactics of acknowledging and denying

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dissonance than they had initially done. In the following excerpts, note how the organization first openly recognizes potential dissonance between the change of centralization and the decentralization implicated in its identity; yet eventually returns to the topic in a consecutive issue to deny the possibility of misalignment altogether.

> To put it frankly, the session of last Friday revealed some uncertainty, a certain mistrust towards the 'technocrats' of the Federation and towards what looked like the centralization of decisional power in Lévis and Montreal. As proof, consider the type of questions addressed to the president: How to be sure that the CORE [i.e., representative councils created during the restructuring] will be consulted before a decision is made? What will be the links between the technocrats and the elected individuals? Will the CORE have sufficient manoeuvring space to deal with operational questions? […] (*Revue Desjardins*, 2001, 67(3), p.12)

> Today, from the first exchanges onwards, one thing strikes this observer […]: that this time, the mistrust has disappeared, with the confusion about the roles and responsibilities of the CORE dissipating quickly. All now understand the reasoning behind these representative councils, what they are and what they are not, the difference between the CORE and the regional federations' administrative councils we had before. (*Revue Desjardins*, 2001, 67(4), p.12-13)

While the organization first acknowledges concerns of strategy and identity potentially misaligning ('uncertainty', 'mistrust'), note that this open acknowledgement eventually works to dismiss such lingering worries all the more satisfactorily: by candidly recognizing what has been on the collective mind ('let us say it outright'), the organization can eventually more specifically address if and why such concerns are no longer fitting ('mistrust has disappeared', 'confusion dissipating quickly', 'all now understand the reasoning'). In this way, the organization works to construct or maintain consensus, while letting change run its course.

Finally, after the change had been effectively implemented, we found managers to explicitly revisit the organizational identity while incorporating elements of the recent change. For example, asked about his intentions for the Group's eighteenth organizational congress and how this assembly related to the Desjardin Group's recent 'giving birth to a single Federation' (p.19) (i.e., the restructuring), the following excerpt by president Béland's successor Alban D'Amours illustrates this return to identity preoccupations quite well:

> This eighteenth conference is special in that it does not question anything. It is meant to reinforce what makes us different rather than transforming it, putting forward the vital elements of cooperation in today's context. […] I would like us to become engaged in making Desjardins

the most human of financial institutions. (Alban D'Amours, *Revue Desjardins*, 2003, 69(2), p.19)

In this excerpt, while D'Amours emphasizes the cooperative identity, note that he also raises the idea of slightly altering that very identity with aspects of change – 'to reinforce', and become more suitable to 'today's context'. In fact, note that the very terms by which D'Amours captures Desjardins' cooperative identity is already a reworking of that identity in itself: labelling Desjardins as 'the most human of financial institutions', D'Amours turns to a discourse in which both the cooperative identity ('the most human') and the strategic change ('financial institution') have been integrated – ratifying the future, while keeping in touch with the past.

Hence, in a proactive approach, we found the organization to discursively build on the drive of an ardent change initiator, first setting the stage for change through framing and rationalizing; to then maintain consensus by acknowledging and denying dissonance; and to eventually harmonize strategy with identity through explicit reconciliation. For an additional illustration of the proactive dynamics shown here, see Appendix 6.1a.

Reactive dynamic in discourse. In a reactive approach, the organization initially limited its discourse about the change at hand, chiefly tapping from a discursive tactic of denying dissonance. This hushed discourse was maintained until the change had been well established, after which an intense response of acknowledging dissonance, framing and rationalizing could be noted. Finally, the organization embedded the strategy into its identity by implicitly reconciling both in discourse, covertly bringing new strategic elements into expressions of identity.

One of the most explicit examples of such a reactive approach can be found in the Group's discourse on the opening up of credit. For years, the organization had been deeply divided on whether or not to extend credit for consumer goods (such as cars or washing machines), with president Vaillancourt being one of the firmest adversaries of such a policy (Poulin, 1994, 1998). In 1963, however, the Group voted in favour of extending 'consumer' credit, giving in to ongoing pressures from the leaders of several larger Caisses to do so. In the reactive discourse that followed, three main phases could be delineated.

First, while the decision to open up credit was effectively communicated in *La Revue Desjardins*, we found the organization to initially keep references to the topic strictly limited. In fact, saying nothing about the change in strategy long seemed to be the discursive tactic of choice: with the *Revue* hardly making any reference to the decision for nearly two years, Desjardins' discourse could make one wonder whether the change had actually occurred in the first place. Occasionally,

this silence was punctuated by organizational leaders dismissing the loosening up of credit as being at all opposed to elements of the organization's identity – such as its emphasis on prudent saving and regional development:

'Consumer credit' is not opposed to savings since it is nourished by it, and is a dynamic factor to the development of the economy. (*Revue Desjardins*, 1965, 31(1), p. 17)

In a second stage, once the change had become irreversible, this silent treatment was lifted for a brief period of intense response: once the new credit rules had been solidified widely, we see a discursive mix of acknowledging dissonance, framing and rationalizing. Consider, for example, the following excerpt by president Vaillancourt, reflecting on the loosening up of credit as having, by then, been decided three years ago.

Is our trajectory a wise one? […] For some years, the Caisses populaires have evolved a lot in their lending: things that before were not considered as necessary to family life have today become domestic necessities. These days, for example, in houses of eight, ten, twelve floors, with multiple tenants, one cannot utilize pots that heat on wood, coal or even oil; one has to buy an electric stove. It is the same for many products. By lending for durable consumer goods, the Caisses populaires contribute at the same time to the development of the nation's industry. (Cyrille Vaillancourt, *Revue Desjardins*, 1966, 32(3), p.47-48)

Note how, in this excerpt, president Vaillancourt both recognizes the potential for strategy misaligning with identity ('is our approach a wise one?'), justifies the need to commit to the change (due to 'the evolution of domestic necessities') and frames the change as conforming with organizational identity ('contribute to the development of the nation's industry'). Yet, by committing to such discursive tactics several years after the loosening up of credit has been decided on, Vaillancourt discursively endorses a change that could hardly be overthrown any longer – alleviating possible concern for a change that, by then, had taken hold already.

Finally, after this episode of intense response, we found the organization to covertly reconcile its renewed strategy with identity. A good illustration of this can be found in Desjardins' printing of a set of articles on 'what it means to be a cooperative'. In these articles, the organization revisited the cooperative spirit, but at the same time slightly tweaked its phrasing to allow for the change of opening up credit to fit in. Consider the following excerpt:

What is a cooperative? […] Co-operators assume the responsibility to allocate the necessary economic instruments to satisfy essential economic needs. (*Revue Desjardins*, 1996, 32(4), p.86)

While these specific wordings might seem hardly remarkable, it should be noted that they represent a subtle rewriting of Desjardins' sense of being: opting for a semantic formulation that is decidedly broad ('to satisfy essential economic needs'), the organization no longer strictly defines itself as an institution that only allocates credit meant for prudent, 'productive' investments – such as houses or workspaces, as the Group had long emphasized before – but instead re-interprets its identity in a way in which the change of opening up to 'consumer credit' can fit in. While the group thus stays true to its cooperative identity, it rewrites this identity according to change – slightly altering the very definition of who the group believes itself to be, to allow for the change to match it.

Hence, in a reactive approach, we found the organization to find itself discursively restrained by a strong change adversary, masking the change initially in an extensive period of denying dissonance; to intensively address the change with acknowledging dissonance, framing and rationalizing tactics once it had been operationalized; and to eventually accommodate the renewed strategy with identity through implicit reconciliation of both in discourse. For an additional illustration of reactive dynamics used in discourse, we refer to Appendix 6.1b.

6.5 Discussion

Following the 80-year trajectory of a financial cooperative, this paper examined how organizations discursively relate strategy and identity in moments of change. Specifically, our findings laid bare five tactics by which discourse can be used to connect strategy and identity in change, each of which suggested a different emphasis on what the organizations does and who the organization believes itself to be (see Figure 6.2). In addition, we examined how tactics were interrelated over time, illustrating two patterns of longitudinal dynamics (see Figure 6.3).

Our findings illustrate how discursive tactics may be mobilized to link strategy and identity in times of change. In the discursive tactic of *denying dissonance*, the organization relates strategy and identity by neglecting or dismissing any potential misalignment. By invalidating or ignoring the possibility that strategy and identity might be growing apart, the organization conveys a message that strategic change is not to be worried about. In contrast, when using the discursive tactic of *acknowledging dissonance*, the organization relates strategy and identity by explicitly recognizing the possibility of misalignment through change. By openly admitting doubts, the organization marks itself as being on top of any potential problem, and ready to address the tension. In *framing*, the organization formulates the change in a terminology that retains close connection to that being used when talking about organizational identity. By addressing change initiatives in

terms related to who members believe themselves to be, the organization smooths out the most controversial aspects of the change being put forward. Instead, when opting for the discursive tactic of *rationalizing*, the organization strongly emphasizes the need for strategy over the need to maintain identity. Forcefully making the case for a necessary revision of priorities, the organization provides members with a credible rationale for moving forward. Finally, in *reconciling*, the organization relates strategy and identity as simultaneously crucial, either discursively emphasizing the necessity of respecting both, or revising identity with elements of change. By showcasing a respect for both future conduct and past values, the organization makes the case for change while retaining the core of its valued identity.

While these discursive tactics can be noted as significantly different in their strategy-identity emphases (see Figure 6.2), our findings suggest them to be complementary rather than competing: as we found discursive tactics being used concurrently throughout the articles studied, our results hint at their contributions being part of an integrated whole. Rather than one particular tactic being preferred in consistently relating strategy to identity through discourse, our findings illustrate discursive tactics to suit such purpose in different ways - with much of their value seemingly contingent on the specific circumstances the organization confronts at the time. By balancing different tactics in discourse, the organization seems to continually adjust to the needs of the moment – to soothe, acknowledge, alleviate, propel, or reconcile organizational members to change according to the concerns of the time, and by so doing use discourse to "help constitute a material reality" (Hardy et al., 2005, p. 60).

Lastly, our findings highlight how organizational leaders generally relate strategy and identity in discourse according to one of two temporal patterns. In the *proactive* approach, the organization sets the stage for change to happen through framing and rationalizing; maintains consensus through acknowledging and denying dissonance; and ratifies the change by means of explicit reconciliation. This approach seems to be the temporal pattern of choice when organizational leaders have not starkly opposed the change prior to its actual implementation: in such cases, discourse is primarily used to promote the concordance of strategy with the organization's identity moving forward. In a *reactive* approach, however, the organization underplays change for as long as possible through denying dissonance; then validates change after it is implemented by acknowledging dissonance, framing and rationalizing; and embeds it in identity by means of implicit reconciliation. This approach seems to occur when the change has already been negatively addressed by organizational leaders prior to its actual ratification: in such cases, when the change is ultimately pushed through by the organization at large, leaders primarily use discourse to side-

step problems of inconsistency – both between identity and the renewed strategy as advanced, and between their own prior proclamations and new choices made. As a result, how organizations coordinate discursive tactics over time – proactively or reactively – seems implicitly affected by the way in which leaders have tied their personal identities to changes put forward. When leaders have initially advanced either positive or neutral points-of-view on changes being considered, the use of discourse that actively relates a change to the organization's identity cannot be considered inconsistent with leaders' personal identity tie-in, thus allowing them to credibly opt for a more proactive dynamic. Yet, when organizational leaders have already ventured an explicitly negative appreciation of a change being considered, such a proactive dynamic would be inconsistent with the way in which their personal identities have been attached to the change in question, thus forcing them to use a more reactive dynamic when publicly validating the change.

6.5.1 Implications and contributions

First, while earlier studies have illustrated the use of discourse for either strategic (Barry & Elmes, 1997; Hardy et al., 2000; Heracleous & Barrett, 2001) or identity-related purposes (A. D. Brown, 2006; Chreim, 2005; Fiol, 2002), this article complements such work by illustrating how strategy and identity can be discursively linked together in organizational level communications. As our findings highlight several approaches by which discourse can be tapped for the interconnection of strategy and identity, our study answers recent calls for turning to organizational text when addressing the "strategy-identity nexus" (Ravasi et al., 2020, p. 5) - showcasing how organizational narratives can interlace "who we are and aspire to become" (p.14). In addition, by illustrating strategy-identity relations as profoundly interwoven in narrative, this study marks the (mis)alignment of strategy and identity as not only happening 'out there' (Anthony & Tripsas, 2016; Tripsas, 2009), but as also finding itself largely reconstituted within the stories an organization discursively constructs. In this sense, whether instances of change pull apart or bring closer together an organization's strategy and identity does not seem solely dependent on how change intervenes with strategy and identity in 'material reality' (Hardy et al., 2000, p. 60) – it also seems largely conditional on how strategy and identity are related in the reality an organization constructs through discourse.

Second, as all changes observed at Desjardins were eventually realized, this study contributes to the literature on strategy by highlighting how organizations may use discourse to move through changes that spark strategy-identity controversies. While studies on strategy have looked at working through moments of controversial change, most have considered the use of rather explicit means, such as power (Hardy, 1996), market stimuli (Johne & Davies, 1999), or unanticipated

information (Kirtley & O'Mahony, 2020). Although such elements were no doubt present in the cases of change we considered, by looking at the use of discourse in change, the findings of this study extend this conversation by showing how managers may complement and legitimize proposed changes through language. Offering ways of relating strategy and identity in narrative, this article highlights how organizations can discursively alleviate what generates controversy in real-life – promoting a new future, while keeping in touch with their past.

Third, our findings extend the relatively nascent conversation on organizational identity work (Golant et al., 2015; Kreiner & Murphy, 2016; Watson, 2016), showcasing how the active adaptation of identity fits into a much broader set of discursive tactics. While we found the Desjardins Group to repeatedly revise its cooperative identity with elements of changing strategies (i.e., reconciling tactic), this active identity work generally found itself embedded in a set of approaches that involved far less direct adaptation to organizational identity (i.e., denying dissonance, acknowledging dissonance, framing, and rationalizing). In this way, our study extends in particular the findings of Ravasi and Phillips (2011), offering one possible interpretation of the "higher-order framework" (p.129) the authors explicitly called for.

Finally, this study adds to the literature on strategy-identity interrelations by highlighting the role individuals play in the way in which strategy and identity are linked through narrative (Langley et al., 2020). As the dynamics among discursive tactics over time were shown to vary according to individual leaders' personal histories as supportive of change, or opposed to it -this article marks the way organizations discursively relate strategy and identity in change to be implicitly driven by the level of identity-inconsistency leaders personally experience when communicating. Doing so, this paper offers a distinct illustration of 'how the individual identities of organizational leaders may express themselves in strategic initiatives and organizational identity work' (Ravasi et al., 2020, p. 15) – that is, not by pushing for tactics that are altogether dissimilar, but by interlinking the same tactics in temporally different ways.

6.5.2 Boundary conditions and directions for further research

This study focused on a single target company: a cooperative financial group. The question therefore arises as to which elements of our observations might be extended to other settings, and which not. Cooperatives have the distinction of being organizations with a democratic structure and dispersed ownership (in this case with members or clients). The need for senior managers to persuade its officers and members (as well as employees) of the validity of its strategies is thus perhaps more intense than in other types of organizations, making the discursive alignment

between strategy and identity of particular importance here. However, employees and clients of other kinds of organizations can also be highly attached to organizational identities because of the meaning it offers them (Suddaby and Foster, 2016). Similar dynamics might therefore be found in employee magazines or other communications for different types of organizations.

Nevertheless, it would be valuable to conduct similar studies in other types of organizations with more centralized power structures to understand and appreciate the differences. Two particular cases come to mind - the multinational, and the start-up. As multinationals represent settings in which the relation between strategy and identity may be blurred by both a spatial (Ambos & Ambos, 2009) and a network dimension (Andersson & Forsgren, 1996), it would be valuable to study whether discursive tactics as identified would differ for this type of organization. In addition, since start-ups generally represent settings in which founders retain dominant voices (Beckman & Burton, 2008), it would be relevant to study whether additional discursive tactics might be mobilized in such contexts.

In terms of future research, we note that this study focused on the discursive analysis of an internally distributed organizational magazine, highlighting how discourse is *mobilized* by the organization for the constitution of strategy-identity relationships. What remains an interesting question, however, is how such discourse would be - if at all - *interpreted* by the organization members it addresses. How do they make sense of the ideas and messages expressed, and of the tactics being used to construct strategy-identity alignment? A focus on audience 'sensemaking' would offer a useful complement to the study of the discursive mechanisms of strategy-identity 'sensegiving' emphasized in the current study.

Another angle we consider interesting for further developing the notions introduced here consists of extending our inquiry across means of communication – that is, do organizations use the same discursive tactics for relating strategy and identity in verbal communication as they do in written narrative? As verbal communication has been argued to both extend – e.g., body language, intonation, pace, etc. - and limit the use of discourse – e.g., by limiting communicators to use compressed, easily understandable phrases - (Boje et al., 2004; Chia, 2000; Robichaud, 2015) we consider an inquiry into the use of verbal discourse to represent a useful addition to the textual focus as developed.

6.6 Conclusion

As organizations engage in strategic change, the alignment between strategy and identity may be disturbed – effectively putting into question whether 'what we do' still relates to 'who we are'. By

dynamically highlighting the role of five discursive tactics for delineating strategy-identity relations before, during and after strategic change, this article illustrates how changing organizations use discourse to relate their ongoing actions with a continued sense of coherence: to reconcile strategic movement towards the future, while retaining connections to the past.

Notes

[1] Digitized data provided by the Observatoire International des Coopératives de Service Financier of the Alphonse and Dorimène Desjardins International Institute for Cooperatives: http://observatoire.coopfinance.hec.ca/fr/home.html.

Appendix 6.1a Additional example of proactive dynamic in discourse

Change #5: Reengineering of organizational processes to boost profitability	
Phase	**Empirical material**
Phase I: Momentum	**In which Desjardins discursively sets the stage for the reengineering to happen.**
Framing	The organization frames the modernization of technology from being an arduous change to being an effort that has always been implicated in its identity of serving members' needs.
	"The reengineering of work processes is a major project for 1995. It touches all aspects of the functioning of our 'caisses'. It concerns utilizing modern technology to realize our mission even better – that is to say, to contribute to the individual and collective well-being of our members, as Desjardins has always done." (Claude Béland, President of the Movement, 1995, 61(2), p.2).
Rationalizing	The organization emphasizes the competition as become increasingly tough, making it imperative for Desjardins to optimize its economics through processual reengineering if it wants to remain relevant.
	"For the 'caisses', the reengineering will prove to be an important means for conserving their competitive advantage." (Claude Béland, President of the Movement, 1995, 61(2), p.11)
	"In undertaking this grand shift [i.e., the reengineering], Desjardins does not sacrifice itself to the latest fad, nor does it succumb to an immoderate appetite for change. We simply have to modernize our way of doing things if we want to stay the most important financial institution in Québec." (Claude Béland, President of the Movement, 1995, 61(3), p.2)
Phase II: Recovery	**In which Desjardins lets the reengineering project run its course while maintaining consensus.**
Acknowledging dissonance	The organization openly acknowledges doubts concerning reengineering lingering amongst its members.
	"We are aware that there is frustration amongst some of our managers and that everyone has their own understanding of the word autonomy. But there can be no autonomy without solidarity. In all, having said 'yes' to the normalization of systems [i.e., the reengineering], we cannot constantly move backwards again." (Claude Béland, President of the Movement, 1996, 62(2), p.3).
Denying dissonance	Picking up on doubts, the organization rebuts the idea of reengineering erasing organizational values (such as democracy).
	"Revue Desjardins (interviewer): "You do not believe that, in the name of profitability, the place of those elected in Desjardins will be threatened?
	Simon Caron: "When I see 16 000 volunteers give their trust to the Movement to the point of spending their time without counting it, I am having difficulty believing that the place of those elected would be threatened." (Simon Caron, President of the Federation of Bas-Saint-Laurent, 1997, 63(5), p.21)
Phase III: Harmonization	**In which Desjardins explicitly interweaves elements of the reengineering into its identity.**
Reconciling	The organization emphasizes the need for balancing strategic elements as advanced by the reengineering ('competitive capacity') with identity elements ('an instrument of local development, 'a democratic institution in service of the collective').
	""We must balance the competitive capacity of the caisse, over the middle and long term; and its importance as an instrument of local development and as a democratic institution in service of the collective. To evaluate the situation well, we must take into account these two dimensions and not only one." (Claude Béland, President of the Movement, 1999, 65(4), p.3)
	The organization explicitly highlights identity and strategy as to be reconciled and interwoven.
	"How can we reconcile the rules imposed on us by the competition with those of Desjardins' mission? We have the obligation to be financially solid, that is essential. The profitability of the Movement must be sufficient to assure its development and its sustainability, but that profitability must be evaluated in function of our being different." (Alban D'Amours, President of the Movement, 2000, 66(2), p.6)

Appendix 6.1b Additional example of reactive dynamic in discourse

Change #3: Introduction of credit card usage	
Phase	**Empirical material**
Phase I: Suppression	**In which Desjardins publicly neglects the topic of credit cards and their usage.**
Denying dissonance	From 1974 to 1981, Desjardins' leaders repeatedly debated the issuance of credit cards, with such technology having been considered identity-inconsistent in a 1974 vote. Yet, despite the ongoing nature of back-office debates, hardly any reference to credit cards is identified in the organization's discourse of this period: with strategy being interpreted as potentially incompatible with identity, the organization seems to discursively muzzle the issue. This discursive neglect of potential strategy-identity dissonance remains the tactic of choice up to the moment where credit cards are effectively introduced at Desjardins (1981) and are sealed into the organization's future direction (see Giroux, 1993).
Phase II: Response	**In which Desjardins engages in novel discursive practices on the topic of credit cards, trying to legitimize a choice it had formerly rejected.**
Acknowledging dissonance	The organization recognizes the strategy-identity dissonance the introduction of credit cards potentially raises, acknowledging that the decision to go with credit cards follows an earlier decision to reject them.
	"The question arises: [...] why is the Desjardins Movement launching credit cards in 1981, after having said 'no' to such cards in 1974?" (Revue Desjardins, 1981, 47(3), p.4)
Rationalizing	The organization emphasizes the external environment as having changed in ways that make credit cards a necessity for any financial institution to remain relevant.
	"The 'yes' to the credit card is a result of the numerous small changes in the society of Québec and North America - rendering this 'yes' possible in 1981, while still questionable and disputable in 1974." (Revue Desjardins, 1981, 47(2), p.41)
Framing	The organization frames 'credit cards' as actually representing 'payment cards', thus alleviating the extent in which the strategic change confronts original organizational values of prudent spending.
	"The credit card is a payment card for the following reasons: • *First, the exchange functionality is inherent to the card. [...]* • *Second, in the utilization of bank cards, the payment function has overall trumped the credit function.* • *Third, the 'credit card' is a payment card because it is founded on the principal criterion of a payment instrument: that is, on the trust it inspires.* • *Fourth, the 'credit card' is a payment card because, by identifying its holder, the 'credit card' allows a financial institution to transfer its financial credibility to its members – everywhere in the country, or in the world.* • *Fifth, the 'credit card' is a payment card because it guarantees the payment of the transaction carried out by its holder. [...]* • *Sixth, as have other payment instruments that preceded it in time, the 'credit card' reveals itself as an instrument that is more convenient and more safe for economic agents. [...]* • *Seventh, [...] if the card had not effectively responded, as a payment instrument, to the needs and constraints of the modern economy, it would not have been able to be included in the general payment system." (Revue Desjardins, 1981, 47(3), p.5-6)*
Phase III: Accommodation	**In which Desjardins interweaves the use of credit cards with its organizational identity.**
Reconciling	The organization emphasizes the balance between strategic elements ('to grow market penetration') and identity elements ('to serve their members').
	*"With VISA, the 'caisses populaires' have opened a new door to the future, having given themselves an additional way to serve their members, and grow their market penetration." (Revue Desjardins, 1984, 50(6), p.22*l

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Chapter 7

Conclusion

In this final chapter, I will first reflect theoretically on the ramifications implied within the studies of this dissertation. Next, I will discuss this dissertation's implications and contributions in terms of change theory, practice, methodology, and education. Furthermore, I will highlight this dissertation's boundary conditions and limitations. Finally, I will set out some directions for further research within each perspective on change as discussed.

Building on five dedicated essays, this dissertation has addressed the question of how organizations go about change. In a first essay, this dissertation highlighted the unfolding of emotions when top managers see their change developments aided by external consultants. As this chapter marked affective experiences to be deeply interwoven in the strategy outcome eventually established, it illuminates the importance of micro-level factors for firm-level results in change. In a second stop, this dissertation addressed how multi-level context can influence the strategic development of embedded organizations. Showcasing organizations as generally aligning their strategic intentions with multi-level phases as consecutively developing, this essay marked change to be temporally dependent on both top-down and bottom-up processes. Next, in a third and theoretical essay, this dissertation addressed the conceptual relation between formative and reactive perspectives on change. Marking formative and reactive concepts as conversely empowering a shared paradigm while holding their own, this paper advances the literature on change by highlighting the relevance of integrating disparate streams of thinking, allowing for the creation of more meaningful insight throughout. In a fourth essay, this dissertation looked into the emergence and development of failure in change, perusing such phenomenon through a dialectical lens. Indicating failure in change to progress according to processes of retention, reaction and recursion, this essay raises failure to eventually establish the conditions for both success and failure to continuously remit. Finally, in a fifth essay, this dissertation addressed the way organizations can make use of discourse to link changes in strategy to an established organizational identity. Highlighting the dynamic complementarity of discursive tactics for relating strategy and identity through change, this chapter offers an integrated perspective on how organizations may project a sense of advancing strategically while maintaining their identity – constructing their future, while keeping in touch with their past.

7.1 Theoretical reflections

As the various studies of this dissertation show, change in an organizational context often proves complex and multi-faceted: with many different yet interconnected social factors featuring in the development of organizational groups, coming to terms with change seldom strikes as a forthright venture. In result, while scholarly development can at times benefit from a certain amount of conversational focus, this dissertation illustrates how perspectives – however different - can also work to meaningfully complement each other. Although this dissertation has initially structured its empirical chapters as building on the theoretical tenets of a main perspective for sake of clarity, the invested reader will have certainly noticed precepts of other perspectives to also occasionally feature, ultimately stimulating the development of theory (see Figure 7.1).

For example, while Chapter 2 was advanced as a case in which change was primarily looked at as an explicit intervention by experts (cf. deliberate perspective), it can be noted that this chapter also complemented such perspective with other, more secondary points-of-view – as can be found illustrated in the intervention being considered intricately moulded by the social experiences of client-consultant interactions (cf. emergent perspective); and in the eventual strategy or plan being propelled by the interpersonal conflicts that developed throughout the client-consultant trajectory as a whole (cf. dialectical perspective). Or, while Chapter 3 was put forward as focusing primarily on the gradual emergence of change on account of the organization's interaction with multi-level context (cf. emergent perspective), it can be noted that this chapter also highlighted such emergence to be at least partially driven by the tensions manifesting between top-down and bottom-up processes (cf. dialectical perspective), with the actions of other industry participants often validating change as response (cf. responsive perspective) or justifying an absence of change altogether (cf. inertia perspective). Chapter 4 even provided an explicit example of perspective reconciliation, addressing the potential for theoretically integrating the formative and responsive perspective. Furthermore, while Chapter 5's theoretical framework primarily drew on the tenets of the dialectical perspective, it also illustrated how retained commitment to the organizational status-quo (cf. inertia perspective) and an all too drastic response to intra-organizational crisis (cf. responsive perspective) can essentially contribute to change going awry. Finally, although Chapter 6 primarily tackled the way in which an organization's identity-based resistance to strategic developments can render change difficult to occur (cf. inertia perspective), it also considered the (semantic) context in which individuals take day-by-day decisions (cf. emergent perspective) and tied into the ways in which leaders try to influence such context intentionally (cf. deliberate perspective).

Figure 7.1 How chapters build on different perspectives on change
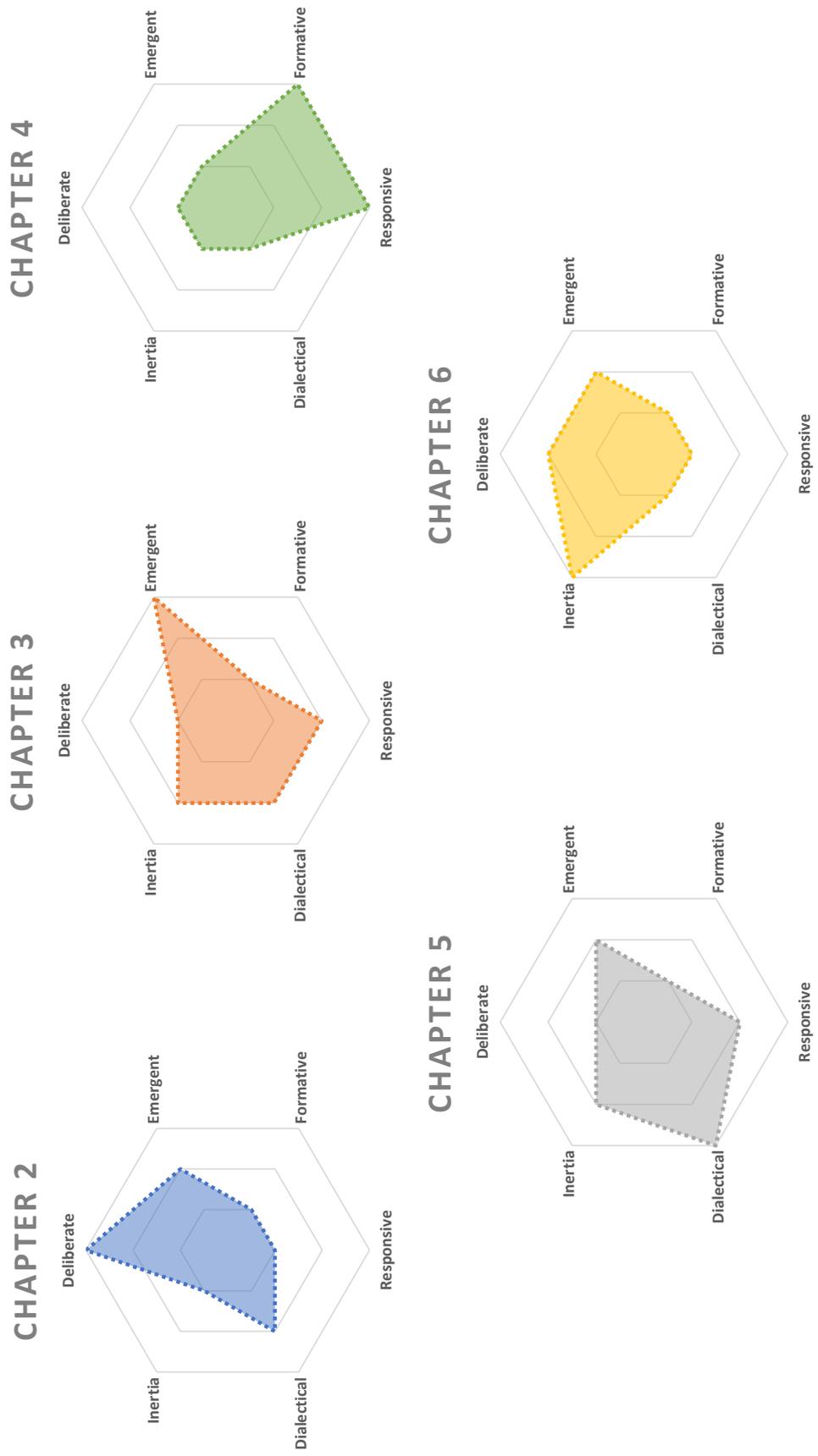
Such potential for cross-fertilization is not only discernible when scanning perspectives as used, but can also be distinguished when focusing on the ways in which the insights of one study can contribute to our understanding of the other. For example, while chapter six has highlighted how organizational leaders may use discourse to validate strategic changes that are at odds with the organizational identity, chapter two lays bare such work as often depending on leaders' ability to reconstruct their own emotional experiences. Or, while chapter four has made the case for a dualistic development of both formative and responsive capabilities for change, chapter three illustrates that the timing at which both capability sets are required may primarily depend on the macro- and micro-level influences that the organization continuously endures. Similarly, while chapter five has highlighted how organizational leaders may drastically switch change approaches when being shown the error of former ways, chapter six illustrates how language can help them make sense of such radical turns towards organizational employees. In this way, although all studies as incorporated in this dissertation focused on different aspects and operated from different approaches, it should be noted that they all contribute to the same multi-faceted image.

Hence, while identified perspectives yield decidedly different outsets from which to peruse the topic of change in an organizational context, the chapters as included in this dissertation showcase them as not being entirely irreconcilable: instead, they are illustrated as being highly complementary, each offering a different take on the complex reality that is change. In result, this dissertation argues that the presence of various onto-epistemological outsets in the current conversation on change does not amount to scholarly folly, but instead reflects the multi-dimensionality that real-life change actually warrants. As each perspective allows us to drill deeper down on one particular facet of change, it is the joint consideration of insights produced by all perspectives that can approximate the complex reality that change represents. While perspectives can be more or less suitable for addressing particular questions or situations we wish to observe, they should as such not be considered either more or less 'correct': they merely provide different lenses to observe or interpret reality from. In this way, this dissertation strongly argues against the predominance of any one perspective on change, and pleads instead for the parallel development of all.

7.2 Implications and contributions

While chapters 2 to 6 have each highlighted their specific contributions in text, this dissertation also advances a number of contributions that are vested at a more overarching level. In the

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paragraphs that follow, I will consecutively address this work's implications on change theory, practice, methodology and managerial education.

7.2.1 Theoretical implications

First, in terms of theory, this dissertation discloses various onto-epistemological angles the field of organizational change has over time come to harbour. Although the conversation on change has been well tended to over the past several decades, this dissertation highlights such theoretical developments to not be composed according to a uniform set of core assumptions: rather, looking into the literature, different onto-epistemological premises seem adhered to. In doing so, this dissertation extends prior work on the pluralism of organizational change (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995, 2005) with distinct insight on the various sets of assumptions that have come to guide scholarly insight on change – thus contributing to our meta-theoretical understanding of the field as it is (Qiu et al., 2012; Ritzer, 1990).

Second, by highlighting how different onto-epistemological perspectives can be innately complementary in guiding one's understanding of change in an organizational context, this dissertation enhances the interconnection between several standing sub-conversations within the broader change domain, thus allowing for a richer and more realistic discussion that generates knowledge of greater relevance and validity. Doing so, this dissertation offers an explicit answer to recent calls for increased integration and meta-analysis as emitted within the conversation on change in general (Müller & Kunisch, 2018; Spicer & Levay, 2012; Stouten et al., 2018), bringing together the 'micro-tribes' that have come to populate the broader literature as it is (Alvesson et al., 2017).

Finally, by addressing a critical scholarly gap in each onto-epistemological perspective on organizational change as identified, this dissertation showcases how each outset in its own right still provides opportunities for the development of insight on change. As perspectives all represent their own set of nuances and emphases, they come to depict vastly different angles from which to tackle change as a topic. Highlighting how each such angle can be capitalized on for the advancement of research, this dissertation explicitly marks the field on organizational change as replete with theoretical opportunity, with outsets working to enrich rather than confront each other's developments. In this way, this dissertation both emphasizes and validates the paradigmatic diversity authors in the field of change can – and should – potentially draw on - fostering insights that stimulate our interest, and contributing to the kaleidoscope of understanding that change inherently comes to warrant (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Lewis & Grimes, 1999).

7.2.2 Practical implications

In terms of practical implications, this dissertation first offers managerial practitioners both the semantics and guidelines for making sense of contemporary advances on organizational change. With a plethora of concepts having been developed on change over the past several decades, managerial practitioners face the arduous task of navigating a field that has grown increasingly complex over time (Müller & Kunisch, 2018; Spicer & Levay, 2012). This dissertation provides practitioners with the necessary conceptual handholds for retaining grip on the conversation as it is: by laying bare the different sets of onto-epistemological assumptions that currently underpin the conversation on change, this dissertation assists managerial practitioners in becoming aware of the frame of reference they themselves typically use for considering the topic. While the dominant retention of mental models has been argued not to be harmful in itself, it has been noted problematic when such models are operationalized in an inconsiderate fashion – that is, when the retainer is unaware of or headless to the presence of other, equally valid perspectives (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In this way, by elucidating the different theoretical outsets that are currently present in the field of organizational change, this dissertation supports managerial practitioners in their coming to terms with other, possibly less popularized conceptual angles. Allowing practitioners to actively leverage the variety of perspectives currently in use, this dissertation contributes to a practical approach of change that is more attuned to the complex reality that organizations effectively represent.

Next, this dissertation highlights the often varied demands that change can impose on organizational leaders, and how leaders may try to cope with such demands in return. Although the demands of change have been illustrated to be partly cognitive (cf. chapter four), they have also been shown to at times be inherently affective (cf. chapter two), social (cf. chapter three and chapter five) or identity-related (cf. chapter six). In this way, this dissertation illustrates that change often requires much more from the avid manager than mere analytical capacity: it requires a state-of-mind in which cognitive-affective awareness is aptly balanced with socio-cultural understanding. To deal with such requirements, the change manager may thus not rely exclusively on a keen mind and a guiding 'gut', but may instead need to invest significantly in his/her capability to interact with peers and advisors (cf. chapter 2), observe and accept shifting market conditions (cf. chapter three), balance paradoxical demands (cf. chapter four), capitalize on tension (cf. chapter five) and communicate convincingly (cf. chapter six). By showcasing how change requires a complex array of competences from organizational leaders, this dissertation sheds light on the varied actions that leaders can advance in order to outperform their competition.

Finally, in empirically addressing pressing issues as identified in each subconversation on change, this dissertation allows managerial practitioners to draw on leading edge insights of that onto-epistemological point-of-view they consider most appropriate to their particular needs. Setting out practical advice from the outset of a wide variety of theoretical perspectives, this dissertation allows managerial practitioners to specifically tap from that knowledge source that is best attuned to their context and situation – hence building in a focused way on theory to the betterment of practice (Alvesson & Gabriel, 2013; Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013).

7.2.3 Methodological implications

In terms of methodological implications, this dissertation showcases qualitative methodologies as offering highly complementary approaches for the assessment of change in an organizational context. With change representing a relatively complex and multi-faceted feature (Stouten et al., 2018), the studies as enclosed in this work highlight 'the' approach to the gathering of data as being quite difficult to pinpoint: instead, it marks the use of several complementary techniques to be preferred. For example, in the empirical chapters included in this dissertation one will note the use of observation for the description of change (chapter 2, 3, and 5); the use of interviews for discovering change agents' underlying motivations (chapters 2, 3, and 5); the use of visual elicitation for further stimulating and probing accounts on change (chapters 2 and 5); the use of archival data for confirmation on recollections provided on change (chapters 2, 3 and 5); and the use of discourse data for uncovering the way managers have historically addressed change (chapter 6). In this sense, this dissertation marks the use of methodological triangulation to be especially important when looking into accounts of change – to reflect the reality of organizational life according to the wide array of colours in which it is actually featured (Woodman, 2014).

In addition, in capitalizing repeatedly on the notion of time, the studies included in this dissertation highlight the relevance of explicitly capturing temporality and transience in work related to organizational change. While such statement might strike the reader as rather obvious, I would like to emphasize that extant literature on change proves it not to be so: with the majority of accounts on change having been marked as surprisingly static (Chia, 2002b; Heracleous & Werres, 2016; Langley et al., 2013), it seems as if change researchers have all too often perused but the figurative snapshot for gaining insight on the entity in motion. Illustrating how to incorporate change temporality by means of interviews, observations, archival data, discourse analysis and/or visual elicitation, this dissertation highlights multiple ways for incorporating a sense of time in our methodological assessment of change. In this way, this dissertation marks explicit methodological

attention to the role of time in change to be most crucial - unlocking a sense of dynamic understanding that more static accounts simply cannot provide.

Finally, I here wish to highlight the technique of visual elicitation as a an approach that, although still seldom used in organizational studies on change, may prove particularly useful to tackling research questions in this area. By allowing respondents to freely associate based on visual cues – such as printed images laid out on a desk - I have found many of such respondents to move significantly beyond the statements they had initially shared in reply to questions as asked verbally. I argue that this can be due to two specific reasons. First, as personal experiences on change have been marked to often be highly diverse and mosaic, it might be challenging for respondents to formulate comprehensive answers to questions without some way to cognitively structure and wrap together their own – often contradicting – thoughts and emotions on the issue. When offered visual aids, it may thus be that respondents find it easier to coordinate and eventually express their experiences. Second, as experiences on change often relate to deep personal and/or affective evaluations of what the organization did (or did not) do, it may be that visual aids offer a kind of intermediary between the interviewer as a 'prober' and the respondent as a 'provider' of information - hereby making the interview situation less threatening in result. By being able to structure their own thoughts on change based on visual cues, it might be that respondents come to experience their statements as being directed largely towards themselves (rather than the 'interviewer'). In this sense, visual elicitation may contribute to lowering the barriers that inevitably exist between the person soliciting answers and the person meant to provide them. For these reasons, I believe that the technique of visual elicitation as illustrated in this dissertation (i.e., chapter two and chapter five) offers a highly meaningful extension to the methodological toolkit that organizational scholars depend on when looking into questions on change.

7.2.4 Educational implications

Finally, in terms of educational implications, this dissertation stimulates the topic of change in an organizational setting to be taught more eclectically as well as more theoretically. Rather than keeping considerations of change limited to any one particular perspective (e.g., deliberate perspective), or spinning off such considerations from the broad features related to organizations in general (e.g., culture, structure, politics), this work supports educators to tutor change according to the rich variety of theoretical outsets the conversation itself has over time come to establish. By doing so, educators could fulfil a significant bridging function, bringing the insights of theory on change to organizational practice as it is.

Next, in highlighting different onto-epistemological outsets currently present in the field of change, this dissertation stimulates students and prospective researchers to become more reflexive of the personal presumptions they bring to the table when looking into the topic: what particular assumptions do I as a student uphold, and which lens do these assumptions generally provide me with for perusing the phenomenon of change in an organizational context?

Finally, by systematizing the extant conversation on change according to its onto-epistemological outsets, this dissertation hopes to add to the educative sustainability of the conversation on change. Highlighting how popular concepts generally fit into a larger school of thinking on change, this dissertation aims to push change from faddism to continuity: with theory and conceptions that last long-term - rather than soar in managerial popularity, only to die a premature death (Armbrüster & Glückler, 2007; Sorge & Van Witteloostuijn, 2004, 2007).

7.3 Boundary conditions and limitations

As with all research, the work presented in this dissertation should be understood within specific boundaries.

First, the empirical studies as presented in this dissertation all draw on cases as observed in specific industries and contexts: IT/consulting in chapter 2; diamond trading in chapter 3; container handling in chapter 4; and (cooperative) banking in chapter 6. In result, although general insights can be extracted from the case studies as described, it should be understood that the idiosyncrasies of industries might impact a detailed reading of what such insights practically implicate in reality. It would be wise, hence, to exercise some caution in extrapolating insights as here displayed to contexts that are drastically different from the contexts in which these cases effectively took place.

Second, this dissertation does not represent the first attempt at contributing to a more overarching theoretical view on the field of change in an organizational context (see, for example, the excellent work by Van de Ven and Poole (1995, 2005) and Poole and Van de Ven (2021)). However, although such earlier efforts have certainly initiated the work of opening up our conceptualizations of change, it is important to recognize that these studies limited themselves to the different *process theories* that the field has come to advance – that is, to the different ways in which researchers conceptualize the phenomenon of an organization moving from A to B. This dissertation, in contrast, moves up a level of abstraction, revealing different sets of baseline assumptions as operationalized in the conversation on change (Qiu et al., 2012; Ritzer, 1990).

Third, although this dissertation discusses several central perspectives as present within the field of change, it should be noted that these perspectives were intentionally highlighted on account of

their theoretical relevance to the essays and chapters that followed. In consequence, although the perspectives as here set out can be considered prominent streams of thinking within the field of change, it must be recognized that they do not necessarily represent the only perspectives available: indeed, other perspectives - deemed less relevant to the research as reported in this dissertation - may also abide in the field of change.

Finally, despite the penchant for qualitative approaches as displayed in this dissertation, it should be noted that this work by no means intends to denounce research contributing to organizational change from a quantitative angle: in fact, it is my believe that quantitative approaches have an equally important role to play in our coming to terms with the topic of change as such. Yet, given the type of questions I personally considered most interesting and pressing to address, qualitative approaches simply proved to be better suited – allowing to address queries of why and how, and so come to better understand the mechanisms behind change-related phenomena (Bansal et al., 2018).

7.4 Directions for further research

While this dissertation has shown research on change in organizations to be rich and varied, many interesting research opportunities still present themselves to the avid researcher. This section will highlight per perspective which tracks can currently be considered most opportune.

7.4.1 Further research in the deliberate perspective

Measuring change effectiveness. First, given the deliberate perspective's lingering difficulties with validating its conceptual outsets empirically, calls have been emitted to develop reliable methods for tracking the performance of organizational change (J. Hayes, 2002). While such measurements can be mostly understood from a quantitative angle, there has also been increased interest in complementing such measurement instruments with a qualitative approach (D. Anderson, 2010).

Laying bare causes of deliberate change failure. Second - and related to the enduringly high proportion of change initiatives marked failing – a wide number of scholars have started to complement the deliberate perspective's initial normative directions with an understanding of what can lead to change going awry – what factors can lead up to the organization floundering on its designed change eventually? Gradually, a plethora of causes have come to be identified, ranging from flimsy structure and communication (Armenakis & Harris, 2002), to the role of senior managers (Bartunek et al., 2011), inadequate planning (McFillen, O'Neil, Balzer, & Varney, 2013), and a lack of people focus (Burnes & Jackson, 2011). In this sense, the deliberate conversation on

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change seems to gradually divert from positivism to negation – not telling managerial practitioners what to do, but rather what certainly not to.

Re-iterating former models in modern contexts. Next, current-day knowledge-building in scope of the deliberate perspective seems surprisingly pre-occupied with the re-iteration of standing models for managing change – up to the point in which the field "seems to be moving forward… but rather to the past" (Rosenbaum, More, & Steane, 2018, p. 286). Yet, instead of simply parading old ideas as new ones, this re-iteration can be essentially understood as an act of revival through modernization: to resuscitate former ideas by tinkering their logic to current developments, such as globalization, the emergence of value networks, and the challenges posed by digital integration (Cummings & Worley, 2014; Rosenbaum et al., 2018).

7.4.2 Further research in the emergent perspective

Drawing in the individual as representative of the organization. In essence, the emergent perspective emphasizes the importance of integrating all levels of analysis in the discourse of organizational change: both the individual level, the group level and the organizational level all represent a valid part of organizational reality as socially experienced, with interactions between them fundamentally interweaving different levels of abstraction. This being said, some authors have marked the emergent perspective as lacking more focused considerations of the individuals that come to outlive and develop the organizational change as eventually enacted (Langley et al., 2013): how do individuals experience their role in broader change, if change is as perpetual and systematically embedded as the advocates of the perspective believe it to be?

Balancing qualitative approaches with more quantitative considerations. Given the perspective's focus on interpretation and subjectivity as key to organizational change, most insights regarding the emergent perspective have been established on account of qualitative methodological means. Yet, this should not necessarily mean that more quantitative approaches should be done off altogether: in fact, by working on things such as event and sequence analysis, organizational thinkers could complement the perspective's extant base of qualitative interpretation with an equally relevant quantitative counterpart (Langley et al., 2013).

Boosting the perspective's practical rigor. Finally, to improve the emergent perspective's practical impact on organizations, some authors have called for the use of methods that explicitly apply insights as developed to the beneficiation of real-life business cases, such as those approaches advanced under the banner of action research. "Action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social

science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework" (Rapoport, 1970, p. 499). By gearing the emergent perspective towards the improvement of actual cases, organizational thinkers could both relieve the stream of thought of its stigma of practical irrelevance, as well as fine-tune those ideas that have only been thought off conceptually (Dawson, 2011; McDermott, Coghlan, & Keating, 2008).

7.4.3 Further research in the formative perspective

Linking the abstract to the concrete. While the conversation on the formative perspective has proven more than eloquent, several authors have deemed it necessary to now turn abstract philosophies into actionable content (Easterby-Smith, Lyles, & Peteraf, 2009). Developing instruments fit for objectively measuring agile, flexible, or dynamic performances marks as one track of particular relevance (Schilke, Hu, & Helfat, 2018; Wilden, Devinney, & Dowling, 2016). Other efforts of concretization include assessing the actual impact of concepts on functional areas - such as IT, R&D, or marketing – and evaluating how stakeholders can proactively impact the development of capabilities fit for change (Battistella et al., 2017).

Exploring micro-foundations underlying formative capabilities for change. With much of the formative conversation naturally resorting to the organization level, there have been relatively few insights linking up to more micro-level dealings - such as managerial cognition, decision-processes, or top-management personality inferences (Easterby-Smith et al., 2009; Nayak, Chia, & Canales, 2020). Yet, to appreciate the formative perspective in full, it has been deemed vital to explicitly acknowledge the organization's skill-set as being essentially embedded in micro-level context, constituted by individual employees. Individuality and micro-foundations, hence, mark as highly relevant subjects for the formative perspective, and have been noted as topical to address in future work (Brozovic, 2018; A. Y. Lewin, Massini, & Peeters, 2011; Milosevic, Bass, & Uhl-Bien, 2019).

Harmonizing constructs developed. Finally, to allow organizational thinkers within the formative perspective to cross-fertilize ideas developed, it has been deemed most vital to objectively explore – rather than assume – how concepts are interlinked (Brozovic, 2018; Schilke et al., 2018). How does agility relate to flexibility? How do dynamic capabilities add to the mix? Thinking along such integrative lines, organizational scholars can work to increasingly relieve themselves of the boundaries of isolated concepts - and work more towards cross-fertilizing various notions into a richer mode of thinking.

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7.4.4 Further research in the responsive perspective

Highlighting the role of leadership in self-managing organizations. While the responsive perspective has largely minimized the role of top management in organizations' successful responses to hardship, more recent work increasingly marks top level echelons as representing important enablers for an organization's capacity of bouncing back (Kossek & Perrigino, 2016; Linnenluecke, 2017; Trahms et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2017). Of particular interest, to this end, is the way leaders can guide their organization in preparing for, adjusting to, and learning from adversity: How do leaders succeed in building organizational endowments that promote resilience? How do leadership behaviours that stimulate a resilient organization differ from more 'ordinary' leadership behaviours; and what individual traits potentially stimulate such behaviour? By developing further insight on the role of organizational managers in adapting to hardship, the responsive perspective can complement its current emphasis on the self-governance of resources with a notion of potential leadership support.

Examining how to cope with the flipside of responsive change. Next, although the responsive perspective has offered extensive insight on the way organizations can successfully rebound from hardship, limited work has so far looked into the implications such rebounding might have on the relational and emotional background of involved individuals (Trahms et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2017). As individuals have been noted to at times dissociate themselves emotionally from the adversity their organization is overcoming (Bonanno, 2004), repeated calls have been emitted to study the hidden cost of changing responsively on an individual level: What does a capacity for bouncing back require from organizational employees, and does such personal cost possibly outweigh the benefits the capacity engenders on an organizational level?

Addressing the role of time and temporality in responsive change. Finally, authors in the responsive perspective have recently come to call for a more profound consideration of the role of time in an organization's rebounding from hardship (Williams et al., 2017). Specifically, this implicates adhering to a more transient understanding of the adversity that organizations are essentially reacting to – that is, to no longer purpose adversity as a single high-impact, unanticipated event, but rather reconceive it as "the result of a long period of incubation; that is, crises occur in phases" (Roux-Dufort, 2007, as found in Williams et al., 2017, p. 737).

7.4.5 Further research in the dialectical perspective

Gathering how tensions are implicitly fostered. While the dialectical perspective has sprouted from the notion of organizational sociality giving way to tensions, little work has so far focused

on the specific conditions that foster (productive) opposition. To this end, several organizational conditions have been put forward for further inquiry, such as group heterogeneity vs. homogeneity (Tsoukas, 2009), even vs. uneven distributions of power (Costanzo & Di Domenico, 2015), or open vs. closed dispositions vis-à-vis the organizational environment (Raisch, Hargrave, & Van de Ven, 2018). By focusing on the specific conditions that prove elementary to oppositional interaction, the dialectical perspective may gain a clearer understanding of the antecedents necessary to the organizational development through conflict – hence "reveal[ing] how taken-for-granted forms of social order may embed relations of domination and to consider how these arrangements might be transformed" (Langley & Sloan, 2011, p. 269).

Gathering how tensions can be explicitly worked or managed. Next, although the dialectical perspective has come to underline opposition within organizations as potentially stirring change, several authors have noted the extant conversation as providing only limited handholds for deliberately steering opposition towards such end. From this outset, researchers have marked the current conversation as necessitating increased attention for managerial angles potentially supplying intentionality, such as conflict management or paradoxical leadership (Miron-Spektor, Ingram, Keller, Smith, & Lewis, 2018; Waldman & Bowen, 2016; Zhang, Waldman, Han, & Li, 2015). To quote Raisch et al. (2018): "Future studies could […] explore the drivers that motivate and enable leaders to move beyond equilibrium towards more systemic and, ultimately, more sustainable worldviews" (p. 1522).

Shifting from a static to a dynamic appreciation of tensions. Finally, while the conceptualization of conflict as present in the dialectical perspective has been explicitly tied into development on an organizational level, authors such as Schad et al. (2016), Farjoun (2017), Putnam et al. (2016) and Raisch et al. (2018) have remarked extant scholarly appreciations of such conflict as remaining relatively static and fixed, calling instead for "more longitudinal approaches to explore tensions and the dynamics they cause" and for research that "explores the transitions between multiple dynamic equilibria and the drivers underlying these transitions (p. 1521).

7.4.6 Further research in the inertia perspective

Using discourse to render change more attainable. Although change can at times be interpreted as inconceivable, several researchers have marked the role of discourse in alleviating such issue (Buchanan & Dawson, 2007; Marshak & Grant, 2008). "In dialogue, individuals negotiate their understandings, and by doing so they attempt to influence one another" (Tsoukas, 2009, p. 954). An important track for further research, hence, proves to be the discursive analysis of change: how

do change agents deal with change in discourse, and how can such discourse aid change in being effectively realized?

Challenging determinism with voluntarism. Finally, while the inertia perspective has long since emphasized the presence of deterministic forces impeding organizations from change, authors have come to increasingly call for inquiries into the voluntaristic leeway potentially present within such forces. Note for example the following statement by Sydow et al. (2009, p. 705) on the concept of path dependence: "A challenging theoretical question is whether the emergence of paths does not simply occur but can also be deliberately brought about. […]. Creative agency and the power of generating momentum are seen as basic ingredients for path creation, although entrepreneurship, as influenced by its own history and important institutions, may well also be a source of path dependence." With similar calls having also been extended in more recent work (Sydow et al., 2020) and in relation to other concepts (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; G. M. Schwarz, 2012), it seems that the inertia perspective on organizational change is increasingly shifting towards balancing impediment with agency and deliberate activism – hence 'actively navigating the path' whenever the environment requires one to do so (Sydow et al., 2020).

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