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A Temporal Perspective on Phronetic Strategizing

Exploring Strategy Making in Unsettled Times

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Abstract

Strategy making in organizations is a future oriented process and is fundamentally complex and full of uncertainties. Therefore there is a need to further improve our understanding of the way organizational actors exercise their judgment and how this informs strategic action and change. However, the role of temporality in such processes is poorly understood. In this paper we further take up this perspective and propose and apply a temporal perspective on practical judgement to study how situated actors embark on strategic action and change in response to drastic institutional changes. By temporality is implied the dominant temporal orientations of situated actors towards either the past, present, or future that shape the way practical judgment unfolds and influences how and when strategic action and change comes about. We draw on a study of six nonprofit associations in the Netherlands who are usually concerned with the maintenance and protection of their local environments and preservation of the cultural value. We examined how members of these associations engage in practical judgement based on their dominant temporal orientations in response to a drastic change in the subsidy regimes forcing them to reconsider their strategies. We found three fundamentally different outcomes for

strategic action and change: suspending (past oriented), desiring (present oriented) and adapting (future oriented). We elaborate on each of them and why practical judgement processes varied leading to these outcomes on how that relates to each dominant temporal orientation.

Contributions are offered to the strategy as practice literature by proposing a temporal perspective and highlight the importance of agency in relation to outcomes in strategy practices. We also contribute to the literature on practical judgment especially in regard to the tensions that organizational actors undergo when they are forced to make tradeoffs between realizing internal goods through practice and external goods demanded by institutions.

Introduction

How actors exercise practical judgment (*phronesis*) has attracted the attention of scholars in management studies in the areas of leadership (Antonacopoulou and Bento, 2016) , management education (Antonacopoulou, 2010; Chia, 2009), organizational change (Shotter and Tsoukas, 2011; Antonacopoulou and Psychogios, 2015; Chia, 2014) and strategy (Chia and Holt, 2009). In short, practical judgement concerns the capacity of actors to ‘exercise judgment’ with regard to what is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ when actors face unique situations (Dunne, 1993) and thus refers to the moral dimensions of agency in decision making (Moore & Beadle, 2006). In addition, practical judgement concerns the way actors engage in the twist and turns in their puzzling surroundings including their imaginative exploration of possible steps forward (Shotter & Tsoukas, 2014) based on their predispositions (Chia, 2009). Above all, studying practical judgment requires a sensitivity to what Shotter & Tsoukas refer to as “*the lived experience of those involved in the exercise of judgement*” (2014:379).

In this paper we focus on how organizational actors exercise their judgment based on their predisposition when making strategy. More specifically, we adopt a temporal perspective on practical judgment and examine how strategic actions are shaped by the predispositions that actors have towards either the past, present, or future. Following Emirbayer and Mische (1998), we label these predispositions as dominant temporal orientations. We propose that such orientations form an important basis because it influences the way actors exercise practical judgment when confronted with complex situations. Therefore, understanding the relationship between dominant temporal orientations and practical judgement can be valuable for several reasons. First, it potentially reveals the temporal-relational dynamics of the “praxis” of strategy making, which refers to the “*actual activity what people do in practice*” (Whittington, 2006) P.619. Furthermore, it highlights how the experience of time blends into practical judgement

when actors face disturbing contextual changes that challenge their current understandings, a process similar to temporal work (Kaplan and Orlikowski, 2012). Third, a temporal perspective on practical judgement may advance the knowledge on the visual characteristics of the underlying schematizing processes of practical judgement including the imaginative exploration of possible futures shaped by temporal dispositions.

The research question guiding our efforts is: how do dominant temporal orientations inform practical judgment of situated actors and what are the implications for strategic action and change?

We studied practical judgment unfolds on the basis of dominant temporal orientations of actors at six agricultural nonprofits associations located in the eastern part of the Netherlands. Our research is based on a multiple case study (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Our research stretched over three and a half years involvement at these associations (2009-2012). We adopted a practice perspective (Schatzki, 2002; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Kaplan and Orlikowski, 2012) and took into consideration context specific characteristic, history of the associations and situatedness of the actors involved. We mainly relied on the use of in-depth interviews and various observations at each of the associations. In general, the associations are all concerned with protecting the environment and preserving its cultural value of their local landscapes. The activities of these associations are mainly funded by national subsidies for decades. However, in 2012 these association were confronted with thinking about strategic action and change because of the announcement of drastic changes in the subsidy requirements which required them to rationalize their activities and increase their scale form local to regional. We believe that, given this situation, the case of these associations is suitable for studying practical judgement in the context of strategy making. Through an in depth understanding of history and daily practice of each association we came to know the dominant temporal orientations that structured everyday practice and also how these orientations influenced the way practical judgment took place in anticipation of the upcoming changes.

Our research findings indicate various forms of practical judgment with each of them having distinct consequences for strategic action and change that we brought into relationship with the dominant temporal orientations of the actors in each association. We reported three outcomes for strategic action and change: When actors are dominantly oriented towards the past they suspend strategic action and change as they find no reason to change momentarily. When dominantly oriented towards the present they are desiring strategic action and change yet see no clues how to realize this, a state that we characterized as myopia. When oriented towards the future, actors propose and already work on appropriate measures in anticipation on the

future. We describe in depth how practical judgment unfolded including its characteristics and elaborate on the differences between the associations.

A key contribution of this paper is to clarify how strategic action and change comes about in organization through practical judgment from a temporal perspective, rather than simply a matter of choice and reason. Therefore, we mainly make contributions to the strategy as practice (SAP) literature interested in the complexities, deliberations and actions of strategy actors in practice (Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Johnson et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006). To some extent, we also contribute to the literature on practical judgement in general but especially the ones concerned with the tensions between practice and institutions (Moore and Beadle, 2006).

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. First we discuss extant literature on temporality and strategy making. After that, we set out our approach towards a temporal perspective on practical judgment. What follows is the method section in which we elaborate on the case setting, research process and data analyses. Next, we present the results followed by a discussion. We close our paper with some concluding remarks, limitations and suggestions for future research.

Literature and approach

How actors formulate and implement strategy in practice is especially a concern of strategy and practice (SAP) (Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 1996; Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Balogun et al., 2013). This perspective on strategy focuses on what actors say and do with things in practice when making strategy (Whittington, 2006). Recently SAP scholars have increasingly argued to take social practices, temporality, agency and materiality seriously when studying how strategy is realized in practice (Jarzabkowski, 2012; Chia and MacKay, 2007; Kaplan and Orlikowski, 2012; Chia and Holt, 2006). Despite the importance of temporality and agency, few have examined empirically how time blends into the agentic processes underlying strategy. One exception is a recent study of Kaplan & Orlikowski, (2013) who studied how actors engage in a process labeled as temporal work. This process involves the dynamic interplay among interpretations of the past, present, and future. Building on Emirbayer & Mische (1998) theory of temporal-relationality, their empirical study demonstrates how actors participate in strategic action and change through a re-construction of

their interpretations of past, present and future which is needed to move forward when existing strategic accounts break down. In addition, Ericson (2013), adopted a life-world perspective on strategy making (Sandberg and Dall'Alba, 2009) aimed to grasp the entwinement of temporal relationality of actors during strategy making. Here, it was observed how actors frequently shift from present to future orientation and present to past orientations when 'making strategy', rather than through event and cause (Ericson, 2013). Hence, rather than portraying strategy practices as simply a matter of rational decision making and problem solving processes, these contributions make clear that temporality is tightly related with the "praxis" of strategy making, especially when actors are confronted with bewildering situations in business life that inhibits them to "just" continue.

Given the importance of the relationship between temporality and strategic action, there is a clear need to further improve our understanding of how time blends into the interpretative processes of actors contextualizing their embedded positions in an attempt to move forward. We do so by investigating how dominant temporal orientations blend into the interpretative processes of practical judgement. In the next section, we develop an analytical approach that further helps to guide our research.

A temporal perspective on practical judgment

For its insistence on viewing social actors as embedded in temporal-relational contexts, we draw on Emirbayer & Mische's (1998) notion of agency, which refers to practitioners' variable agentic orientations within flows of time. Agency consist of three interrelated parts, namely, the past (in its habitual form), present (in its practical-evaluative form) or in its future (projective) form, also referred to as "*the chordal triad of agency*". Following Emirbayer & Mische (1998), practical judgment or practical wisdom - as a concept - is particularly concerned with the way actors relate to the contingencies of the present. In other words, it focuses on situations that "*calls for increasingly reflective and interpretative work on the part of social actors*" (p.994). This implies that practical judgement resonates with the practical-evaluative dimension of agency, and thus a prime orientation towards the present (ibid 1998:994). However, since the past and future are inextricable related to each other, actors must in some way also reflect on their habits and projections in making sense of their present situation and to move on. Furthermore, Emirbayer & Mische (1998) note that, although open to change, one temporal orientation is the dominant tone and this shapes the way in which actors relate to the

other two dimensions. For instance, depending on the temporal-relational context of action, actors who are typically oriented towards the future, such as entrepreneurs or start-ups, might relate differently to the past and present as opposed to actors who are dominantly orientated towards the past, for instance catholic priest. In both cases however, the two other dimensions of agency are part of the internal chordal structure of that particular dominant temporal orientation but the difference is that each one is defined by specific kind of schematizing processes' (ibid:979).

Based on these insights, we see valuable opportunities to examine practical judgement from a temporal perspective specifically by incorporating the agentic orientations of actors whenever they 'exercise judgment' in practice. We define such agentic orientations as dominant temporal orientations of actors which are inextricably part of their engagement in every day social practices.

Method

We studied practical judgement at six agricultural associations all operating regionally in the Eastern part of the Netherlands. Our research involved two and a half years of fieldwork and started in August 2009 until April 2012. Agricultural associations usually perform landscape work on the basis of subsidies or other public funding but now they are seriously threatened by changes in the selective subsidy requirements to be effective in 2015. Therefore, we characterized the situation as a "*system-disturbing potential*" created by changes in technology, new regulations, laws, or major economic shifts leading to change (Barley and Tolbert, 1997) Organizations are usually assumed to anticipate such events by announcing the adaptation of new practices and technologies, personal changes, in response to upcoming changes. Such an approach demands from researchers the use of a before and after design on the basis of baseline data of an event that will occur. Therefore, we used multiple and distinctive data collection techniques, such as interviews, observations, and archive studies to understand the context in which association operate, the dominant temporal orientations of actors working at these six associations and in relation to this, the way practical judgement occurs. We spent a total of 250 hours in the field doing observations on site and participation in cluster meetings. Furthermore, we conducted a total of 24 formal and 20 informal interviews with key informants and members of the associations. In addition, we read about 500 pages of archival materials, meeting minutes, annual reports, newsletters, and governmental policy regulations. We use pseudonyms to safeguard the names of the six agricultural associations: Trim Cutter, Green

Care, Coppice Expert, Heathland Preservers, White Spots, and Green Heritage. All of these six nonprofit associations are located in the eastern part of the Netherlands. Below we first elaborate on the background of these agricultural associations followed by a further specification of our data collection and analysis techniques.

Background of agricultural associations and regulatory changes

In the Netherlands, there are about 200 agricultural associations with a total of about 9000 members: usually farmers but also many volunteers. Most agricultural associations were founded in the 1990s to resolve tensions between groups interested in the natural environment and the agricultural interests of farmers. Nowadays, agricultural associations work on a subsidized basis and perform the work necessary to preserve ecological and cultural value of their local environments in close collaboration with local farmers. Some of these farmers are actively involved in agricultural work through their presence in the work forces for which they receive a payment. Volunteers are mostly local people with an interest in preserving and doing good for their local landscapes. Landscape work may consist of all kinds of activities such as designing new landscape elements, protecting wildlife, maintenance of riverbeds and roadsides, coppicing hedges, but also maintaining larger wooded areas. Most landscape work is financed by national or European subsidies and is in general conceived as serving the public interest. Some associations have managed to lower their reliance on subsidies since they receive income from municipalities and private landowners who pay for the maintenance of their private landscape elements. Therefore, it is important for some associations that they maintain a strong local focus as they depend on good relationships with local authorities and landowners to continue in existence. The region called ‘de Achterhoek’, is well-known for its biodiversity and its unique landscape. However, the ecological conditions in which these association operate varies. Some associations operate in an area that is of significant biodiversity and dense woodlands, while other operate in a less ecologically rich area, with many fallow lands often termed ‘white spots’. As a result, some associations developed have multiple activities to conduct landscape work in an area full of bio-diversity whilst others rely on one single activity because that is dictated by the local circumstances. This also applies to the use of equipment. Some associations conduct landscape work using state-of-the-art equipment, unlike others who do the job by hand in a perhaps a less professional manner. Despite differences, all these

associations are highly appreciated by local, provincial, and national bodies as they are considered good stewards of the natural environment and also a legitimate spokesman for local agricultural and landscape matters.

Between 2009 and 2012, some of the associations joined an interregional cross-border project between the Netherlands and Germany to explore the opportunities for exploiting biomass materials for heating purposes. This enabled these participating associations to experiment with different practices and ways of earning extra incomes. Unfortunately, this initiative did not live up to the expectations because there was a lack of interest in adopting biomass for heating in the relevant communities.

In 2012, the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs published drastic changes in the subsidy requirements for agricultural landscape maintenance work. These changes drastically contradict with current standards about how best to finance and structure landscape work. The reason why the ministry is declaring the new regulations is that they believe that the cost of bureaucracy can be reduced and competition amongst landscape work organizations encouraged. One of the most important changes is that this Ministry expects that future landscape work must be performed by so-called ‘farmer collectives’, which are intended to be organizational arrangements able to manage and perform large-scale landscape work. The Ministry is determined to see these changes implemented. A ministerial note states; “*Without proper design and implementation, the proposed greening measures will hardly be effective in stimulating farmland biodiversity and reducing greenhouse gas. Their effectiveness would be improved by tailoring them to local conditions and stimulating the realization of ‘green infrastructure’ through regional coordination*” (PBL note, greening the CAP, 2012). To deal with the uncertainties and to anticipate the coming changes, the six associations founded a so-called participation cluster of collaborating agricultural associations, called VALA (original name), in January 2013.

Data collection

As stated earlier, we drew upon three data sources: interviews, documents, and observations to assure a thorough understanding of context, dominant temporal orientations, judgment of how to proceed and outcomes for strategic action. Table 1 summarizes the chronology of our research, including focus areas and methods used in more detail.

Year	Key phases in the development of agricultural associations	Research focus area	Primary data sources and amount
1995-2006	Founding of agricultural associations in ‘the Achterhoek’ necessary to restore and preserve the balance between natural and agricultural interest	Context, understanding historical development of each association.	(2009) 8 formal interviews with key members of each association (8 hours recorded, transcribed verbatim)
1999-2011	A stabile subsidy regime enabled the associations to locally perform practices and achieve ends Some association probed in lowering dependence on subsidies by an involvement in regional bio-mass project	Understanding daily practice of each association and dominant temporal orientation of actors	(2009) 2 expert interviews with knowledgeable agents (experts of umbrella organizations, notes) (2009) Archival data (CLM Oerlemans report, 2004) (2009 – 2013) Observations on site and during meetings, workgroups, etc.
2012-2013	New subsidy and regulatory changes are announced (GLB) in 2012, yet rather vague. (clarity expected in 2014). Increasing concerns about the future. Association joint cluster association to reduce and interpret upcoming changes and consequences to act in a larger ‘farmer collectives’. Associations identify larger scale opportunities (biomass energy) to lower dependency on subsidy regime.	Understanding how practical judgement occurs and with what result for strategic action	2012-2013 Observing the sayings of board members of the associations during cluster meetings (6 meetings) (2009-2011) (2012) 14 formal in-depth interviews (recorded, 8 hours) and informal (notes) interviews to understand practical judgment and strategic action.

Table 1. stages, foci and data collection

First we started collecting data to understand the context and historical background of agricultural associations in general and later for each of them specific. In doing so, we start to investigate the everyday setting in which actors use to operate. We did so by following the suggestions of Sandberg and Tsoukas (2011) to search for the ‘entwinement logic of practice’ of actors at these each associations and in what way values are present and sustained in today’s practices (Gehman et al., 2013). Following the in-depth interviews and observations, we were able to capture practice history, the strategic goals that each association pursues and their standards of excellence of what they consider “good landscape work”. This stage of data collection was especially important to understand which dominant temporal orientation prevails at each association. We have structured these descriptions per association in table 2 which can be found in the appendix.

After that, we turned focus to the present struggles at these association regarding the upcoming regulator changes. According to Sandberg and Tsoukas (2011), practitioners tend to

temporarily step back from their every day practices when researchers prompt practitioners to reflect on what they do: *“Practice then becomes reflexive insofar as practitioners obtain a clearer view of their actions and, looking back at them, can see aspects they could not see before”* (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011:350). Our interest was to understand how practical judgement varies amongst key actors of each association based on the dominant temporal orientations and what the effect for strategic actions are. During the interviews with key members, we were guided by the following interview question: How will your organization respond to upcoming changes and how are they affecting ongoing practice? All formal interviews were recorded and transcribed for coding purposes.

In analyzing the data in this part of our research, we used coding techniques and procedures as offered by Corbin and Strauss (1990) We first categorized the data of each interview in temporal terms, that is, classifying the temporal manifestations of practical judgment of key actors of each association in terms of how they relate to past experience, the present state of affairs of their association, and , the projected actions to adapt to the upcoming changes. The latter one was important to reveal the kind of strategic action foreseen. After this step, we further looked at the differences of these temporal manifestations and compared them with the dominant temporal orientation we ascribed to each association in the previous stage of data collection. These steps enabled us to identify patterns between the six associations in the way key actors engaged in practical judgment on the basis of the dominant temporal orientations.

Results

The overall findings suggest that dominant temporal orientation inform the way actors engage in practical judgement and also influence strategic action. Below, we describe each style of practical judgment and strategic action starting with dominant temporal orientation. We use illustrative quotes to support our outcomes.

Practical judgment and dominant oriented toward the past: suspending strategic action

We first start with Green Care and Heathland preservers as associations with a strong orientation towards the past. At both associations, we observed how actors at these associations

responded remarkably calmly in response to the upcoming changes. In reply to our question if and how the upcoming changes affect ongoing practice, the coordinator of Green Care remarks: *“We always knew that being depended on subsidies is a risk, therefore we have always looked and found alternative funding sources”*.

It seems that this coordinator is confident that their sensitivity to alternatives is a safeguard for the future. He further remarks that there may be some internal tensions whenever the changes become effective.

“Workforces are used to directly sell wood material by themselves, for own profit, our association had never benefited from that money. Yet, if subsidies cease, we might have to change in the future and of course, this will be a source of tensions between us and the workforces” (coordinator Green Care). Here, this coordinator indicated that there might be some trouble once the changes become effective but did not give the impression that this will seriously affect ongoing practice. For him, the importance of agricultural associations is historically determined.

He recalls that: *“you see, subsidies spend on landscape work serves a public interest for a long time, ...if such interests decline, than our whole sector is in danger but for now we should focus on our primary task”* (coordinator of Green Care)

The situation at Heathland Preservers was somewhat similar. The chairman referred to their experience that they had developed in the past which would safeguard them from the upcoming changes. He notes that: *“our area is very difficult to maintain for its bio diversity, special areas, and complex structure.... it requires specific knowledge and a good understanding of local circumstances..... we are a special kind of an association and deeply embedded in the local community....it is difficult for any other party to do the same”* (chairman Heathland Preservers)

The present was also involved in terms of immediate actions needed.

The coordinator of Green Care remarked that: *“we don’t see the need to change right now, we operate in a special landscape and still have a lot of work...nevertheless, we should think about the future”..... Yes, the GLB [changing subsidy requirement] provides opportunities but nobody knows in which direction exactly....we don’t see it as a problem yet ”*. He goes on and says *“although we are attentive these changes [in the subsidy requirements], today, there is no sense of urgency in our association yet,....everybody here is satisfied: board members, workforces, and the coordinators”*. (coordinator Green Care).

These actors remained calm in response to the upcoming changes. Although acknowledging some impact for the future, these association strongly leaned on their past experience and

resource base which, jointly, shaped the way they were judging the current situation and future strategic action. This is not to say that the future is not present at all.

As the chairman of Heathland Preservers made clear: *“we are of course too small for doing large scale activities in the future, and therefore our current presence in the cluster (VALA) is important for us.* He also indicates the importance for extending their activities through professionalization. *“We have to professionalize in the future but also continuing to strengthen our relationship with the community through intensive collaboration and employing multiple activities”* (chairman Heathland Preservers). Nonetheless, immediate strategic action and concrete anticipation regarding the upcoming changes remained something to be of concern for the future for both associations.

Practical judgment and dominant oriented toward the present: desiring strategic action

At White Spots and Green Heritage we observed how practical judgement unfolded in light of the upcoming changes in a situation where actors are dominantly are oriented towards the present. Here, actors responded enthusiastically to the upcoming changes while at the same time were struggling with the severe internal and resource concerns related to these changes. In some way, their dominant orientation towards the present distracted them to clearly anticipate on the future and allow them to define realistic strategic actions.

The youngest association of the six is White Spots. At White Spots, there is a deep concern of how the changes will affect ongoing practice in the present. After asking the same question again, the coordinator remarks: *“we are much younger than most of the other associations and we also operate in an ecologically poor area...[therefore],our existence is really threatened since our area does not provide so many alternatives for becoming self-sufficient”*(coordinator White Spots). He continues and says: *“right now, we are really on a ‘pilot flame’ because it is uncertain how the GLB [subsidy requirements] regulations affect us.....we just operate in a poor landscape here and that is our challenge and destiny”* (coordinator White Spots).

While this coordinator referred to the ecologically poor area and therefore less possibilities to commercialize, Green Heritage presently encountered some severe internal problems. Following their coordinator. *“Currently we are disputing what to do in the future because of this GLB [changing subsidy requirements],...how can we attract money in the future?older generation board has no affinity with commercializing....they are difficult to motivate and rather stick to what we always did”* He goes on and says: *“the board members “new style” are seeing the opportunities and the changes necessary but this is not shared by the older*

generation of board members. This coordinator also points to the past to make the point that change is really necessary.

“In the past we just focused on helping farmers with subsidies and doing landscape work together with them, this seems to become problematic” (coordinator White Spots). Although clearly identifying the need for change and strategic action, the internal struggles or the resource concerns faced in the present prevented both associations to project how their association can cope with the new future. We asked them again specifically about actions to match the demands of the future for their association. In response, we documented how these actors propose some measures that they held feasible. As the coordinator of White Spots notes: *“I see opportunities for our association in the future but only when we operate jointly or merge with another association”* (coordinator White Spots). Likewise, the coordinator of Green Heritage refers to the importance of working in a larger cluster to grow and to professionalize. He notes: *yes, I see that we must become the central face in this region, as a collective.* He continues and says: *“networking is important for us, we have to start think in a commercial way, acting on opportunities, collaboration, or even merging with other associations”* (coordinator Green Heritage). Although actors of both of the associations looked into the future, their judgment is mainly guided by persistent problems that they myopically kept them busy. It seems that these concerns prevent them from defining effective measures and strategic actions to be followed up by themselves.

Practical judgment and dominant oriented toward the future: adapting to strategic action

We observed practical judgement on the basis of a dominant orientation towards the future at Trim Cutter and Coppice Experts. In contrast to the four association that we just have discussed, at these associations we witnessed how actors were actively anticipating on the future in light of the upcoming changes and implementing concrete changes in existing practices.

These upcoming changes are considered as inevitable yet not something to be feared. As the coordinator of Coppice Experts remarks: *“The future is not so uncertain, ...of course, the upcoming changes in the subsidy regime bears on us because we have to invest in revise administration systems and become busy with that....we also have to upscale and standardize ways of working with all the other associations”*. At the same time, this coordinator refers to the past by noticing that: *“we have always focused invest in growth by improving knowledge*

and capabilities involved in landscape maintenance, it is a continues process” (coordinator Coppice Experts).

Also a coordinator of Trim Cutter refers to the future by making the remark that: *“If the subsidy requirements change so drastically, our future role as a collective becomes even more important because farmers in our area lack the knowledge of these changes”* (coordinator Trim Cutter). While considering their role of knowledge provider as something that can be further exploited in the future, he also referred to the past: *“our knowledge of landscape maintenance and subsidy developed in the past becomes even more important for the future”* (coordinator Trim Cutter). In reply to the increased professionalization and commercialization demanded by the changing subsidy requirements, the same coordinator responded as follows: *“We have always been busy with creating value with wood but it seems that it becomes more valuable these days”*. Consequently, he says: *“in the future, we will increase our focus on private owners for extra income”* (coordinator Trim Cutter)

While prompting their reflections on the upcoming changes, the coordinators that we interviewed clearly were able to connect their past experience with the demands of the future by articulating what kind of strategic actions are needed and to be implemented by themselves. The current state of their associations certainly also played a role in these reflections. As the coordinator of Coppice Experts noted: *“today we see that, despite changes in the upcoming subsidy requirements, private parties increasingly ask us to do maintenance work of their landscape elements”* (coordinator Coppice Experts). Likewise, the coordinator of Trim Cutter remarked that: *“If regulations keep on changing, we must start commercially exploit biomass more intensively....it also serves our workforce members because of the increase of more labor”*. Furthermore, he noted that *“our strength is that we have strong relationships with local farmers as our members but also provincial bodies”* (coordinator Trim Cutter). Apparently, the members of these associations consider the past and current conditions of their associations as positive and contributive for anticipating on the changes and, in their eyes, correct strategic actions.

Summary of the findings

In each of the three cases, we identified distinct ways of how practical judgement unfolded and how this produces distinct outcomes for strategic action. In each case, we showed how the past, present, and future are inextricably part of this process. However, the way these

dimension are manifested in moments that actors are engaged in practical judgement to address how to move further in light of the upcoming changes varies substantially. Actors continue to appreciate existing values and goals when they are dominantly oriented towards the past. Although somewhat attentive to the upcoming changes, in our case, actors tend to delay strategic action for the time being and stick to existing values which has proven to be successful in the past. In the second case, we observed how actors were occupied by present concerns partly related to the upcoming changes. These actors were mainly focus on immediate concerns which for them, was almost impossible to overcome worsened by the upcoming changes which they held for real. The present state of affairs including their achievements of the past of their associations were seriously questioned and these actors could only see a solution by immediate strategic action, that is, merging with other associations to survive in the future. This was different for the associations whose dominant orientation was the future. Here we observed how actors referred to their past and present state of affairs of their association in a positive way. This enabled these associations to work on strategic action in anticipation of what lies ahead. In table 3, we describe the outcomes for strategic action and how practical judgment unfolded based on the dominant temporal orientation.

Dominant temporal orientation towards the:	Description of the Practical judgment process:	Outcome for strategic action:
Past	Mainly appreciating historical values and present state, seeing the future change yet not the need to take action.	Suspending strategic action: no reason to define strategic actions momentarily
Present	Panicking, myopically occupied by the present yet at the same time attempting to drastically depart from it by offering drastic measures.	Desiring strategic action: strategic action is proposed yet proper measures remain absent
Future	Anticipating on the future while synchronizing the past and present because considered as constructive.	Adapting to strategic action: strategic action is proposed and realized.

Table 3: Outcomes of practical judgement in terms of strategic action based on dominant temporal orientations

Discussion and implications

We began this paper by emphasizing why it is important to understand how dominant temporal orientations towards either the past, present or future, influence the way practical

judgment unfolds whenever actors are confronted with uncertainty. Basically, studying practical judgement implies an fundamental appreciation of “*the lived experience of those involved in the exercise of judgement*” (Shotter & Tsoukas, 2014:379), that is, mainly the lived experience of a present situation. Thus, practical judgement corresponds to what Emirbayer and Mische (1998) refer to as the practical ‘evaluative ability’ of actors to decontextualize their embedded positions and chose alternative routes of actions. However, following Emirbayer and Mische (1998), whenever actors reflect on their structural positions, they undergo distinct schematizing processes that involves the past, present and future depending on their dominant temporal orientation. Probing into these schematizing processes is of course not possible as we could only describe and analyze how actors refer to their past experiences, asses the present state of affairs and imagine their future on the basis of their dominant orientation when confronted with ambiguous situations. On this basis, we showed that each configuration between dominant temporal orientation and practical judgement lead to distinct strategic actions that we have labeled as: suspending, desiring and adapting. We have described the characteristics of practical judgment from a temporal perspective and showed how actors in each case reflected on their values and experiences ranging from appropriate to insignificant depending on their dominant temporal orientation. In other words, dominant temporal orientations inform the way actors make tradeoffs between what works well and what not to realize ends in the future.

So far we have taken the dominant temporal orientations for granted for they emerged from our analysis. However, a remark can be made to the origins of the dominant temporal orientations of the actors at each association. In other words, what shaped their dominant temporal orientations? We documented how the associations varied on their history, current standards of excellence and goals adjusted to their field of operations. Whenever these associations consistently realize these goals, temporal orientations may become stable over time. This was clearly the case at the associations that suspended strategic action. This consistency was brought into question by two associations that desired strategic action but not able to realize it momentarily. For the two association who were dominantly oriented towards the future, we reserve a middle position between the other two suggesting that these associations have developed a more critical albeit appreciative stance towards their knowledge base, standards of excellence and values because anticipating on the changing demands of the future. Either way, what matters for the stabilization of dominant temporal orientations towards the past or future is that these associations realized a certain consistency over time. This is different from the other two associations who had difficulties to realize this consistency which made

them to be occupied with the present. Although our research involved stretched over more than 2,5 years, we can only speculate on when changes in dominant orientations occur and if these are only temporary or persistent.

Specific contributions can be made to the SAP stream of literature. Especially the notion of praxis of relevant to our findings. “Praxis” is defined as *“all the various activities involved in the deliberate formulation and implementation of strategy”* (Whittington, 2006:619). We showed why including temporal orientations in the study of strategy making practices are important for their influence on the form and intensity of deliberate strategy formulation and implementation. We especially highlighted how the various dominant temporal orientations influence the intensity of reflection about strategic action as well as how and when implementation should take place. This viewpoint however, requires a sensitivity to practice history (Schatzki, 2006) and must take the social practices underlying strategy making seriously (Chia and Holt, 2006; Chia and MacKay, 2007; Vaara and Whittington, 2012) that is, including the “life world” of those involved in strategy making (Sandberg and Dall'Alba, 2009).

Practical judgement reflects the moral dimension of agency (Moore and Beadle, 2006; Wall, 2003), which implies that situated actors in practice make tradeoffs between what is “good” and what is “bad” on the spot (Dunne, 1993). Although we did not specifically focused at how moral dimensions play out in the moments that actors exercised their judgment, we believe that some contributions can be made here. The associations we studied were all principally interested in continuing their work as protectors of their local environments and the preservation of its cultural value for the community. However, the upcoming institutional changes challenged this virtue since they were confronted with a new economically driven way to rationalize this virtue. This can be viewed as a tension between what Moore and Beadle (2006) call the dichotomy between the institution and practice, a framework that is developed from the virtues-goods-practice-institution schema of MacIntyre (1985). Institution is concerned with the achievement of external goods, and practice is concerned with the exercise of virtue and the achievement of internal goods (p373). Although not the purpose of this study, we can see how such tensions manifest themselves in practice when institutional subsidy regulations change mainly driven by economic rationalization measures and caused problems for actors to attain their organizational virtues at the level of practice. We showed how actors cope with the tensions accompanies by these changes and highlighted their attempts to resolve.

Concluding remarks

We demonstrated how actors engage in practical judgment as they act and react to institutional determined changes. Our temporal perspective on practical judgement in strategy making lead to more refined insights on how actors act and react in terms of strategic actions and change. Rather than through rational planning and choice, we demonstrated how and in what way strategic action emerges from reflexive processes on a background of dominant temporal orientations. Understanding the emergence of strategic action in that way lead to a more comprehensive and finer grained knowledge on strategy making. However, we also need to discuss a few limitations of our study. First, we documented practical judgment on a single moment in time by means initiating so-called second order breakdowns aimed to provoke spontaneous thoughts of the ones studied (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011). We suggest that more stronger accounts on practical judgement in organizations can be developed based on unobtrusive data collection techniques, for instance observations. Although we conducted various observations during our research involvement, the primary aim of these observations was to understand context and to define the dominant temporal orientations of the associations involved. Longitudinally conducted observations in combination with unstructured interviews aimed to understand the manifestations of practical judgement over time would have allowed us develop a processual account strategic action, particular when extended to implementation and unexpected events happening. Although we argue that our research merited valuable insights at this stage, for future research we suggest to adopt a process perspective on practical judgement from a temporal perspective to analyze the effects of practical judgment in relation to action and subsequent moments of practical judgment. Nonetheless, we showed how extant literature on practical judgment in organizations (Moore and Beadle, 2006; Shotter and Tsoukas, 2011) can be fruitfully combined with time-based approaches to strategy making (Kaplan and Orlikowski, 2012; Ericson, 2013). Finally, our extension of practical judgment in the context of strategy making demonstrates the value of injecting a stronger dose practice theoretical approaches in organizational research (Schatzki, 2005; Schatzki, 2002; Schatzki et al., 2001). This implies that practical judgment is a result of the involvement of actors in everyday social practice rather than a feature of individuals.

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	Practice history	Goals pursued	Standards of excellence (how is good landscape work achieved?)
Trim Cutter 400 members, mainly farmers and 100 % depended on subsidies	Initially driven by representing farmer interest and conducting landscape work in an area that has a rich bio-diversity but dispersed which makes landscape work complex.	Strives for continuing landscape activities conducted for farmers by farmers. Explores commercial ends.	Performing good landscape work is a matter of coordination of workgroups in the field and regular training and dealing with the tensions that arise with balancing the responsibility between environmental and agricultural matters.
Green Care 100 members, 80 donators. Subsidy dependence is 35%. - 40% and based on longstanding contracts.	Started as a project bureau for organizing and conducting landscape in commission of communities and other bodies interested in persevering the local cultural value of landscape elements.	Strives for continuity by executing re-current projects according to the standards set by their clients.	Performing good landscape can only be completed by proper planning and continuity. Accounting and “good” governance by being transparent are considered key values.
Coppice Experts About 535 members. Commission driven, less dependent on subsidies. Only (re-current) projects.	Initially driven by representing farmer interest and conducting landscape work in an area that has a rich bio-diversity.	Strives to conduct landscape work in a professional and efficient manner. Increasingly pursues commercial ends.	Performing good landscape work requires continuous development of professional knowledge about landscape work in relation to regulations.
Heathland Preservers Dependent on subsidies and donators. 400 members of which most of them volunteers	Strong community driven association mostly driven by volunteers. Heathland Preservers owns some important landscape elements in their operative area which require specialized hand work to maintain. Hand work has become their cornerstone	Strives to remain the leading local authority in preserving the valuable local nature by involving all kind of stakeholders (schools, municipalities, etc.)	Landscape work is based on a social and joyful activity performed by many volunteers. Sharing knowledge and show goodwill is important to stay accustomed with the local community
White Spots 100% dependent on subsidies. 150 members (land owners and farmers)	Initially established to represent the interest of farmers and cultivation of landscape elements.	Strives to secure income for farmers as workforce members.	Good landscape work is built on a basic knowledge of nature (plant material) and dealing with the problems typical for this area
Green Heritage Founded in 1997. 83 members (majorly dependent on re-current projects assigned by municipalities (indirect subsidy)	Founded as a spin-off of the municipality of Lichtenvoorde which offered a stabile work base which still provides a secure income for this association. Never rally on maintenance of landscape elements.	Strives for carrying out sufficient landscape maintenance work (mainly road sides) and also authority in respect to subsidy regulations.	Good landscape work requires a basic understanding of nature which especially applies to the work forces but also the knowledge of changing regulations necessary to advice farmers.

Table 2. overview of the characteristics of each association