Timely Emotion
The Rhetorical Framing of Strategic Decision Making

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The Rhetorical Framing of Strategic Decision Making

PhD dissertation

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The CBS PhD School is an active and international research environment at Copenhagen Business School for PhD students working on theoretical and empirical research projects, including interdisciplinary ones, related to economics and the organisation and management of private businesses, as well as public and voluntary institutions, at business, industry and country level.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation is the result of an enduring fascination with the way humans use words to shape the world. I can track the origin of my fascination to the wisest woman I have ever known, my grandmother. 100 years ago, Marie came into this world torn by the First World War. She had the same appetite for knowledge as I but without much chance of pursuing intellectual ambition in a completely different society. She was bright, but money was sparse and school ended after 7th grade.

I owe sincere thanks to the society I grew up in and one company, in particular. I would like to thank Innovation Fund Denmark, Copenhagen Business School, and Rhetorica for funding this Industrial PhD. It has been a privilege to spend three years developing the fit between rhetoric, decision making, and business value. Nonetheless, the true heroes of any organization are the people who shape it. Thank you, Tobias, for showing me that academia and business can co-exist, Karen, for standing by my side no matter what, and Mathias, for your support even when academic rigor and an endless stream of unexpected events put a toll on business relevance.

The pursuit of a PhD is worth little without completion, and seldom happens without perseverance. A foundational gratitude to the greatest mentor, supervisor, and motivator. Sine, without your relentless support, wealth of optimism, and continuous whole-hearted belief, my brain would have made up some perfectly rational reason to give up. Thank you, Christian, for instilling a fundamental interest in political rhetoric, which has enabled me to work with the ‘political’ even outside the realm of politics. Also, thank you, Joana, for pushing me to focus on the contribution and for helping me understand that it was wise to stick with qualitative inquiry.

In line with the credo of the Industrial PhD Program, research without an affinity to the ‘real world’ could quickly become somewhat like a feast without guests. Therefore, a great thank you to the people who have made it possible for me to study processes of organizational decision making with all its beautiful agency, complexity, and emotion involved. You know who you are, and please be certain, when you read these lines; without you, there would be no dissertation.

A warm thank you also goes also to my fellow ‘dent-makers’ at Copenhagen Business School; especially Sara for our mutual exploration into being PhD students, Joachim for reminding me of the society in which academia exists, and of course, Team 3.48 at IOA; Anders, Ann, Esben, Jakob, Jonathan, Katharina, Katrine, and Ole. I am also grateful for the wealth of helpful comments I have received in reviews and especially in my two work-in-progress seminars. Thank you, Assimakis Tseronis, Madeleine Rauch, Ioanna Constantinou, and Eric Guthey.

I owe a special thanks to my family. My dear mother unfailingly continued my grandmother’s legacy and showed me the strength of combining a sound argument with the persuasiveness of one’s actions. Speaking of action, a special appreciation goes to the most formidable aunt, moster Irene, thank you for always showing up and letting your actions speak for you.

Ultimately, words cannot express the admiration and gratitude I feel for my bright, bold, and beautiful wife, Nanna, and our two rays of meaning that shine upon us every day, Thit and Anker. May the questions you posed all along still linger in the back of my head when I think I figured it all out, which I hope will never happen.

To all whom I regrettably forgot. I will do my best to repay my debts when the time is just right.

> *Did I deliberately supersede the negative in my existence and with time tell the same stories, so that they changed for the better? Is it not possible that over time we come to better understand the real causes for why things happened as they did, and already at that time tried to make the most out of it?*
>
> - Marie Kristensen (1920-2006)

Marcus Lantz, Karrebæksminde, July 31 2020

Abstract

This dissertation investigates how humans decide to take action—from a rhetorical perspective in which decision making is the social exchange of reasons about choice in the face of uncertainty.

While rhetoric, broadly understood as a theory of persuasive discourse, is integral to examining decision making as persuasive processes of symbolic interaction, existing theories of temporality, emotion, and framing provide key insights as to why some arguments compel humans to make a decision—and act on it. Albeit rhetoric frames emotion and reason, temporality emphasizes the negotiation of past, present, and future, and together shape the exchange of arguments that constitute decisions. Integrating these two insights, the question is:

How does rhetorical argumentation constitute organizational decisions on when and how to act?

To investigate this research question, the dissertation combines a pragmatist philosophy of science with an action-research empirical approach and conducts two qualitatively informed field studies, totalling 22 months, as well as a final, mainly theoretical study of a key political speech. The first study specifically addresses the decision of when to act and addresses the temporal dimension of organizational decision making, detailing how organizational actors reason about the right time to begin a strategy process. The second study specifically addresses the decision of how to act and examines how organizational actors use framing rhetorically to resonate with decision makers. The third study investigates how arguments of timeliness appeal to emotion in order to muster support for a decision and, equally, how arguments that appeal to emotion may reflect or even constitute the reasons to act in the present. Thus, it synthesizes the two empirical studies in order to explain the confluence of time and emotion.

As a whole, the dissertation demonstrates how the ongoing negotiated organizing of emotion constitutes compelling reasons to act. Three key findings support this conclusion. The first study finds that the constitution of a compelling opportune moment, deciding when to act, requires both a fit with existing organizational interpretations and an active shaping of what the organization aspires to achieve. The second study finds that deciding how to act is made possible by diagnostic and prognostic framing, which become persuasive through appeals to emotional experiences. The third study finds that experiences and choices from the past influence the emotions that decision makers feel in the present and inform the intertemporal mechanisms that allow them to take the leap of faith of decision making.

These findings advance our understanding of how decisions happen in organizations—both in times of relative peace and prosperity and in dire straits where decision makers experience significant pressure to act. In essence, the dissertation provides novel insights into the convergent nature of emotion and cognition by detailing the role of time as a mediating factor in the argumentation about and framing of contingent matters. Thus, it contributes to a rhetorical theory of organizational decision making and offers practical advice on how organizational and societal actors may make better decisions.

(490 words)

Dansk resumé

Denne afhandling undersøger, hvordan mennesker beslutter sig for at handle – ud fra et retorisk perspektiv, hvori en beslutning hviler på den sociale værdi af fornuften i et usikkert valg.

Mens retorik (bredt forstået som den persuasive diskurs' teori) er uundværlig for en undersøgelse af beslutningstagning som en symbolsk interaktions persuasive processer, giver eksisterende teorier om temporalitet, følelser, og framing vigtig indsigt i, hvorfor nogle argumenter ansporer mennesker til at træffe en beslutning og handle på den. Skønt retorikken kobler fornuft og følelse, understreger temporalitet en forhandling af fortid, nutid og fremtid, og skaber tilsammen den udveksling af argumenter, der konstituerer beslutninger. På den baggrund stiller afhandlingen følgende spørgsmål:

Hvordan konstituerer retorisk argumentation beslutninger i organisationer om, hvornår og hvordan man bør handle?

For at undersøge forskningsspørgsmålet kombinerer afhandlingen en pragmatisk videnskabsfilosofi med en aktionsforskningstilgang og gennemfører to kvalitativt baserede feltstudier på i alt 22 måneder såvel som et afsluttende, overvejende teoretisk studie af en afgørende politisk tale. Det første studie adresserer specifikt beslutninger om, hvornår der bør handles, og den temporale dimension i en organisations beslutningstagning samt detaljerer, hvordan organisationens aktører resonerer om det rette tidspunkt at påbegynde en strategi-process. Det andet studie adresserer specifikt beslutninger om, hvordan der bør handles, og undersøger hvordan organisationens aktører anvender framing retorisk for at vække genklang hos beslutningstagerne. Det tredje studie undersøger, hvordan argumenter om rettidighed appellerer til emotioner for at vinde støtte til en beslutning og ligeledes, hvordan argumenter, der appellerer til emotioner, kan reflektere eller endog konstituere en begrundelse for at handle i nuet. Således forklarer og sammenkobler de to empiriske studier tid og følelser.

Overordnet demonstrerer afhandlingen, hvorledes følelsers fortløbende organisering konstituerer overbevisende årsager til handling.

Tre primære resultater underbygger denne konklusion. Det første studie viser, at for at skabe det overbevisende, afgørende øjeblik, hvor der besluttes, hvornår man skal handle, kræves både sammenhæng med organisationens eksisterende fortolkninger og en aktiv formning af det, organisationen ønsker at opnå. Det andet studie viser, at en beslutning om at handle muliggøres af diagnostisk og prognostisk framing, hvilket muliggøres gennem følelsesappeller. Det tredje studie viser, at fortidige erfaringer og valg påvirker de følelser, beslutningstagere oplever i nuet, og ligger til grund for de intertemporale mekanismer, der tillader dem at træffe en beslutning.

Disse resultater fremmer vores forståelse af, hvordan beslutninger træffes i organisationer i såvel relativt fredelige og fremgangsrige perioder som i trange tider, hvor beslutningstagere oplever signifikant pres for at handle. Grundlæggende giver afhandlingen ny indsigt i koblingen mellem fornuft og følelser ved at detaljere den rolle, tiden spiller som en medierende faktor i argumentationer om og framing af kontingens. Den bidrager således til en retorisk teori om organisatorisk beslutningstagning og giver praktiske anvisninger på, hvordan organisatoriske og sociale aktører måske vil kunne træffe bedre beslutninger.

(456 ord)

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Figures and Tables

Preface

This dissertation contains three individual papers submitted to academic journals. I have presented earlier versions in different forums, and below, I list the details and processes of each paper. For the remainder of the dissertation, each paper functions as a chapter in order to support the reading of this dissertation as one coherent argument. Therefore, I have also compiled all references in a combined literature list at the end of this dissertation.

The paper “Getting the Timing Right: How Rhetorical Framing of Kairos Constitutes Strategy Making” (chapter 4), co-authored with Sine N. Just, is currently in review with the Scandinavian Journal of Management. I presented an earlier version at the European Group for Organizational Studies (EGOS) conference in Edinburgh, July 2019.

The paper “Strategic Resonance in Management Decisions: Invoking Confidence Through the Rhetorical Framing of Emotion” (chapter 5), single-authored, is currently in review with the Journal of Management Inquiry. I presented an earlier version at a PhD course in political psychology at the University of Lund, December 2019.

The paper “Affecting Argumentative Action: The Temporality of Decisive Emotion” (chapter 6), single-authored, has been granted a conditional acceptance in Argumentation: An International Journal on Reasoning. I presented an earlier version at the Nordic Conference on Rhetoric Studies (NKRF) in Bergen, September 2019.

1. Introduction

How do we decide when and how to act?

> One reason why the climate and ecological crisis is so hard to communicate is that there's no magical date when everything is beyond saving. You cannot predict how many people's lives will be lost, or exactly how our societies will be affected. There are of course countless estimations and calculations which predict what could happen—one more catastrophic than the other—but they almost exclusively focus on a very limited area and almost never take into account the whole picture. We therefore must learn to read between the lines. Just like in any other emergency. (Thunberg, 2020)

Empirically, this dissertation is not about the current climate crisis Thunberg so astutely discusses, yet her harsh critique to which an abundance of data does not automatically bring certainty speaks directly to the main concern of the dissertation: when and how to decide to take action. In the year 2020, the global state of affairs encompasses a deadly pandemic claiming an ever-increasing number of lives[1], a racial reckoning in the United States, unprecedented wildfires in Australia, and the list goes on. All of these crises call for decisive action, but they have also incited citizens to criticize decision makers for doing too little too late, for taking the wrong decision at the wrong time.

A world in crisis, indeed, requires action, a fact captured in the etymology of the word "crisis," which stems from the Greek *krisis*, meaning an "act of separating, decision, judgment, event, outcome, turning point, sudden change" (Merriam-Webster, 2020). I continue to wonder whether a crisis is needed—or is even the smartest way—to convince individuals and organizations to decide, and if so, to act on those decisions. Humans and organizations alike

[1] At the time of writing (July 29 2020), there were 660,123 confirmed deaths according to the database Our World in Data, edited by researchers of the Oxford Martin Programme on Global Development at the University of Oxford (Roser et al., 2020).

understand that proactively making decisions before the evidence is in separates the innovative reformers (Hargadon & Douglas, 2001) and intuitive investors (Huang & Pearce, 2015) from what could be labeled the evidence-based evangelists. Still, the questions remain: How exactly does a speaker argue for well-grounded decisions during or in anticipation of a looming crisis? How does this speaker convincingly argue for the need to change what still appears functional—at least to those in power and thus making the major decisions?

Before COVID-19 caused what the OECD characterizes as an impending “tightrope walk to recovery” (2020), organizations seemed increasingly obsessed with controlling and planning the future (Wenzel et al., 2020). Overall, the performative role that rhetoric plays in engendering this indeterminate flux between stability and crisis continues to puzzle me, for the future remains ever problematic, open-ended, and unpredictable (Hernes et al., 2013). Well-known maxims make such declarations as “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it,” “let data fuel your decisions,” and “don’t let emotions cloud your judgment.” Under stable conditions, I would myself consider such advice, but what happens if conditions are anything but stable? If the only way to avoid an encroaching point of no return is to act with a prudence unsupported by consistent evidence? If more data only adds to the confusion? If emotion is a key vehicle for making wise decisions?

Seeking answers to these fundamental puzzles, in this dissertation I investigate how humans decide to take action—from a rhetorical perspective in which decision making concerns the social exchange of reasons for choices in the face of uncertainty. I hope that this alone warrants spending more than 200 pages on unfolding the detailed empirical accounts that allow for theorizing—and will help advance the search for solutions to the grand challenge of making the right decisions at the right time.

A Rhetorician Walks Into an Organization …

This dissertation is concerned with human decision making, broadly defined as a choice between a minimum of two options (Edwards, 1954). Unlike with rational models of choice, where options are well known and the probability and utility of competing options can therefore be calculated (Schoemaker, 1980), I focus on the empirical phenomenon of organizational decision making as a rhetorical process of human interaction in which particular options are often emergent and outcomes intrinsically changeable and contingent, for which reason people seek to affect these very decisions (Hoefer & Green, 2016). Thus, decisions are the outcomes of persuasion. While rhetoric, broadly understood as a theory of persuasive discourse (Perelman, 1979), is integrally relevant when decision making is examined as a persuasive process of symbolic interaction (Burke, 1969), existing theories of temporality, emotion, and framing can provide key insights as to why some arguments impel humans to make a decision—and act on it. In the following, I will outline the relevance of examining the empirical phenomenon of decision making through these theoretical lenses (see figure 1).

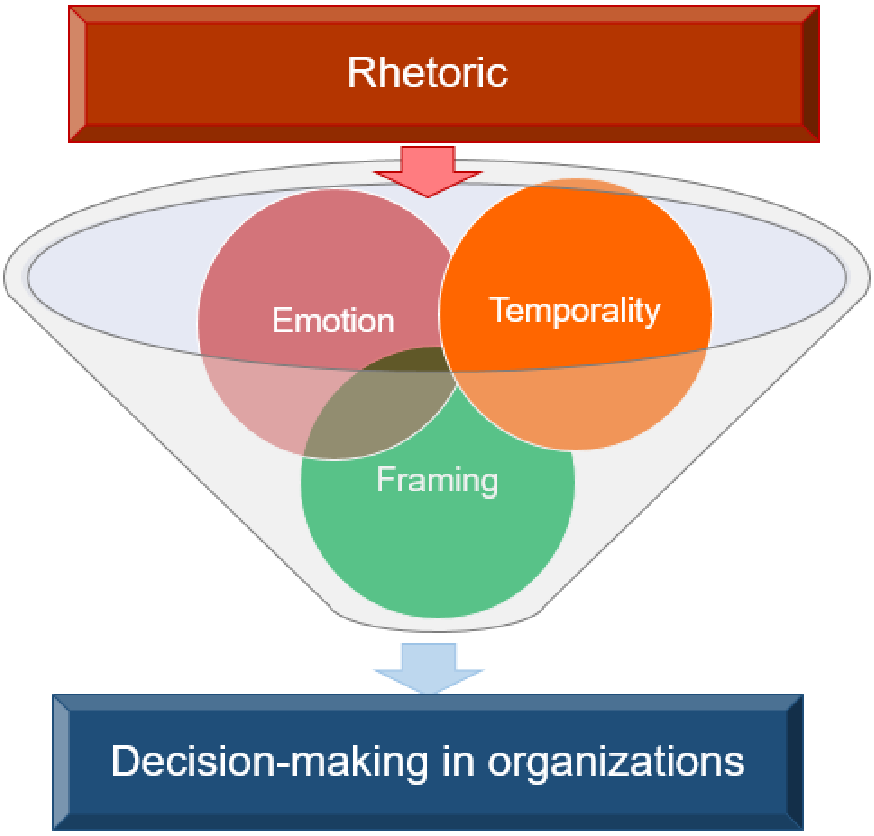

Figure 1: Theoretical lenses and the empirical phenomenon

I would like to emphasize that the figure above illustrates how rhetoric functions as the primary theoretical lens through which I seek to understand and examine the empirical phenomenon in question, to which I also include relevant theories of emotion, temporality, and framing. However, the figure does not depict or hypothesize causal mechanisms, for instance, or show the emergence of decisions across time.

While it has been well established that words can indeed “do things” (Austin, 1962), this dissertation focuses on how humans use words to persuade (persuasion itself being a key intent of words) other humans to do things—say, to formally initiate an IT strategy process or terminate a product development project. Beginning from the intellectual birthplace of persuasive discourse, rhetorical theory stresses that the distinct domain of rhetoric is deliberation about *choice of action* (Kock, 2017). Overall, “situations of uncertainty and possibility” (Cheney et al., 2004, p. 3) define organizational rhetoric, which in turn increases one’s understanding of how organizations create and socially construct knowledge through communication (Ihlen & Heath, 2018, p. 3).

While rhetorical theory has informed several studies within organization and management studies (Lockwood et al., 2019), for instance, on the legitimization of institutional change (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005) and entrepreneurial pitches (Van Werven et al., 2019), the rhetorical dimension of creating an understanding that action is worthwhile is a key to further understanding how organizational decisions happen.

A vital discussion in contemporary rhetorical theory concerns whether a situation constitutes (Bitzer, 1968) or the speaker creates (Vatz, 1973) the rhetorical exigence defined as “an imperfection marked by urgency” (Bitzer 1968, p. 6) from which an audience can act. Today, a consensus has emerged around the view that rhetorical agency is always both instrumental and constitutive (Leff & Utley, 2004). Because of this tension between deliberate instrumental actions and emergent constitutive processes, a crucial theme in decision making is how to *frame* the present moment as the right time to make a decision, in spite of the highly uncertain outcomes and the ongoing dynamic relationship between discourse and situation (Miller, 1990).

The burgeoning research within organization studies that investigates temporality as the "ongoing relationships between past, present, and future" (Schultz & Hernes, 2013, p. 1) provides a relevant springboard from which to understand the right time as a rhetorical phenomenon. Temporal organizing is always both deliberate and emergent (Hatch & Schultz, 2017), and research on temporal work in strategic decision making suggests that successful framing fits organizational members' experiences of the past and expectations for the future, and that this fit in turn renders a speaker's recommendations acceptable to the audience (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013).

Rhetorical theory also emphasizes epistemic and practical uncertainty, which makes the inclusion of emotion *(pathos)* another vital dimension of the theory, as persuasion depends on emotion to put "the audience into a certain frame of mind" (Aristotle, 2005, 1356a2). This dimension has also gained increasing importance in organizational studies. For instance, a recent study showed that the emotions manifest at the time the central bank chair spoke shaped how a supposedly "rational" market interpreted and reacted with uncertainty to taken-for-granted assumptions (Harmon, 2019). Such emphasis on the role of emotion in decision making coincides with "a veritable revolution in the science of emotion" (Lerner et al., 2015, p. 800), which has also emerged in the literature on organizations (Vuori & Huy, 2016), management (Ashkanasy et al., 2017), and strategy (Hodgkinson & Healey, 2011).

Along with an increasing emphasis on emotions, framing has repeatedly been foregrounded as a central mechanism for affecting decisions (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). Viewed as a "rhetorical tool for resonating with an audience" (Giorgi, 2017, p. 733), framing uses a convergence of emotion and cognition to enable persuasive contextualization, thereby becoming a lens for shaping and adapting arguments to fit with an audience's existing worldview (Raffaelli et al., 2019). A process view of framing highlights that "motivational frames" function as a call to arms—a call in which resonance, defined as the combination of frame credibility and salience, makes decisions and action happen (Benford & Snow, 2000).

Combined, these various discussions provide an original prism through which to understand how individuals, organizations, and society as a whole arrive at their decisions not by delivering irrefutable proof, but by gradually arriving at arguments that embody both existing beliefs and a fresh ambition to change what seems unreasonable. Building on relevant research efforts of the past, this dissertation seeks to enhance the present understanding of how such decision processes function and specifically how the interaction of emotion and temporality functions as a foundational aspect of the arguments humans exchange to arrive at a decision. To provide this greater understanding, I essentially aim to examine the constitutive role of rhetorical argumentation in decision making.

Research Question

Following a process view of rhetoric, which encompasses emotion and temporality, the overall research question guiding the inquiry of the dissertation is:

How does rhetorical argumentation constitute organizational decisions on when and how to act?

Starting from the key assumption that organizational decisions can happen through ongoing processes of rhetorical argumentation, the dissertation specifies this deliberately broad question in three separate inquiries guided by the key concepts of temporality, emotion, and framing, all of which are embedded in varying dimensions of exigence, ranging from prudence to urgency and unfolded respectively in chapters four, five, and six. As such, I conceptualize the dimension of rhetorical exigence as involving a situation either urgently calling for a decision to be made (such as a crisis), or where organizational actors have to rhetorically construct the need for making a prudent and yet incisive strategic decision. This conceptualization enables me to provide a simple depiction of each inquiry and how it approaches the overall research question, by topic and with varying degrees of exigence between urgency and prudence (see figure 2). The overall research question and the ensuing sub-questions call for a positioning of key concepts, which I seek to do in the following paragraphs, each beginning with a sub-question and ending with a return to the main research question.

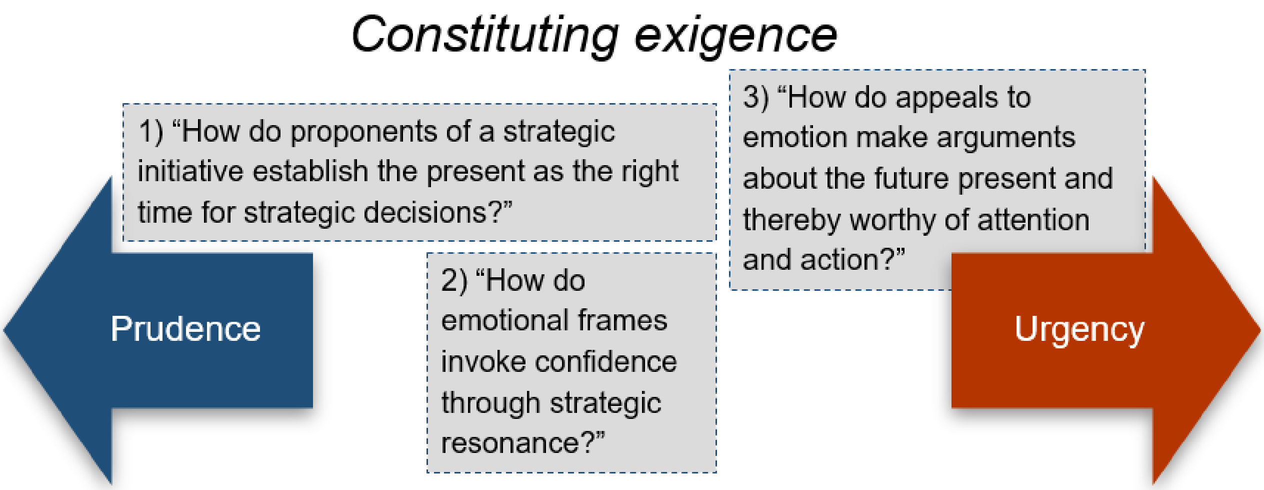

Figure 2: Constituting exigence and three inquiries

The first inquiry entails a study specifically addressing the aspect of how rhetorical argumentation constitutes the decision of *when* to act. The study investigates how advocates, themselves convinced a strategic initiative is overdue, try to establish an organizational consensus that the present moment is the "right" time to decide to initiate a strategy. Hence, the study explores the incipient stages of strategic decision making—what Dutton and Duncan (1987) called 'strategic issue diagnosis'—in order to determine which developments and events should influence the actual formulation of an organizational strategy. The negotiation for consensus is intrinsically rhetorical because the uncertainty and prospective nature of a situation mean that advocates do not per se have to make a decision; it is their interpretation of the situation (and the future yet to come) that compels them to view the situation as one in which taking action is favorable. Hereby, the study addresses the temporal dimension of organizational decision making, detailing how organizational actors reason about the right time to begin a strategy process, which is itself processual in nature.

Whereas the first study focuses on the need to act, the second study hones in on how rhetorical argumentation constitutes the decision about *how* to act. It examines how organizational actors rhetorically use framing to resonate with the decision makers who will weigh proposals of potentially significant long-term impact on the organization—hence the concept of *strategic* resonance. More specifically, the concept of emotional framing ties in with the rhetorical heritage of appealing to emotion as a means of successful audience persuasion, and in this specific context the focus is on invoking sufficient confidence. According to Aristotle, confidence is the opposite of fear, and “we feel it [confidence] if we can take steps—many, or important, or both—to cure or prevent trouble” (2005, 1383a20).

The third study investigates how arguments of timeliness appeal to emotion and, equally, how arguments that appeal to emotions such as confidence may reflect or even constitute the urge to act in the present. By examining this interrelation, I seek in this study to synthesize the two empirical studies and thus further contribute to theorizing how the confluence of time and emotion constitutes the decision of *when* and *how* to act.

All in all, each question grapples with the underlying dimension of how some certain framing of time and of emotion succeeds in impelling decision makers to accept—however unwillingly—that the present is the right time for a decision, and how the ongoing negotiation of past, present, and future helps constitute the emotional foundation for a commitment to action.

Methods and Research Context

In this dissertation, I investigate these questions by taking a pragmatist stance (Martela, 2015) to exploring empirical phenomena within organizational settings. I have engaged with the field in response to proposals to examine "how actors make interpretive links in time, as this significantly shapes organizational choices and actions" (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013, p. 990), and to see the degree to which "a combination of emotional and cognitive appeals ultimately accounts for a robust resonance that lasts over time" (Giorgi, 2017, p. 732). As an industrial researcher[2], I drew on existing and new contacts and gained insider access to two organizations, the resulting field studies of which constitute the empirical backbone of the dissertation.

From the outset, my interest in decision making as an empirical phenomenon came not only from a gap in the literature and recent calls for research but also from an accumulation of everyday experiences. Before entering academia, I worked as a full-time strategic communications consultant. In these formative years, the variety of specialists, managers, and executives with whom I had the privilege of working described the organizational decisions they tried to influence as prolonged and challenging processes, and a recurring theme expressed among them was the difficulty in "proving" the outcomes.

Therefore, from the outset of my PhD research, I strove to take an empirically driven, problem-focused approach, well suited for qualitative research (Reinecke et al., 2016). A positive consequence of this approach was the growing emphasis on temporality, which only emerged during one of my field studies (chapter 4). The two field studies, both informed by an action-research approach (Sykes & Treleaven, 2009), gave me access to a variety of data sources, including text data (internal memos, e-mails, reports), observations of meetings, one-on-one conversations, and interviews with managers and decision makers, all of which helped to

[2] Innovation Fund Denmark financed the study through its Industrial PhD program, which facilitates collaboration between a host company and a university (see more in Chapter 3 on Methodology).

triangulate my findings. Finally, I also relied on a close reading of a recent political speech made in the crisis context of COVID-19. Although the two field studies entailed no crisis situation as such, the coronavirus crisis provided me with an unexpected chance to further examine and understand how advocates—in this case the current Danish prime minister—argue for the need to take action in an uncertain present and before the full implications of both action and inaction are apparent.

Findings and Contributions

The overall finding of this dissertation is that the ongoing negotiated organizing of emotion constitutes compelling reasons to act. This conclusion draws its cogency from three key findings. First, decision makers have to view the present as an opportune moment; second, such opportune presence depends on a convergent framing of ambition and achievability; and third, when striking this balance, argumentations affects action via appeals that invoke emotion, and these appeals thereby translate the distant past and future into the situated present, thus enabling a decision.

The *first key finding* helps to advance conceptualizations of strategy making, establishing that the constitution of a compelling opportune moment requires both a framing that fits with existing organizational interpretations and actively shapes what the given organization aspires to achieve. A decision to take action requires organizational decision makers who experience the present as the opportune moment. *Kairos*, a word stemming from the Greek god of opportunity and the favorable moment (Rämö 1999, cited in Garud et al., 2011), has been variously used to speak of “the opportune moment.” My co-author and I build on this usage to conceptualize kairos as a rhetorical framing of temporality that both exploits and constitutes what organizational decision makers come to view as “the right time” for deciding on a strategy. As such, this finding contributes to a stronger understanding of the inherent dynamics involved in committing to change before the need for change has become apparent, in other words strategizing through the discursive application of temporal work.

Focused on emotional framing, the *second key finding* is that the enablement of decisions resides in a tension between diagnostic and prognostic framings (Benford & Snow, 2000), and that organizational phenomena that include temporal work depend heavily on the creation of emotional experiences that both warrant identification with (Giorgi, 2017) decisions and strengthen their empirical credibility. Ultimately, this finding contributes to the processual understanding of how an organization and its top-tier decision makers come to view certain arguments as strategically compelling, suggesting that a pivotal mechanism is the emerging accordance of ambition and achievability, encapsulated by the concept of *strategic resonance* (figure 7, see chapter 5).

Lastly, aimed at synthesizing the two primary concepts, time and emotion, the *third key finding* shows how experiences and choices from the past influence the emotions decision makers experience in the present and inform the intertemporal mechanisms that allow them to take the leap of faith and make decisions. Conceptually, I suggest an argumentation model of temporality and emotion (figure 8, see chapter 6) that includes two mechanisms: retrospective forecasting, which establishes a past-future-present link and prospective remembering, which establishes a future-past-present link. In combination, the two mechanisms constitute a situated presence that transcends the temporal constraints of uncertainty. This finding contributes to the emerging understanding of cognition and emotion as equally important for and mutually dependent on organizational decision making.

These three separate findings all point to the importance of how one frames the need to decide in the present. Such a decision is contingent on a finely calibrated understanding of the ongoing emotional negotiation between re-interpretations of key learnings and value grounded in the past vis-à-vis ambitions of a fundamentally uncertain future. Essentially, this dissertation contributes to a growing understanding of and appreciation for the convergent nature of emotion and cognition, within rhetorical (Micheli, 2010; Tindale, 2018) research, organization and management studies (Elfenbein, 2007; Ashkanasy et al., 2017), as well as the social sciences in general (Lerner et al., 2015; Nussbaum, 2018) and society as a whole.

Choices and Consequences

While all rhetoric is discourse, not all discourse is rhetorical. As 18th century rhetorician, Hugh Blair, wrote: “The most important subject of discourse is Action, or Conduct, the power of Eloquence chiefly appears when it is employed to influence Conduct, and persuade to Action” (1783, quoted in Kock, 2017, p. 43).

Although rhetoric, anchored as it is in a long tradition of studying arguments in context (Morrell, 2012, p. 74), enables me to focus on how humans shape their surroundings by expressing arguments capable of inducing action, I have no illusions that this is the only useful way to shed light on the empirical phenomenon of organizational decision making. Rather than presenting all the possible roads not travelled, I will in this section seek to justify my choices and acknowledge their consequences, hence delimiting the work undertaken her.

At the outset of this delimitation, it is important to recognize the foundational philosophical quarrel that marks the initial intersection of my journey: Do we base decisions on criteria of truth (the Platonic idealism) or probability (the Aristotelean realism)? As Perelman asked in the inaugural volume of the journal Philosophy & Rhetoric:

> Is it to the rhetor or the philosopher — to Protagoras and Gorgias or to Socrates — to Isocrates or to Plato — that we must entrust the task of completing the upbringing of the man and the citizen, of the one who is to govern the city and preside over its destiny? All

> were agreed that it is mastery of the *logos* that qualifies a man as a leader, but is it to the good speaker or to the accomplished dialectician that one ought to entrust concern with political affairs? (1968, p. 15)

In this matter, I take the side of the rhetor. Specifying this choice in terms of decision making, Miller (1990) pointed out that decision science and the rhetorical deliberation that leads to decisions are profoundly different, both ontologically and epistemologically. Fundamentally, decision science and rhetorical argumentation define uncertainty, audience, and human rationality differently. From a rhetorical perspective, *uncertainty* is not only an epistemic fact (divergence between information available and information needed to decide) but also a practical precondition because values guide the decisions that *audiences* as active participants try to arrive at through deliberation (Tindale, 2018). Further, rhetorical *rationality* “emphasizes the interdependence of substance and process” (Miller, 1990, p. 178) in which previous experiences, emotions, and value judgments can, indeed, function as legitimate reasons even though deductive logic cannot verify or falsify them. In siding with rhetoric, I become able to detail and explain deliberation in practice through a critical, qualitative approach to inquiry, thereby leaving behind the possibility of hypothesis-testing that seeks generalizability by using predominantly quantitative methods such as the formal decision analysis (Parnell, 2013) or behavioral decision making (Redlawsk & Lau, 2013).

In the end, two main reasons encouraged me chose to follow this path. One is the serendipitous empirical discoveries (see chapter 3), which led to a focus on temporality and a stronger process-orientation. The other is my own yearlong interest in emotion as a key element of what it means to be human, including persuading others to follow one’s lead—even though one cannot prove the definite worth or outcome of doing so. I hope that readers of this dissertation will find that these choices lead to useful insights and interesting destinations and, hence, forgive the many roads not travelled here.

Outline of Dissertation

In this chapter, I have introduced key contexts and concepts as well as sought to stimulate enough curiosity to spur continued reading. The rest of the dissertation proceeds as follows:

Chapter two establishes and delineates the field to which I seek to contribute by expanding and connecting the main scholarly conversations: namely the role of time, framing, and emotion in rhetorical argumentation aimed at affecting organizational decision making under uncertainty.

Chapter three unpacks the overall methodological considerations of the dissertation, presents the pragmatist philosophy of science guiding the inquiry and details the three studies on which I base the dissertation.

Chapters four, five, and six take the form of three separate papers that respectively report on one of three studies on how organizations decide that it is time to act, with each study addressing the question in a different organizational context and from a different theoretical angle.

Chapter four, "Getting the Timing Right," reports on a 13-month field study and examines strategy making in the empirical context of an otherwise prosperous financial institution. It unpacks how advocates of a new strategy changed their reasoning over time, adapting to the organizational context so as to become persuasive within it. In other words, the study uncovers how an ongoing negotiation established exigence for making a decision, and details how persuasive discourse unfolds as part of the "strategic organization of time" (Bansal et al., 2019) that shapes emergent strategic decisions.

Chapter five, "Strategic Resonance in Management Decisions," reports on a 7-month field study in a company that manufactures supplies for the building industry. Here, the empirical focus was decision making involved in product development processes. The chapter documents how decision makers face a dilemma between making timely decisions and deciding with sufficient confidence in an organization where “hard evidence” is the, often unattainable, gold standard.

Chapter six, “Affecting Argumentative Action,” contains the third and final paper of the dissertation. In this primarily theoretical contribution, I investigate the confluence of temporality and emotion in rhetorical argumentation, suggest a conceptual model incorporating the relevant literature, and illustrate its empirical relevance by analyzing a recent speech made by the Danish prime minister at the outset of the COVID-19 crisis.

In Chapter seven, “Conclusion,” I return to the overall research question, provide an answer based on the collective findings of the three individual papers, and discuss the contributions from a theoretical and a practical perspective, as well as suggest possible next steps.

2. Theoretical Currents

How does time and emotion function rhetorically in organizations?

In this chapter, I summarize the main theoretical currents that inform my study of the rhetoric of decision making and my attempt to push the frontier of this study by combining theories of temporality, emotion, and framing with detailed empirical accounts. This chapter further functions as an introduction to the theoretical diversity, which I have come to understand and appreciate while conducting research in the field.

I acknowledge that within management studies in particular, several critical voices (e.g. Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013) have lamented the lack of theorizing; that is, "…the field of management studies, when broadly defined, has been starved of new, home-grown theories." (Cornelissen & Durand, 2014, p. 995). Instead, many scholars have applied theories from other social sciences such as sociology, for instance Giddens's structuration theory (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001), and psychology, for example cognitive appraisal theory of emotion (Vuori & Huy, 2016), in prior attempts to explain empirical phenomena relevant to organization and management studies.

Although I find Cornelissen's and Durand's ambition admirable, I seek to combine existing theories of rhetoric, framing, and emotion, which have not yet seen sufficient interaction, to inform my empirical inquiries (see chapter 4 and 5), which in turn qualify my theoretical contributions (see chapter 6 and 7).

In order to position and connect the conversations that guide my overall investigation into time and emotion in strategic decision making, I seek to understand how time and emotion function rhetorically in organizations, and in order to appreciate how arguments shape decisions, framing of such arguments offer a relevant link. To provide an adequately grounded launch pad for the remainder of the dissertation, the chapter proceeds as follows. Firstly, I seek to define and explain what rhetorical argumentation is, and how it centers on deliberation about decision making under uncertainty. Secondly, I focus on the organization of time and the rhetorical use of temporality as a negotiation of past, present and future in relation to organizational decision making. Thirdly, I connect framing with appeals to emotion in situations where decision makers have to make a choice despite deep uncertainty.

Deliberation Over Choice of Action

Rhetoric exists to "affect the giving of decisions..." (Aristotle, 2005, 1377b22). As the distinct domain of rhetoric is indeed deliberation over choice of action (Kock 2017), rhetoric or persuasive discourse becomes relevant when humans reason about practical matters; that is, which course of action to pursue. Applying this view to organizational settings, rhetorical argumentation is the practical reasoning that takes place when organizational actors discuss and decide what to do.

In line with process-research on organizational phenomena (Langley et al., 2013), we may view decision making as processes evolving over time, in which organizational actors are active participants in articulating and judging arguments (Tindale, 2018, p. 30). Although there has been an increase in process-based inquiries into organizational decision making (e.g. Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004; Kaplan, 2008), both boundedly rational (March, 1997) and political (Allison, 1971) models of decision making seem to imply that social interaction is crucial, yet not emphasizing the rhetorical exchange of arguments.

Zarefsky (2019) unfolded five key assumptions of rhetorical argumentation foundational for understanding the inevitability of rhetoric in deliberations about choice: audience focus, uncertainty, arguers as restrained partisans, cooperativeness, and particularity (p. 3-11). Rhetorical argumentation, then, from a speaker's perspective is about providing an audience (which could be fellow organizational decision makers) with enough confidence to commit themselves to decide and to act upon this decision, even though the process of reasoning is, indeed, a process that evolves across time. What we may describe as rhetorical uncertainty evolves around the disputes (which decision to make given several options, including the in-decision of the status-quo) as well as the process of reasoning as it unfolds over time:

> Uncertainty results not only from the incompleteness of knowledge on which the arguers rely, but also from differences in the hierarchy and intensity of their preferences and values. (…) Sometimes hierarchies of preference will be modified during the course of the argument; sometimes they will be discovered or revealed only during the course of the argument. All these factors compound the uncertainty inherent in a rhetorical view of argument. (Zarefsky, 2019, p. 5)

The multidimensional uncertainty that Zarefsky underlines as part of rhetorical argumentation, is crucial for understanding rhetoric and decision making as processes in which preferences are not stable, but subject to modifications and changes throughout the interaction with other actors in which the self-serving and communal interests meet and possibly merge (Kock, 2017, p. 62).

Rhetorical Argumentation in Organizations

From an organizational perspective, rhetoric aids our understanding of how organizations create and socially construct knowledge that serve individual as well as collective interests through communication (Ihlen & Heathh, 2018, p. 3). Recognizing that decisions define organizations (Nutt, 1999), scholars taking the linguistic turn in organization and management studies have sparked a lively academic conversation on how actors use language and other symbolic means to convince others to make decisions and take action (Lockwood et al., 2019). Across organizational contexts, rhetoric changes existing organizations (Harmon et al., 2015), constructs identity (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001), legitimizes institutional change (Suddaby &

Greenwood, 2005), rationalizes strategic decisions (Bouwmeester, 2013), and enables institutional decision making (Hoefer & Green, 2015). Although other factors such as verbal emotional displays (see, e.g., Liu & Maitlis, 2014) can influence human persuasion, in this dissertation my focus is on rhetorical argumentation as it connects reason, emotion, and time.

When reasoning about matters of choice, rhetoric becomes constitutive as it shapes reality through discourse in order to let an audience identify with and process how to decide rather than rely on a normative force of arguments, whose persuasive power paradoxically rests on the audience carrying out what a speaker proposes. Rhetoric becomes constitutive when it is capable of positioning an audience: "What is significant in constitutive rhetoric is that it positions the reader towards political, social, and economic action in the material world…" (Charland, 1987, p. 141). The duality of rhetoric as constituent and constitutive marks the link between rhetoric and temporality as constitutive rhetoric questions and challenges the ontological nature of the reality on which a speaker argues.

Time for Decisions

While focusing on the persuasive uses of time and the duality of rhetoric as both constituent and constitutive, I assume that persuasive discourse plays a crucial role in organizational decision making (Ihlen & Heath, 2018). This also includes strategic decisions that "are not just occasions for deciding what to do next, but are more broadly about setting the strategic direction of the organization (March, 1994, in Kaplan, 2008). Within the broader field of organizational decision making, strategic decisions, then, are decisions that happen in a flux of the ongoing present as it depends on the past in defining the future, which does not yet exist (Suddaby et al., 2010).

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (2010) [3] argued that the intervention of time is the defining difference between demonstration (i.e. deductive logic) and argumentation, which is exact reasoning about practical matters:

> The oppositions that we notice between classical demonstration, formal logic, and argumentation may, it seems, come back to an essential difference: time does not play any role in demonstration. Time is, however, essential in argumentation, so much so that we may wonder if it is not precisely the intervention of time that best allows us to distinguish argumentation from demonstration. (2010, p. 310)

Because rhetorical argumentation evolves around practical choice of which we have not yet seen the outcome, temporality plays an essential role in distinguishing argumentation from demonstration. Temporality, defined as the "negotiated organizing of time" (Granqvist & Gustafsson, 2016, p. 1009), is the organizational background of these choices and establishes the "ongoing relationships between past, present, and future" (Schultz & Hernes, 2013, p. 1). As such, invoking and appealing to temporality inherently involves what Kaplan and Orlikowski called temporal work, that is "reimagining future possibilities, rethinking past routines, reconsidering present concerns, and reconstructing strategic accounts that link these interpretations together" (2013, p. 973).

The pertinent question on which I focus in relation to persuasive discourse capable of constituting reality (Charland, 1987) is one of time and timing. Should organizational actors wait until the need to decide arises or should they pursue and discursively create these moments themselves; that is, should they wait for the right time, or should they actively pursue the right timing (Kunisch et al., 2017, p. 1024)?

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[3] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca published their original paper, "Traité de l'argumentation: La nouvelle rhétorique," in 1958. When referring to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (2010), I have used the 2010 English translation and commentary by Bolduc and Frank, "On Temporality as a Characteristic of Argumentation".

Time in Organizations

The question above brings forward how organization studies have conceptualized time and in particular, how time may organize decisions. Holt and Johnsen (2019) supplied an overview of the role of time in organization studies and argued that time, understood as time beyond human interference, was lost in organization:

> Organizations were no longer places of waiting for fate to have its say. They became places of action, and with the wash of all this activity came a progressive forgetfulness of an unmanaged and ungovernable time. Instead time was subjected to classifications, that in turn served pragmatic human need: time was unfolded through plans and plotted through prediction, and in being made available to managerial practice it became the rack upon which to stretch the world. (Holt & Johnsen, 2019, p. 1558)

I highlight the above because it emphasizes the current focus of this dissertation on uncertainty and unpredictability. Organizations and managers seek control and predictability; they strive for "decisiveness, certainty, and clarity" (March, 2006). Meanwhile, or maybe because of, the future is inherently uncertain and organizational decision practices such as strategy making evolve around "predicting the future in order to change it." (Kornberger, 2016). Yet, despite this uncertainty, decisions happen, and of particular interest is therefore the rhetorical use of time in organizations. Although a number of studies do not use the term rhetoric, the underlying dimension relates to the uses of time as part of persuasive organizational discourse. More precisely, how do organizational actors articulate time rhetorically when framing decisions?

Research on time in organization and management studies has witnessed a rise in popularity (Holt & Johnsen, 2019; Kunisch et al., 2017). Ancona, Okhuysen and Leslie (2001) provided a general overview and found that conceptions of time vary according to the types of time involved and the social construction of time (see also Hernes et al., 2013). Generally, we may conceptualize time along two axes: as chronological or linear clock-time (chronos) vs. non-linear event-time (kairos), on the one hand, and objective vs. subjective conceptions of time, on the other. The consensus within the field is largely that time (for action) is socially constructed, in which temporal work becomes close to synonymous with the emergent process of organizing (Hernes et al., 2013) and the strategic construction of a chronology of past and present in order to create ‘situated activity’ (Hernes & Schultz, 2020).

One specific concept that bridges chronological and event time is a rhetorical understanding of time as kairos, most readily translatable as ‘right time’ or ‘opportune moment’ (Sutton, 2001). Within organization studies, kairos is often contrasted with *chronos* (chronological clock-time) and links to event-time, which is also how organization studies have usually adopted kairos (Dougherty et al., 2013; Reinecke & Ansari, 2016). Nevertheless, the issue of how an organization (or individual actors) seizes an opportunity or gets the timing right may involve clock- as well as event-based arguments and construct the right moment on a time-space-continuum as well as in the here and now. Such time constructions might take the form of rhetorical history (Suddaby et al., 2010; Suddaby & Foster, 2017) in which actors draw upon the particular version of organizational history that best serves their persuasive agenda. Invoking such particular versions of time also implies that the same past can become a tool for advocates of both stability and change, for instance, depending on how they frame the past, and thus to which degree they succeed in constructing a temporal narrative that credibly addresses present concerns and the historical trajectories that constitute their versions of the future, for which they seek support (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013).

While kairos might appear to arise within a chronology, the use of rhetorical history implies that actors may also strategically use a specific presentation of chronos rhetorically to create kairos (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002; Hawhee, 2002). As such, a strategic time construction becomes rhetorical when discourse increases “an audience’s sense that this moment is the right moment for the course of action or judgment being proposed” (Bisbee, 2018, p. 495). Rhetorical appeals to ‘the right time’, then, work both in and through time as a temporal shaping of the present moment as kairotic can provide a momentary control of the uncertain in making a decision (Miller, 1994).

To summarize, the persuasive processes of decision making, including decisions on which strategy to pursue, is inherently situational and therefore time-dependent. Different contexts require different rhetorical arguments that enable different interpretations of the past, present and future in order to make organizational actors feel and think that the moment is right for the decision and the decision is right for the moment. Therefore, time matters, but so do different conceptualizations of time and what is timely, as they influence how decisions emerge. In those situations, the choice of framings and the arguments involved in convincing decision makers to make decisions and take action play a pivotal role. Let me therefore proceed to review how the framing literature connects with a foundational rhetorical aspect of argumentation, namely appealing to the emotions of the audience.

Emotional Framing of Decisions

To view framing as a “rhetorical tool for resonating with an audience” (Giorgi, 2017, p. 733), combining existing literature on emotion as well as framing may shed a light on how speakers present and portray decisions, and subsequently, how decision makers proceed to choose. Both emotion and framing are inherently contextual; emotions tend to arise as immediate reactions to stimuli in specific contexts (Moors et al., 2013), and emotional processes are deeply contextualized (Elfenbein, 2007, p. 323), while framing enables contextualization (Werner & Cornelissen, 2014) and framing processes allow for a social understanding of how collective action emerges and unfolds (Benford & Snow, 2000).

Emotion in Organizations

Emotions have been a subject of study since Aristotle proposed that persuasion entailed appeals to emotions, yet recent decades have seen “a veritable revolution in the science of emotion” (Lerner et al., 2015, p. 800). These developments in the ‘affective sciences’ have increasingly begun to make a mark in the literature on organizations (Huy, 2012; Vuori & Huy, 2016), institutions (Green et al., 2009; Harmon, 2019), management (Barsade, 2002; Huy, 2001; Ashkanasy et al., 2017), and strategy (Hodgkinson & Healey, 2011; Kunisch et al., 2017; Kouamé & Liu, 2020).

In her review of emotions in organizations, Elfenbein (2007) explored the rise of emotion in organizational scholarship. Of particular importance to this dissertation, emotion is “an interrelated series of processes that unfold chronologically.” (Elfenbein, 2007, p. 317). This process-view allows for a dynamic integration of dimensions, including the emotional stimulus, registration, experience, and expression, and equally important, how postemotional responses that affect action tendencies, including decisions, interrelate with these dimensions. This means that an integrated process framework of emotion allows for a more holistic and dynamic understanding of emotion, and for the current dissertation, it underlines how rhetoric that (one way or the other) appeals to emotion functions across this spectrum. Viewing emotions from such an integrated perspective also allows for an inclusion of the management literature on threats and opportunities (Jackson & Dutton, 1988; Dutton & Ashford, 1993) because emotions allow humans to experience an event, assess whether this event is benign, threatening, or irrelevant, and whether they should approach or avoid it (Lazarus, 1993). Consequently, emotions can help explain whether organizational actors interpret an uncertain future as a threat or opportunity based on how they assess the present.

Relatedly, van Knippenberg and van Kleef (2016) reviewed the role of affect, broadly, in leadership. While their emphasis was on affective displays, which is not the focus in the current dissertation, leadership revolves around motivating followers to pursue collective goals, and they underlined that for long, a strong focus has been on cognition rather than affect. This privileging of cognition, which tends to over-simplify the convergence of cognition and affect, underlines the need for more comprehensive research integrating the two dimensions; for instance, how cognitive interpretations and situational stimuli influence the content of the affective interpretation (Van Knippenberg & van Kleef, 2016, p. 826). For my take on a more integrative view of emotion and reason, see the following section on the convergence of emotion and cognition and in particular, chapter five for the lengthier, empirical exploration with an emphasis on framing, and chapter six for a theoretical discussion with an emphasis on argumentation.

Emotion also plays a crucial role in relation to time, as research on strategic change has shown. Kunisch, Bartunek, Mueller and Huy (2017) reviewed the role of time in strategic change that affect fundamental elements of the organization, such as structure, identity, or strategy (p. 1007). The authors underlined that without understanding the roles that emotions play, it is "impossible to fully understand the temporal components of strategic change" (Kunisch et al., 2017, p. 1045). Of specific importance to this dissertation, they suggested that future research should examine when and how particular types of emotions influence decisions about strategic change. One way to bring about emotional reactions is through the framing of where an organization is situated (and comes from) and where it is (should be) heading (Kaplan, 2008).

Framing as Emotional Processes

Framing, broadly defined, enables contextualization, and whether scholars examine framing through a lens of rhetoric (Kuypers, 2010), communication (Entman, 1993), social movements

(Benford & Snow, 2000), or strategic change (Fiss & Zajac, 2006), frames define and diagnose problems and causes, make future prognoses, provide solutions or make moral judgments, and thereby motivate action. As such, a process-view of framing (Purdy et al., 2019; Reinecke & Ansari, 2020) connects with a temporality of argumentation and is the primary reason for including framing theory in the dissertation.

Furthermore, framing is inherently rhetorical as framing defines "the packaging and organization of information" (Giorgi, 2017, p. 712). Notice the similarities with Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's definition of the concept of presence, as crucial for gaining adherence to a proposal:

> By the very fact of selecting certain elements and presenting them to the audience, their importance and pertinence to the discussion are implied. Indeed, such a choice endows these elements with a presence, which is an essential factor in argumentation and one that is far too much neglected in rationalistic conceptions of reasoning. (1969, p. 116)

Within organization and management studies, Cornelissen and Werner (2014) provided a comprehensive review of extant scholarship on framing and frame analysis. They underlined that discursive framing processes and cognitive frames—what they called "knowledge schemas"—may be separate concepts, but are nonetheless "reciprocally and recursively interconnected in the construction of meaning in context" (2014, p. 183). The importance of context makes framing a pivotal concept in studying the rhetoric of decision making: In using words and language symbolically (Lockwood et al., 2019), organizational actors who articulate frames not only describe reality (Bitzer, 1969) but also construct a situation in which decisions can happen (Vatz, 1973). In a recent paper, Nyberg, Wright and Kirk (2020) examined the temporality of framing, specifically how the climate crisis is framed, and offer the concept of 'hope without optimism' in order to keep the future open as a time-yet-to-come, a future in which it is worth fighting despite any positive diagnose of the present, from which action emerge.

As should be evident, emotions (euphoric and dysphoric, alike; Cigada, 2006) and framing of decision making intertwine. Two recent conceptual papers bridged framing and emotion (Giorgi, 2017; Raffaelli et al., 2019). Taking a strategic management perspective and emphasizing Top Management Team (TMT) innovation decisions, Raffaelli, Glynn and Tushman conceptualized that emotional and cognitive framing interact as “frame flexibility”—defined as the ability to reframe a proposal, for instance an innovation, as a potential fit for the firm (2019, p. 1023)—allows a TMT to view non-incremental proposals as strategically relevant. In this sense, emotional framing enables “striking a responsive chord or being emotionally resonant” and is key to whether a frame is effective in promoting a decision or not (p. 1025). From within management studies, Giorgi (2017) proposed that frame effectiveness relies on how well frames resonate with an audience, distinguishing between cognitive and emotional resonance, and suggests a mix of emotional and cognitive appeals create a “robust resonance that lasts over time.” (p. 732)

The sociological literature addressing framing in social movements had already established the concept of frame resonance, but rather surprisingly without incorporating emotion despite emphasizing that “motivational frames” function as a call to arms and defining resonance as the combination of frame credibility and salience (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 619). Giorgi advanced the understanding of resonance by defining emotional frame resonance as “a felt alignment of a frame with the audience’s passions, desires, or aspirations” (2017, p. 717), which in turn underline the rhetorical (and hence, emotional) nature of framing.

Convergence of Emotion and Cognition

If a combination of cognitive and emotional framing, as Raffaelli and co-authors (2019) as well as Giorgi (2017) suggested, is more suitable for understanding organizational phenomena such as innovation decisions and management behavior, then it seems worthwhile to pursue a cognitive approach towards emotions.

In this dissertation, I follow the definition of emotions as “adaptive responses to the demands of the environment” (Elfenbein, 2007, p. 316). More specifically, I adhere to a cognitive appraisal theory of emotion (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Moors et al., 2013), which understands emotions as processes that comprise, among others, three crucial components required for understanding emotion in a decision-making context. These are appraisals by which a person evaluates the environment and interaction with other persons, motivational action tendencies or other forms of action readiness, and the subjective experience of feelings (Moors et al., 2013, p. 119). A cognitive appraisal theory of emotion chimes well with the rhetorical tradition in which appeals to emotion (pathos) are not mere irrational impulses but involve cognitive and emotive components (Aristotle, 2005, 1378a19). The cognitive (often-factual) component and the way a speaker chooses to frame salient characteristics can appeal to and resonate with the audience’s emotions, thus paving the way for decision and action. This view also reflects how emotions seldom arise in a social vacuum, but through human social interaction (Van Kleef, 2016).

Given that all argumentation is selective (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969), the framing of future consequences, and the subsequent invocation of these, into the present, become indispensable for understanding how arguments form temporal translation of distant events into the present and situated activity (Hernes & Schultz, 2020) of deliberation, which enables decisions. One technique appears to revolve around the emotional dimension of argumentation in compelling decision makers to act upon the invocation of distant events and their interrelation with present choices (O’Keefe, 2013). Consequently, emotions that motivate action become reasons for decisions and potential action (Helm, 2009). In line with the duality of kairos that I described earlier, the rhetorical use of emotion also contains a duality. As indicated above, emotion influences the formation of judgment, but rhetoric also evolves around “the role of judgment in the formation of the passions” (Micheli, 2010, p. 6). In this dual understanding, in which emotions not only have cognitive effects but also cognitive origins, it is difficult to separate emotion from judgment, but it is possible to assess emotion and the reasons that might support why an individual judges and feels a certain way and/or how (s)he attempts to make the audience feel. Hence, it is possible to approach and evaluate emotions argumentatively.

To feel emotions is to experience motives of acting “well up inside us, where that feeling of motivation is part of what it is like to feel these emotions.” (Helm, 2009, p. 249). We may therefore view appeals to emotion as appeals to an emotional focus, which has particular import for the decision makers and therefore resonate with situational appraisals (i.e. cognitive judgments that give rise to emotions). This could be agency (actions matter), certainty (amidst uncertainty, at least, there are signs providing some degree of faith), and coping potential (the available means to act). These are all felt evaluations (appraisals) that undergird how it feels to be in a situation where it matters what organizational actors choose. Especially the notion of agency, whether decision makers feel that they can in fact do something about the subject in question, directly links to a temporal focus. If we think “our efforts are a waste time, we don’t embrace hope.” (Nussbaum, 2018, p. 214).

In sum, emotion and cognition interact, and when assessing what to decide, which often involves multiple uncertainties, both epistemic and practical, emotions guide decision making.

Concluding Remarks

Considering that rhetorical agency is defined as "the relative capacity of speech to intervene and affect change" (Hoff-Clausen, 2018, p. 287), I conclude this chapter by linking the inherent temporality of agency to the important role that framing of emotions can take in rhetorical argumentation; that is, deliberation about decision making, especially when uncertainty is high.

I began this chapter by asking how time and emotion function rhetorically in organizations. Firstly, time and timeliness underline the sense that rhetoric is contextual; no two situations are identical. This provides fertile ground for the many rhetorical uses of time in deliberations about choice. Temporality as the ongoing rhetorical negotiation between the past, the present, and the future, becomes part of the reasoning to make decisions and take action. By focusing on the concept of kairos, I emphasize that rhetorical appeals to 'the right time', work both in and through time, extending the present into the future as well as shaping the present to match a desired future from which organizational actors may make decisions.

Secondly, emotions function rhetorically because emotions fundamentally are "adaptive responses to the demands of the environment" (Elfenbein, 2007, p. 316). In relation to time, the demands of the organization are not only demands that stand out in the very present, but equally so, the expectation of things to come and how organizational actors frame such expectations. Hereby, the framing process of where an organization stands, where it is heading, and why decisions are necessary, become crucial in advocating for departures from the status quo. Such framing processes, especially in uncertain conditions that challenge reliable predictions, invite a view of emotions as both unavoidable and necessary and, hence, appeals to emotion as a crucial aspect of a rhetoric of decision making because emotions motivate and enable commitment to act (Helm, 2009).

While I have now thoroughly outlined my theoretical positioning, the overall question of how rhetorical argumentation constitutes organizational decisions on when and how to act is still largely unanswered. In the following chapter, I therefore describe the pragmatist philosophy of science, which guided the qualitative methods that I applied in my attempts to examine and understand how time and emotion influence the rhetoric of organizational decision making.

3. Methodology

How do we investigate decisions to act?

Since rhetoric is concerned with the "essentially contestable" (Garver, 1978, in Miller, 1990, p. 162), a key task for any scholar investigating the rhetoric of decision making must be to rigorously uncover how and why decision makers find the arguments they encounter compelling enough to make the decision to carry out an action.

Grounded in the assumption of decision making as a process in which organizational actors deliberate and exchange reasons for and against competing courses of action, the methodological aim of this dissertation is to explore how these processes themselves come to define what a ‘good’ rhetorical basis for strategic decision making is. Recalling Kock’s point that the domain of rhetoric is reasoning about choice of action (2017), the most rhetorical of all decisions could very well be strategic decisions, understood as decisions that “are not just occasions for deciding what to do next, but are more broadly about setting the strategic direction of the organization” (March, 1994, in Kaplan, 2008). However, strategy, commonly defined as predicting the future in order to change it (Kornberger, 2016), rests on a set of assumptions about predictability about future outcomes, which paradoxically seems to render strategizing obsolete. Rhetoric holds the key to escape such an agentic straightjacket, if we view strategy as a present consumption of the future: Kornberger underlined that “Strategy construction reverses the arrow of time: the imagined future becomes the reason for action in the present.” (2016, p. 42), which is similar to Kenny’s observation that in practical reasoning, “we argue as it were backwards; that is, we start with a certain goal, value or end that we want to promote” (1979, in Kock, 2017, p. 57).

When I began working on this dissertation, theories of behavioral decision making influenced my thinking on how I could best examine decision making. Originally educated as a rhetorician, one might say that it was a rather late rebellion against the classical hermeneutic circles of the arts. In seeking explanations of how humans convince each other to make decisions, however, I have found myself 'coming back' to a skeptic stance towards the epistemological foundations of behavioral decision theory with its emphasis on how humans fail to live up to normative standards of expected utility maximizing (e.g. Kahneman, 2011; Redlawsk & Lau, 2013).

Carolyn Miller, a rhetorical scholar, argued that decision science, broadly, exhibits an inability to reason about values as the following quote underlines:

> The task in solving a problem of action is not to acquire more information or to modify a calculus; it is, rather, to exercise what Aristotle called practical reason, to adapt to a particular case of general principles or values. But since scientistic reasoning does not recognize the need for deliberation about problems of action, about what we ought to do or be, it cannot accommodate values. (Miller, 1990, p. 176)

Fundamentally, decision science and rhetorical argumentation have varying definitions of uncertainty, audience, and human rationality. From a rhetorical perspective, uncertainty is not only epistemic (divergence between information available and information needed to decide) but also practical because values (often incommensurable; see Kock, 2017, p. 137) guide the decisions that audiences as active participants (Tindale, 2018) try to arrive at through deliberation. Lastly, a rhetorical rationality "emphasizes the interdependence of substance and process" (Miller, 1990, p. 178) in which previous experiences, emotions, and value judgments can function as 'good reasons'.

In highlighting these differences, I want to emphasize how a rhetorical approach towards the empirical phenomenon of decision making complements a process-based, qualitative methodology. Process-grounded studies are concerned with how organizing and organizations emerge and develop in and over time (Hernes, 2007), and a rhetorical approach to studying decision making as processes in which the evolution and 'durability' of arguments (Tindale, 2018) help determine their ability to convince decision makers can therefore gain from a processual, methodological approach. While rhetorical scholars start to embrace ethnographic methods, process-grounded studies seem very sparse (for a recent overview of audience-centered methods, see Kjeldsen, 2018).

Despite epistemological and ontological differences between decision science and rhetoric, any researcher within both fields must answer the following questions: "Why was this study done? Why was this study done in this particular context? What is the author studying and why? And how did the author conduct the study and analyze the data?" (Pratt, 2008, p. 503)

Ultimately, the aim of the current study is to unpack how argumentation unfolds and *becomes* persuasive during organizational decision-making processes. The dissertation as a whole aims to contribute to the study of strategic decision making as an ongoing rhetorical negotiation between organizational actors. In this chapter I explore how such rhetorical negotiation can be studied.

This chapter consists of four sections, in which I will answer Pratt's questions and elaborate on the choices I made along the way.

1) The first section lays out the organizational context and nature of the Industrial PhD Program and it describes how I managed to access two field sites, otherwise closed to the public.

2) The second section unfolds the philosophy of science behind my inquiries. It takes a pragmatist stance towards questions of ontology and epistemology, informed by process philosophy (Hernes, 2014) and rhetorical deliberation (Miller, 1990).

3) The third section reflects upon the opportunities and constrains of doing process research as an insider (organizational ethnography as action research; Sykes & Treleaven, 2009), presenting my thoughts on the process of data collection as well as the emergence of relevant phenomena.

4) The fourth and final section lays out the data collections and the analytical strategies I followed to arrive at what now appear as rather neat and orderly data sets, which, of course, were much messier in the process.

Because of the usual space-constraints of academic papers that tend to restrict the unfolding of methodological choices (Jarzabkowski, et al., 2016, p. 239), I exploit the rare opportunity to be transparent about how the methodological choices, which I made while collecting as well as analyzing data, inform the overall argument presented in this dissertation. I try to do so by describing the steps involved in the iterative (and equally messy and dumbfounding), yet rigorous process of gaining access, observing, interviewing, coding, analyzing, drafting, theorizing, and writing the individual papers that now form the backbone of this dissertation.

Before I describe the organizational context of doing an Industrial PhD, I find the following reflection helpful as a guide to this chapter: The main aim of this chapter on methodology is to illuminate how the empirical material *became* and made sense to me. Although this had been my initial ambition, at no point during the data collection did I find myself in a room full of well-versed über-reasonable arguers who deliberated and subsequently decided on a course of action, which I was then able to meticulously document using perfectly complementary methods of data collection. Rather, numerous conversations, texts, thoughts, frustrations, reflections, plans, decisions, action as well as in-action of informants shaped and informed my inquiries. Not to speak of the many failures I experienced along the way.

One specific incident comes to mind. While still trying to negotiate access to one specific organization (which I never obtained), I flew to Stockholm to participate in a meeting and present my research to a group of experienced (and very skeptical, it turned out) technical experts. Quickly, the presentation turned into a defense in which I felt I had to try to convince the participating experts that shadowing their work would not interfere with the yearlong relations they had built with collaborators, as I would be an unobtrusive observer. Essentially, I was, of course, unable to 'prove' how the would-be informants and their contacts would react to my presence; therefore, the experience stands out to me as an example of the difficulty humans encounter when trying to convince others to make a decision. When acting under uncertainty, one can never 'prove' an outcome, only make it appear more or less likely that things will, indeed, play out as one foresees. At this point in my research, however, I had not yet recognized that qualitative inquiry can hardly be entirely value-free or unobtrusive (Langley & Klag, 2019, p. 525). I flew home with nothing but polite mentions of 'let's stay in touch'. Afterwards, I only met a wall of silence, and in the end, none of the sparse data, which I eventually did manage to collect in the organization, made it into this dissertation. There was nothing to theorize about—or if there was, I could not see it.

Perseverance did pay off, though, and I was able to access two other organizations. However, my experiences changed my understanding of what it can and should mean to do research on decision making, prompting me to be transparent about what I experienced along this three-year exploration of becoming a researcher. I now understand that qualitative inquiry, capable of pushing theoretical boundaries, requires researchers to "focus more on the means by which organization members go about constructing and understanding their experience" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 2). Such a focus entails a deep, ethnographically inspired engagement in the field to be able to understand how informants appreciate their social world—how they make decisions and try to make others decide.

Organizational Context and Negotiating Empirical Access

Innovation Fund Denmark financed this study through the Industrial PhD program, which enables collaboration between a host company and a university. The purpose of the program is to “create commercial benefits for companies, strengthen universities’ relationships with the industry and allow students to see their research applied in real life” (Innovationsfonden, 2020). In my case, the host company was Rhetorica, a consultancy specializing in leadership communication based on rhetorical, behavioral and leadership theory. When applying for funding, the plan was to do fieldwork with one of Rhetorica’s main clients (LiSci, a pseudonym), a research-intensive company in the life-science business. The CEO of LiSci at the time expressed a clear interest in examining the executive decision-making processes and potentially finding ways of improving executive deliberation on matters where there was a lack of evidence and/or competing interests.

Before I began as a researcher, I worked full time as a consultant at Rhetorica, which had allowed me to build rapport with LiSci. It also meant that I had to make the shift from consultant to consulting researcher while maintaining my relations with the same group of colleagues. I now look back to early meetings in which colleagues kept on asking me questions such as ‘What is the value proposition of the PhD?’, ‘Which added value do you bring to a company?’ Anyone who has ever been in a sales meeting knows that (overly) bold conclusions such as ‘we may increase turnover by 20 %” is a way of securing initial interest, but for an early career researcher it also underlined the large difference between the temporalities of relevance and the rigor of supporting data. I found myself in a space where bold conclusions were not enough—this dissertation, three years in the making, provides support for some of my initial assumptions, whereas I had to discard others. In sum, robust scientific conclusions take time, and the findings I present in this dissertation are more nuanced than what my colleagues had wished for.

I am not making generalizations based on only one observation, but my experience with the Industrial PhD program was a blessing and a curse all tangled up. Working at a company secured me access to study decision-making processes in two organizations, which I would not have had access to otherwise. However, this access also highlights some of the challenges of juggling research and consulting (as was the profession in my case). There is always an exchange. In exchange for access and data, the researcher has to take on a double role and provide relevant knowledge and input. As I will unfold, I approached what could easily become a dilemma—at least from a positivist stance where researchers may 'contaminate' the generalizability of findings by their sheer presence—by grounding the data collection in the traditions of action research.

Having briefly established the overall premise of doing an Industrial PhD in which juggling commercial and academic interests is simply a given, I now proceed to outline the ontological and epistemological assumptions that have guided my empirical inquiries.

Philosophy of Science

How is it possible to examine the process of persuasion, uncovering the ways in which discourse influences an audience to make decisions? To understand how persuasive discourse between humans in organized settings functions—and can be studied—we may advantageously pay a short visit to a foundational debate within rhetorical studies on the constitutive nature of rhetoric and the "rhetorical situation". In short, does the situation allow for a fitting response by the speaker (Bitzer, 1968), or does the speaker construct a situation that allows for a rhetorical fitting response by the audience who can then understand themselves to be mediators of change (Vatz, 1973)?

In an influential paper, Leff and Utley (2004) sought to settle the dispute by highlighting that rhetoric is always both instrumental and constitutive. Ontologically, one key point for this dissertation is that an understanding of rhetoric as both instrumental and constitutive helps to position rhetoric as residing between a realistic and constructivist position.

I highlight this discussion because it emphasizes the inadequacies of some rhetorical theory to account for the confluence of situation and individual agency. To understand the role of persuasive discourse in social phenomena such as decision making under uncertainty, I underline that it can be beneficial to take a process approach in which it is possible to unfold the richness, messiness, and fluidity of the arguments that can affect decisions and consequences. To understand such messy dynamics, the "rhetorical turn", in its critique of the objectivism of social inquiry, argues that one must acknowledge the contingency of historically situated truths, and how they reflect values and interests (Simons, 1990, p. 2). Within management and leadership studies, for instance, Alvesson's studies of so-called knowledge-intensive firms intensify the need to critically assess how rhetoric shapes and constructs "reality and the reality of construction the realness of symbols and the symbolic character of reality" (1993, p. 1007). Parallel, the "process turn" in organization studies emphasizes the importance of detailing the "temporal structure of social practices and the uncertainty and urgencies that are inherently involved in them…" (Langley et al., 2013, p. 4).

Accordingly, I draw on an organizational process view in order to understand and describe the role of rhetoric in the organizational processes that lead to decisions.

Pragmatist Rhetoric

To position myself, I take a pragmatist stance about human action and social practices, focusing in this dissertation on argumentative action; that is:

> Argumentation seeking adherence (…) is essentially an action: the action of an individual that we may call, in a very general sense, the orator, upon an individual that we may also

> call, in a very general sense, the listener, and this action is done in order to trigger another action. (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2010, p. 316)

Pragmatism situates inquiry within a stream of experiencing that constitutes human condition and is key for understanding how argumentation can influence human thinking and action, making individual actors and collectives adhere to a proposal. As such, a pragmatist approach corresponds with the assumption that rhetoric is always both instrumental and constitutive, as it unfolds and affects social practices and action in processes across time. Perelman and Johnstone, in the inaugural edition of the journal Philosophy & Rhetoric, underlined that the choice of language is neither arbitrary or a copy of reality:

> The reasons that induce us to prefer one conception of experience, one analogy, to another, are a function of our vision of the world. The form is not separable from the content; language is not a veil which one need only discard or render transparent in order to perceive the real as such; it is inextricably bound up with a point of view, with the taking of a position. (Perelman & Johnstone, 1968, p. 17)

Such a rhetorical stance towards a philosophy of language coincides with a pragmatist perspective, in which beliefs (apropos conceptions of experience) are future-oriented 'rules for action' (James, 1907, in Martela, 2015, p. 540). Adhering to such beliefs does not simply happen by behavioristic causal mechanisms—if it were so, experimental studies in social psychology would most likely be more replicable than is the case (Open Science Collaboration, 2015). The 'problem', if one will, is individual agency, and pragmatism captures this dimension in its particularity and context-boundedness that is inherently rhetorical (Zarefsky, 2019). As Burke (1966) emphasized, language functions as symbolic action, just as humans can bring about action simply by the use of such symbols. The action in question here is argumentation and the human action that argumentation can affect is always context-specific:

> In pragmatism, the action always takes place in a particular situation, in which the individual draws on a wide range of experiences, on symbolic meanings, social roles and imperatives from previous situations, in order to deal with the current situation and the consequences of the new act. To understand a specific action's meaning, it is necessary to understand its future consequences. In this context, meaning is established by the action taken by the individual. (Egholm 2014, p. 179)

Action is process. John Dewey, one of the foundational pragmatists, wrote, “The "settlement" of a particular situation by a particular inquiry is no guarantee that that settled conclusion will always remain settled” (1938, p. 8). Joas (1993) aptly described the unifying element in Dewey's work as “…the shape of an inquiry into the meaningfulness to be experienced in action itself.” (p. 5). Pragmatism, then, offers a processual lens through which it is possible to study and understand how actions, including argumentative action that affects decisions, are becoming, and how this process of becoming is contingent on human actors and the persuasive reasoning they apply in trying to shape the organizations they are part of. By considering individual intentions to be “procedural, relational and situational” (Egholm, 2014, p. 180), pragmatism allows for a convergence of the individualistic and social, and it casts away the dichotomy between idealism and materialism.

Drawing on a ‘Deweyan experientialism’, Martela (2015) stated, “inquiry itself is primary and any ontological and epistemological commitments are entangled within and arise from this inquiry rather than standing outside it as independent presuppositions.” (p. 539). Largely, I follow Martela's advocacy of a pragmatist philosophy of science in doing organization studies. From this perspective, organizing is an ongoing process of uncertainty settlement; “it is of the very nature of the indeterminate situation which evokes inquiry to be questionable; or, in terms of actuality instead of potentiality, to be uncertain, unsettled, disturbed.” (Dewey, 1938, p. 105).

Pragmatist Processes

Pragmatism is process-oriented in the sense that actors "are active participants in the social world, based on tangible practices in which previous experiences from other contexts are used to cope with new situations." (Egholm, 2014, p. 180). This "process view", which is fundamental to a pragmatist philosophy of science, allows me to draw on a strong tradition within organization studies, namely process philosophy (Hernes, 2014). Hence, the temporal nature of pragmatism allows and prompts a focus on how the past influences the present as actors try to navigate and affect future trajectories.

From a temporal perspective, rhetorical argumentation is inherently pragmatist because of its focus on deliberation about choice. Rhetorical argumentation, in which the central domain is deliberation about and disagreement over proposed action, and knowledge creation in a pragmatist worldview share key defining features. An examination of argumentation aimed at affecting action begins with a specific context in which it is impossible to demonstrate the epistemic validity of a potential options; choice is not true or false (Kock, 2017, p. 26). "The domain of argumentation is that of the credible, the plausible, the probable, to the degree that the latter eludes the certainty of calculation." (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 1)

Approaching argumentation from a pragmatist process philosophy, a key assumption is that the world—and hence, the arguments that shape and affect human action—is constituted by the processes and transformation instead of stable entities. According to a pragmatist epistemology, 'warranted assertions' (i.e. arguments) should replace more rigidly defined concepts such as beliefs (doxa) and knowledge (logos): "Warranted assertions are outcomes of inquiry that are so settled that we are ready to act upon them, yet remain always open to be changed in the future." (Martela, 2015, p. 540). This notion of warranted assertion provides a helpful link in order to choose which of a number of competing actions to take because it stresses the inherently uncertain nature of rhetorical argumentation: “Uncertainty results not only from the incompleteness of knowledge on which the arguers rely, but also from differences in the hierarchy and intensity of their preferences and values.” (Zarefsky, 2019, p. 5).

To summarize, I have briefly outlined how a pragmatist philosophy of science dovetails with a process-orientation to rhetorical argumentation. Accordingly, the emphasis that a pragmatist epistemology puts on the procedural, relational and situational emergence of knowledge dovetails with how decisions happen through processes of ongoing social practices. It is now time to proceed to describe how I came to study such rhetorical processes of decision making.

Methodology

Given that argumentation and decision-making processes may well be messy, complicated and even outright contradictory, countering the assumptions and expectations of informants and researchers alike, how might we capture these processes? That is, what are the best methods for data collection?

A key premise is that a researcher studying decision making from a process perspective must situate herself in the present to understand the ongoing negotiation of past, present and future:

> An ongoing view of temporality implies deciphering how actors cope in a continual present, which, for purposes of thinking and acting, requires that the stream of experience is carved, re-composed up, and made sense of. In a nutshell, it is about being in the presents when events are made up of those presents. (Hernes, 2014, p. 179)

Fundamentally, process-grounded studies are concerned with processes themselves and how they emerge and develop in and over time. Hence, organizations are not pre-existing units but rather processes ‘in the making′ (Hernes, 2007).

Processes are prior to entities and thereby shape these entities; from an argumentation perspective, a single argument (say, in favor of taking action now in order to mitigate anticipated future events) then only makes sense as part of an argumentation process. Especially when arguments depict consequences, they tend to dilute positivist standards of truth, which enables agency but also challenges what one can hold onto:

> …assuming inquiry is of a correct, methodologically intense kind, then realizing truth is a possibility. Yet despite the claims to being scientific, no sooner is a social variable isolated as potentially related to another than these variables begin to interfere with one another like unruly lovers. (Holt, 2016, p. 637)

I highlight the above as a precursor to outlining the methodological strategies I applied in collecting data across two field studies and making sense of how various argumentative dynamics interacted, emerged and evolved. To understand decision making as a process implies studying and immersing oneself in the situations that make up these processes, but what does this more specifically entail?

Below, in table 1, I outline how the three research questions and chapters address and examine the rhetorical decision-making process from three perspectives, including the methods of data collection. Each chapter differs in its focus on how organizational actors as well as the situation rhetorically create an exigence defined as “an imperfection marked by urgency” (Bitzer, 1968, p. 6), which calls for actors to make a decision. Kaplan (2008) underlined, for example, that strategic decisions can be difficult to capture *ex ante* because of the very processes that produces decisions, which warrant a situated, ethnographic approach. Therefore, different methods were useful for capturing and understanding the argumentation involved in decision making varying from the prudent establishing of the right time (chapter 4), to the formalized staging of development projects (chapter 5) to the urgent response to an fast-approaching crisis (chapter 6).

Table 1: Research questions, rhetorical exigence and applied methods

Chapter	Research question?	Rhetorical decision-making process as	Applied methods and data sources
4. Getting the Timing Right: How Rhetorical Framing of Kairos Constitutes Strategy Making	"How do proponents of a strategic initiative establish the present as the right time for strategic decisions?"	Deciding to initiate a strategy process or not. The ongoing negotiation of past, present and future constitutes organizational exigence.	13-month field study Interviews with participants and decision makers Organizational in-situ observations and participant conversations (one-on-one meetings) Documents: Internal and external reports, strategy memos, e-mails
5. Strategic Resonance in Management Decisions: Invoking Confidence Through the Rhetorical Framing of Emotion	"How do emotional frames invoke confidence through strategic resonance?"	Deciding to proceed with a strategic development project or not. The formalized decision-making process and meetings constitute exigence.	9-month field study Interviews with decision makers Participant conversations (one-on-one meetings) Workshop and meeting observations Documents: Decision proposals ('pre-reads'), memos, e-mails
6. Affecting Argumentative Action: The Temporality of Decisive Emotion	"How do appeals to emotion make arguments about the future present and thereby worthy of attention and action?"	Deciding to follow government recommendation or not. Imminent societal crisis constitutes exigence.	Collection and analysis of publicly available texts

In chapter four, Getting the Timing Right, the emphasis is on the emergence of a strategic decision to formally initiate a strategy process or not. Based on a 13-month field study, I unpack the temporal emergence of reasons applied by organizational actors who advocate a new strategy; that is, I uncover how an ongoing negotiation established exigence for making a decision. To document this change, I rely on text data, from before I entered the organization, observations and one-to-one conversations with informants, interviews with both managers and two decision makers. Through building up rapport with one key informant, I also gained access to internal memos and reports, which help triangulate my findings.

In chapter five, Strategic Resonance in Management Decisions, the aim is to understand how framing of projects affect decision makers. Through interview data with decision makers, ongoing observations while I was in the field and working with informants as well as project documents, I unpack how mutual understanding between decision makers and project managers depend on an emerging resonance. An incorporated process (a so-called stage-gate model) establishes exigence for making a decision but does not guarantee understanding or efficacy.

In chapter six, Affecting Argumentative Action, which is a primarily theoretical paper, the focus is on the development of a conceptual model of argumentation through a critical review of two scholarly conversations, namely on the roles of temporality and emotion in argumentation. Hence, this chapter takes a more ‘classical’ humanistic methodology, performing a close reading and rhetorical criticism (Jasinski, 2001; Foss, 2018) of a single key text.

Below, focusing on the empirically rich field studies, I present the data sources on which I draw in chapters four and five.

Data Collection

As mentioned, this dissertation consists of two main field studies in addition to a theoretically driven study, in which a key speech during the COVID-19 lock-down functions as an illustration. The two field studies provide two different access-points to how decision making occurs. The aim of the dissertation is not to make a comparative study of the field studies (chapter 4 and 5) as the two contexts differ and exclude direct comparison; in contrast, they provide a chance to describe and understand how decision making happens across organizational contexts and settings. My approach clearly exploits the access I gained, which enabled me to uncover the specificities of the two cases; see table 2 for an overview of the data sources I base my analyses on.

Table 2: Overview of data

	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	
Organization	Financial Firm (FiFi)	Global Building Component Supplier (GBCS)	
Period	December 2018—January 2020	March 2017—November 2017	Total
Recorded interviews	6	6	12
Informal interviews	13	12	25
One-on-one meetings	45	17	62
Observations of meetings	4	1	5
Site visits	33	12	45
Field hours	+180	+95	+275
Documents	8	16	24

In addition, I position myself as skeptical towards the generalizability of the social sciences; especially when studying an empirical phenomenon such as decision making under uncertainty. As Flyvbjerg (2006) underlined, "Social science has not succeeded in producing general, context-independent theory and, thus, has in the final instance nothing else to offer than concrete, context-dependent knowledge." (p. 223).

The two settings also allow me to study exactly how the three primary concepts of this dissertation; framing, temporality, and emotion, played key roles in such concrete, contexts of decision making. Where chapter four primarily grapples with the framing of temporality, chapter five faces how framing of project proposals affect the emotions of decision makers and hence, influence the decision-making processes, including the ongoing negotiation of premises, contingencies, and outcomes.

As table 2 unveils, there is a gap between November 2017 and December 2018. As mentioned in the section on Organizational Context, my original aim was to conduct a longer field study of executive decision making with LiSci, one of Rhetorica's key customers, either as the primary data source or in addition to the field study in GBCS, which I initiated before becoming an Industrial PhD student. During much of 2018, I tried to negotiate access with LiSci, which never happened. As of now, I take my pragmatist stance, contently accept what I cannot change, and highly appreciate the two organizations that did invite me in.

Action-Research as Process Ethnography

If a 'real' ethnography is similar to Malinowski's yearlong anthropological inquiries or several years in the same organization as some Industrial PhD dissertations (e.g. a political party; Husted, 2017), then I dare not say I did ethnography. But as an 'argument investigator', engaging in the complexities of the fields and trying to understand how the relative strength and credibility of the arguments that shape decision making are becoming rather than being, I am confident that I have dived sufficiently deep into understanding the social processes of decision making. By immersing myself in two specific fields and engaging with my informants, I came to understand challenges that were previously unknown to me. Furthermore, as Reinecke, Arnold and Palazzo underlined (2016), multiple iterations (both in data collection and analysis) is important for increasing rigor and transparency and may very well lead to revising earlier interpretations (p. xvii). In the next section, I elaborate on the emergence of temporality as a key concept in chapter five; an understanding, which only emerged due to multiple iterations.

Because rhetorical argumentation, as I approach it in this dissertation, is the practical reasoning about choice of action that real people engage in, ethnographic methods are well suited (*ethnos*

= people, *graphein* = writing). I rely on the following key characteristics of organizational ethnography (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 6-9): Combined fieldwork methods include observation, conversation, and close readings of key texts; being at the scene allows for descriptions and understandings of the lived realities of informants in addition to understanding often-overlooked or concealed dimensions of power and emotions; context-sensitive and actor-centered analyses capture both fine-grained details of everyday life and 'panoramic' processes; rigorous analyses of the organizational meaning- and sense-making processes enable questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions (of both informants and researcher); a multivocality of voices and interpretations allows tensions and discrepancies to surface; and finally, a reflexive generation of data rather than collection of pre-existing phenomena waiting to be 'picked up' by a researcher. In summary, organizational ethnography allowed me to document the fine-grained, often tension-filled process of argumentation that—in correspondence with a number of other factors—enabled decisions.

The latter characteristic, the reflexive positionality of the researcher, ties well with the approach I took, heavily inspired by the tradition of action research, defined as "an orientation to knowledge creation that arises in a context of practice and requires researchers to work with practitioners." (Bradbury-Huang, 2010, p. 93). When negotiating access and performing in-depth qualitative research, combining ethnography and action research can provide legitimacy because action-research assumes involvement by the researcher and has been useful in previous studies, for instance on paradoxes associated with hybrid organizations (Jay, 2013, cited in Langley & Klag, 2019). Gaining access to the two field sites (chapter 4 and 5) was possible because of my position at Rhetorica. In both cases, the knowledge that came about because of the research materialized through situational, co-constructed interaction with informants who struggled with a challenge they could not solve; respectively, creating an understanding that a new strategy was a prudent answer to meet future challenges (chapter 4) and increasing understanding between project managers and top management decision makers (chapter 5).

As part of my learning from my own fumbling (not gaining full access to LiSci), my aim was not to be a neutrally observing ‘fly on the wall’. One reason being that my presence alone could inevitably have implications and consequences for what would take place; another that my access to the field sites happened because of my role as an advisor working for Rhetorica. To exemplify, when the field data collection began for my study on emotional framing and strategic resonance (chapter 5) I worked as a strategic communications advisor before becoming a full-time researcher during the field study. GBCS (a pseudonym) hired one senior colleague (who holds a PhD in management, politics, and philosophy) and myself as advisors to facilitate workshops and hold individual sessions with project managers before their meetings in which they presented development projects to the TMT. This presented me with what Langley and Klag refered to as the “Involvement Paradox” between actual field involvement and the expression of it in a research paper (2019). For GBCS, the main aim was to improve how project managers presented decision proposals to TMT in order to “increase reliability and efficiency of the stage-gate model”, as was our brief upon entering the organization. I could not remain an unobtrusive observer, but engaged with project managers to aid them in better understanding and engaging with the decision-process; something they viewed as a major challenge and, hence, my approach aligned with a key element in action-research, namely that “only through action is legitimate understanding possible” (Bradbury-Huang, 2010, p. 93). As Langley and Klag (2019) wrote, trying to mask potential influence when it could be present is not the ideal way to resolve the involvement paradox (p. 526). However, although I sought involvement and influence, I do not believe that my presence and the work I carried out yielded unprecedented influence on the top management decisions, which the following field notes of an experience I had with Eric Bergson, then Senior VP for Market & Product Support in GBCS, illustrates:

> Sometimes I feel like standing on top of an extremely steep slope not knowing whether the snow will hold or not. Today was one of those days. I felt lots of pressure, and had absolutely no recording of the interview. Bergson started by saying that he did not believe rhetoric made any difference whatsoever as to whether development projects were successful or not. Still, he was smiling and just waiting for me to make the next move. I politely acknowledged his view and asked him to elaborate. The problem, as he saw it, was a "structural deficit" with too many senior people crammed into the same room trying to make a decision. With fewer decision makers, people would not constantly be on their guard, and project managers could then stand up to their work and knowledge.
>
> - Field notes, August 16, 2017

Although Bergson's claim could not shake my own confidence in the importance of rhetoric—his description could seem to indicate a view of rhetoric as 'mere' talk (Simons, 1990)—his comment does reflect the fundamental importance of context in relation to decision making (Miller, 1990; Zarefsky, 2019).

Accordingly, by engaging in the field, repeated interactions with project managers enabled me to reach a richer understanding, which in turn allowed an ethnographically informed approach to why decision makers came to see decisions as reasonable and the arguments supporting them as compelling. Sykes and Treleaven (2009) underlined that action research may contribute to ethnographic studies of organizations: "Ethnography, like action research, is a way of knowing, an epistemology, where the ethnographer's task is both semantic and semiotic – oriented towards both specific meanings and the 'signs' though which meaning is conveyed." (p. 218).

The orientation is only possible through ongoing involvement within the organizations studied:

> The distinguishing feature of this type of action research, as compared to these other research approaches, is an involvement by the researcher with members of organizations

> over matters that are of genuine concern to them and over which they intend to take action. By 'involvement' we mean taking a role such as facilitator or consultant to a client or clients (or being an employee), having some influence on choices and accepting the accountability and responsibility that this implies. In contrast to most research approaches, which presume the researcher takes a 'fly-on-the-wall' perspective, action research presumes that behavioral and/or organizational changes will result from the researcher's involvement. (Eden & Huxham, 2006, p. 388)

Hence, there is an inherent assumption within action research that is has to be pragmatic (Eden & Huxham, 2006). How does this assumption connect action-research with the pragmatist ontology as situated between realist and constructivist positions? Equally, how does it fit with an inherently abductive approach to empirical phenomena?

To answer these questions, I now proceed to describe how my focus on time and temporality arose from engaging in fieldwork, especially in FiFi (chapter 4), rather than being concepts, whose importance to understanding decision making I was fully aware and appreciative of beforehand. Thereby, I aim to illustrate how a problem-focused approach (Reinecke et al., 2016) to understanding relevant phenomena emerge as part of the process of understanding the particularity of a single organization; unlike a pre-constructed hypothesis waiting to be tested.

Empirically Driven Research and the Emergence of Relevant Phenomena

Pratt, Kaplan and Whittington (2020) underlined that "qualitative researchers—regardless of method, epistemology, or ontological view—should be clear about what they did and the analytic choices they have made." (p. 12). Therefore, in the following, it is important to me to describe the initial parts of this process. How observing, talking to and engaging with informants allowed me to understand that perhaps I was never going to find what I thought I was looking for, but ending up appreciating the role of temporality as the ongoing negotiation of past, present, and future…

When Rhetorica applied for funding for this PhD with Innovation Fund Denmark, the concepts of temporality (Schultz & Hernes, 2013) and temporal work (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013) did not enter the application. The only hint at time came from the fundamental notion of rhetorical argumentation as deliberation about choice, which naturally can affect future states. The concept of emotion and 'emotional argumentation' played a key role but looking back, the definition was very broad (emotional argumentation was defined as a rhetorical interaction in which a persuader tries to support a reasonable conclusion by subjective, value-based and/or emotional premises), and I had not yet observed, empirically, the role that the "negotiated organizing of time" (Granqvist & Gustafsson, 2016, p. 1009) plays.

Especially while conducting the field study in FiFi, I learned to adjust my gaze while searching for theoretically relevant 'kinks' in the empirical foundation. As chapter four explores, rhetorically establishing the present as the right time for strategic decisions was no easy feat, and I tried to understand how the advocates for an IT strategy reasoned, given the organizational context in which they worked with its lack of an imminent need to take action. While one has to look at the right place at the right time to catch a glimpse of a rare bird, in the process, an unexpected animal might show up and change one's perspective. This is what gradually happened while I conducted my fieldwork but it took months to realize, and in the meantime, I relied to a large extend on how my informants understood their situation, as the following representative story, or vignette (Jarzabkowski et al., 2014) illustrates (see also chapter 4):

> At the end of January 2019, I had asked for a meeting with the managing team in Department A to find out more about which strategic projects they were working on and struggled with. Three of our five key informants, Victor, Bobby, and Jeff were late to the

meeting. When they finally arrived, they showed an eclectic mix of excitement and anxiety. The reason, they explained, was that they had just been in a meeting with George who had presented an analysis of the status of the IT system, and, the three managers agreed, 'this mess is much more complicated than we expected.'

- Field note, January 30, 2019

As chapter four describes in detail, the experience described in vignette became central to the advocates of an IT strategy—and, hence, to my understanding of how the advocates of an IT strategy initially framed the need to act as survival depending on urgent action (what my co-author and I label a burning platform). During the following month, I came to learn more about the situation, during one-on-one meetings with managers from Department A of whom several worked directly with IT. These conversations, which only happened because of my working directly with the management on generally improving their leadership communication skills (hence, action research), provided me with several examples of an, at best, inefficient IT system. A little more than a month later, I had a meeting with Victor, the Department Executive and member of the Executive Leadership Team, in which we were broadly discussing how decision making functioned in FiFi.

I went into a meeting with Victor thinking that we were about to discuss the digital transformation process as an interesting case for studying organizational decision making. Victor had other plans. He introduced me to an ongoing process of making an IT strategy, and he enthusiastically described IT as a 'huge strategic advantage if we just dare'. He reflected on how he himself was convinced that investing now and taking the next steps was the right choice, but he also lamented that 'nobody feels like fixing something that is not broken'. We talked about how specific examples could pave the way for supporting the need to take action, and he mentioned the work George had done and the specific examples he could present in an attempt to convince the ELT to take action now.

- Field note, March 6, 2019

At the time when I wrote the above, I did not know that I was essentially rushing down a blind alley in which I thought that the argument-from-example as a theoretical concept could explain how decision makers could accept the need to initiate a formal strategy process. It took several months of being in the field and trying to understand why an IT strategy was still just an ambition among a few advocates. I was curiously pursuing how examples of the problems could function rhetorically; in part, due to the emotional appeal of examples or what Gross (2008) called episodic framing. Several informants used the same example to substantiate their claim that although IT was possibly functional, growth was in jeopardy. They called it ‘the story of the marine’ and the gist of the story is that once a month, one employee (‘the marine’) attends work when the rest of the organization sleeps in order to run a query that is necessary for the IT system to be fully functional. George, the Chief Enterprise Architect responsible for developing the foundational IT infrastructure, presented the story as follows (also found in chapter 5):

> Our marine, he’s one of the people who every month when we make payments to the customers…but it is a heavy process, unnecessarily heavy process, to conduct, and he gets up a bit past three in the night, drives to work to be here at around 3:30 AM, then he does the payment query […], but before eight, which is the opening hour of FiFi, because otherwise FiFi would be unable to run. And this is just the amount of people we are paying now. What if it were ten times the customers? […] and that is why FiFi does not have scalability. That’s the example I use to say we can’t get any further in FiFi. Don’t believe it can take in 100,000 more customers. We simply cannot. We wouldn’t be able to solve the tasks.

The only problem was that although the story of the Marine was compelling—to the informants and myself—as an inductive proof of an IT system that did not fulfill the requirements of an organization aiming for growth, it eventually turned out to be insufficient as ‘proof’ of a larger tendency in FiFi—at least at that present moment. To spell it out, regardless of the Marine, the firm was doing well and, importantly, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) in FiFi had no reason to believe otherwise. Therefore, advocates for change in the sense of enabling the initiation of a strategy process could spend all available ‘capital’ and possible moments with decision makers (which are, in most organizations, sparse) reiterating how dangerous a symptom the Marine was—or they could begin to adjust their framing strategies.

Four months later, on my way home from the 2019 EGOS conference in Edinburgh, where I had presented an early version of chapter four, in which the argument-from-example was still a key concept, I wrote the following note to myself:

> My head is about to explode, or at least, completely full of impressions. It is a nice feeling but also overwhelming. I think the best feedback I received was from Sine [my main supervisor who eventually joined as co-author of the paper, ed.]. She also knows the project and commented that the link between emotion, affect heuristics and argument from example was not clear enough. I think I have to work more on that. At the same time, I *really doubt* how much the empirics from FiFi actually shine a light on this? What about Margaret [Risk Manager, ed.] and the operational risks? If the examples are to work persuasively as proof of larger problems, do they not have to be problems with a capital P, as I also discussed with Victor. The challenge is that they appear not to be, at least not in the eyes of the ELT and maybe not at all, as FiFi is doing quite well in the market.
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> - Research journal note, July 7, 2019, Edinburgh Airport

Chapter four will provide the richer empirical context, but essentially, I was struggling with increasing doubts as to whether the data that was available to me provided any sound explanations for why FiFi had not yet formalized and put an IT strategy on paper. Even though the examples existed in the organization, they did not seem to rise to the surface, not to speak of to the level of the ELT.

Any researcher has to be open to what Hernes (2014) described as serendipitous encounters, and they tend to only happen when a researcher has “an orientation that is open, pragmatic, dispersive, and opportunity seeking” (p. 182). Being open to unexpected empirical links enables one to capture surprising and interesting data, which the researcher did or could not expect beforehand. From this openness does not follow a purely inductive approach. In line with the pragmatist stance taken in this dissertation, an analytical process of abduction (Locke et al., 2008) enabled me to go back and forth to develop a more plausible explanation as to what was going on. Abduction, from a pragmatist perspective, emphasizes the processual and fallibilistic nature of inquiry, which then provides the researcher with the capacity of making qualified inferences vis-à-vis the ongoing gathering of data, which could very well shake the assumptions guiding the inquiry:

> The abductive inference therefore means a continuous circular movement between one’s own pre-understanding, the provisional data one has gathered and existing theories to reach an understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny that best serves the practical interests one has chosen to advance. (Martela, 2015, p. 549)

This circular analytical movement (not to be mistaken with circular reasoning) enables a close intertwinement between theory and data, making the collection and especially analytical process highly iterative, reflecting the process of shifting between empirics and existing theoretical concepts—allowing me to discover connections and make a theoretical contribution.

After returning home from Edinburgh, earlier experiences, which I had not paid sufficient attention to, began to dawn on me. I emphasize this aspect to underline that I did not suddenly wake up one morning and had seen the ‘holy light’ of inspiration or took what Langley (1999), building on Weick, called an “uncodifiable step that relies on the insight and imagination of the researcher” (p. 707). As Langley continues to emphasize, there are no obvious templates for doing process studies (for the most recent iteration, see Abdallah et al., 2019), and hence, I detail how I went back and forth between data and potentially relevant theory to explain the emergence of a conceptual framework. Revisiting field notes and transcripts, I began to appreciate how a gradual shift had been happening within FiFi; that is, a process from an alarmist framing of imminent organizational crisis towards a framing that lent more weight to the merits of the past and the functionalities of the present as constitutive of future goals and hence an emphasis on temporality.

One illustrative quote emphasizes the importance of respecting the legacy and large effort by colleagues: “It is important to have respect for what the firm has built up. You cannot just tell your colleagues that they have done a crap job for the last 25 years. You do not get anywhere with that approach.” (Bobby, IT Operations Manager, interview March 20, 2019)

Prompted by the appreciation of the past weighing in on the present, in which decisions are made that affect the future, my co-author and I began to discuss the concept of kairos, defined as ‘the right time’ or ‘opportune moment’ (Sutton, 2001). Introducing this concept allowed us to focus our analysis on how rhetorical framing becomes kairotic—how it not only offers a temporal frame but also persuades an audience that the time is right for the advocated action.

To summarize, I have tried to outline how, in this field study, the ongoing immersion in the field allowed me to finally focus on the concept of temporality, broadly, and the rhetorical framing of kairos, specifically. That is one part of the iterative process; the other part focuses more on the analytical strategies and the choices I made along the way, on which I will now reflect.

The Rigor of Qualitative Research

While I agree that qualitative research should not strive for replicability, clarity and transparency are key to establishing a rigorous framework for analyzing the empirical material, often collected, as in the two field studies of this dissertation, over longer periods.

Therefore, in addition to the process outlined above, focusing on the emergence of a theoretically interesting *and* empirically grounded concept, which I unfold in chapter 4, I now detail how I approached the equally iterative process of data analysis. I am going to be explicit about specific choices I made and key learnings (often in hindsight because of choices I did not make) in order to reach a level of description allowing for—not replicability—but understanding and potentially inspiration for other researchers.

Recently, Pratt, Kaplan and Whittington (2020) lamented that current responses to challenges raised by the ‘‘replication crisis’’ tie trustworthiness to replication, missing the point of what qualitative work in general seeks to do and is capable of achieving. I agree and try my best to follow the advice they prescribe.

Analytical Strategies and Choices

To which extent are my observations valid and which principles may warrant my conclusions? In chapters four and five, I outline the two distinct analytical strategies I pursued (see separate sections on data analysis). Still, because journal papers have a tendency to require a tightening of the descriptions of methodological choices and steps taken in the data analysis (Jarzabkowski et al., 2016, p. 239), I would like to elaborate on the separate steps of the data analyses by illustrating with an expanded excerpt of the analysis of strategic resonance in chapter five.

Below, I first present the neat version that is the result of more than six months of analytical work; in reality, the steps, which I then seek to unveil in order to increase transparency, highlight a number of dead ends, which I now understand were helpful for arriving at a stronger analytical framework. As 'dead ends' became iterations, they helped me gain a better understanding of what informants understood as a key challenge in making and influencing decisions rather than what I thought to be the case (with the increasing but still, incomplete understanding of the organization, as compared to the informants, several of whom had worked there for +10 years).

The data analysis for chapter five consisted of two main sub-analyses—one focusing on how decision makers feel about project framings (interview data) and one focusing on how projects in fact frame their decision proposals (stage-gate documents), hereby combining a two-step abductive approach with the aim of inferring the best possible explanations (Frost & Shaw, 2015). The first step was inductive in order to identify patterns across all of the available data that would not show if I only looked for "evidence" to confirm initial assumptions about the role of emotions. The second step was largely deductive based on the existing conceptualization of emotional framing as "striking a responsive chord" that resonates as an opportunity (Raffaelli et al., 2019). Therefore, in the interview data, I focused on descriptions that related to threats and opportunities (Jackson & Dutton, 1988), which enabled me to infer dominant emotions of the decision-making process (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985).

Many intermediate results and corrections did not make it into the final manuscript—and for fair reasons; if manuscripts had to document every single analytical step, they would become very long and not necessarily interesting to read. However, such condensation might not come without a cost on exact transparency. Therefore, one analytical step, which I would like to highlight, is the move from my initial coding of the interview data with decision makers in

GBCS to realizing how the concept of confidence was crucial. This step then guided much of the subsequent analytical work and allowed me to arrive at the conceptualization of strategic resonance as the emerging accordance of ambition and achievability.

Below, in table 3, I include a passage from my initial coding of interview transcripts from my interview with Albert Frederickson, Head of Product Development in GBCS. This is to show how I coded relevant passages as either a threat (marked red), an opportunity (marked green) or ambivalence (marked purple) taken from the conceptualization of frame flexibility by Raffaelli, Glynn, and Tushman (2019). It is worth noticing that the informants did not use these terms but they did indeed speak of "challenges to innovation", for instance.

Table 3: Initial coding of interview

Threat	Opportunity	Ambivalence	"In Vivo codes"
Many of our challenges stem from being too solution-eager too early. We have to lift ourselves up to the next level of abstraction when we begin these projects, in order to become better at aligning expectations and finding out, what are we solving with this?	Which internal or customer demand do we see that we wish to satisfy? But, already at that stage we have plans to make 1,000 units to test a specific technique, which we believe is exactly the right one.	You need management to make the difficult decisions. One does not have to bring up obvious things. It is to make those decisions where it is unclear what is the smartest thing to do. That is important to do because those decisions are both a waste of time and money. If one wants to do one thing and another a different, to proceed, we have to escalate these decisions.	"SOLUTION EAGERNESS", "LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION", "ALIGN EXPECTATIONS" "WHAT TO SOLVE", "INTERNAL DEMAND", "CUSTOMER DEMAND", "SATISFY DEMANDS" "DIFFICULT DECISIONS", "TIME AND ECONOMY THIEF", "ESCALATE DECISIONS"

However, during this part of the analytical process, I was discombobulated; I thought I knew what I had coded but not why. Therefore, I went 'back' to a more open-ended inductive coding. I ended up with hundreds of "In Vivo codes" (Saldaña, 2014) that came to constitute relevant categories including Decisions, Emotions, and Framing with passages such as "Right decision grounds", "Put feelings into a project", and "Different interpretations" (see appendix 1 for excerpt of open-ended in-vivo codes). Although I am in principle sympathetic to the notion of getting lost in the early-stage “myriad of informant terms, codes, and categories” (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 6), at the time of analyzing my interview data, I could hardly see how the analytical process in any way could contribute to the ongoing conversation on emotional framing.

What happened to the role of emotion on decision making, which eventually played a distinct role in the analytical framework, as chapter five will show? Despite specifically asking decision makers about the role of emotions (see appendix 2 for interview guide), it was not until I again took a step back and focused on one of the early puzzles—how to affect others to dare make a decision despite lack of data and hence high levels of uncertainty—that I was able to discover a connection in the structure of the open coding in terms of how emotions influence decisions. Independent of one another, three decision makers had emphasized the importance of instilling confidence, including the COO at the time, as the following quote illustrates:

> The audience often consists of technicians. Technicians feel confident in a mathematical estimate of uncertainty. If the volume goes up or down, if the expenses in- or decrease, if the time frame changes? That you try to quantify this uncertainty with something that feels normal. We all know, shit happens. 10 % more or 20 % longer. Show us what happens with other key figures if for example the expenses increase with 10 %. That builds up a *confidence* in the project. (emphasis added)
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> - Interview with Executive Officer, Supply Chain and Product, GBCS

March (2006) underlined that the rhetoric of management is “a rhetoric of decisiveness, certainty, and clarity” (p. 71); yet, it took me several rounds of re-reading and trying to figure out what was going on before I understood the centrality of confidence to my informants. What I wish to highlight is the analytical process and the “combination of knowing and not knowing [which] amounts to another fine balancing act that allows for discovery without reinventing the well-ridden wheels” (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 7). Discovering and subsequently detailing the dimension of confidence helped me view emotion as a key driver in framing decisions, and I found that the social psychological literature on emotion had emphasized how evaluative dimensions of certainty and control (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985) help determine which emotions an individual will experience. Hence, this step enabled me to conceptualize confidence in a rhetorical perspective as "invoking a feeling of safety and security" and from here on apply confidence as a key for understanding framing of projects as opportunities worth pursuing, threats that the organization had to avoid, or ambivalence that would leave decision makers confused. Of methodological relevance, this was not the case because project managers explicitly used lexical terms such as 'opportunity', but because an increase (/decrease) in confidence would more likely lead a decision maker to view the project as promising (/threatening).

Closing Remarks

Taking a pragmatist stance, I have sought to explain how I approached the methodological challenges for studying how decisions to act happen. As an Industrial PhD student, I was able to access two organizations and study two different forms of organizational decision-making. Taking an action-research of collaborative, I experienced the becoming of giving voice to the informants who graciously shared their thoughts, reflections, and frustrations with me during two field studies totaling 22 months. A pragmatist philosophy of science goes well in hand with the action-research approach I chose (Sykes & Treleaven, 2009) enabling me to uncover how decisions do not merely seem to happen in an instant, but build up over time. This ongoing, processual understanding of decision making reflects a continual negotiation of past, present and future and how varying understandings and interpretations affect the decisions that organizations both aspire to and actually make. Methodologically, I attempted to capture and mitigate this cacophony of impressions by triangulating data sources (documents, interviews, observations, one-to-one meetings, and informal conversations) and making several iterations between the ongoing data collection, theoretical conversations and analysis. The strengths of the approach I took are the particularity of details and the voice given to informants, which naturally reflects a lack of generalizability (Langley, 1999, p. 706).

It is now time to unfold the three separate studies that form the foundation of this dissertation, beginning with chapter four and the inquiry into how advocates for the initiation of an IT strategy struggled but in the end managed to rhetorically frame the reason for a strategy and thereby the timing right.

4. Getting the Timing Right

How Rhetorical Framing of Kairos Constitutes Strategy Making

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Abstract

As strategy makers work and re-work the past, present, and future of their organizational contexts in the attempt to establish support for proposed actions, rhetorical framing of temporality is central to strategic decision making. To explain how such rhetorical framing occurs, this paper explores *kairos* as a concept that captures the duality of finding and making 'the opportune moment' for decision making. Following a process of initiating strategy making in a financial firm, we find that kairos arises when the rhetorical framing of temporality is consistent with dominant interpretations of the interrelations between the past, present and future of the organization. Thus, the paper conceptualizes kairos as constitutive for strategic decision making; only when the timing is 'right', will strategy making proceed.

Strategy making is a process of steering an organization through time, bringing past experiences to bear in the present so as to prepare for the future. Or rather, that is how the strategy literature typically portrays temporality; by means of planning, the strategist ensures the linear progress of the organization as it moves through chronological time (for critiques of this view, see inter alia Vesa & Franck, 2013; Ericson, 2014; Steensen, 2014). However, this conceptual framing of strategy is in itself a strategic construct, a means of furthering this particular view on strategy and, hence, bringing it to bear on the reality it purports to describe (Kornberger & Clegg, 2011).

In this paper, we seek to advance an alternative conceptualization of strategy making, one that focuses on the strategic framing of temporality, the projections of the past and/or the future on to the present (Kornberger, 2013; Suddaby et al., 2010). More specifically, we propose to view strategic efforts of temporal framing as rhetorical, focusing on the discursive efforts of strategy makers to establish 'the now' as the right time for organizational decision making. Employing a classical rhetorical term, we conceptualize such efforts as the rhetorical framing of *kairos*.

Thus, we begin from the assumption that persuasive discourse plays a crucial role in organizational strategy making; it is by means of rhetoric that existing organizations change and new organizational forms arise (Brown et al, 2012; Harmon et al., 2015; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). On this basis, we argue that rhetorical framing of the past is a key means of advocating certain present actions that will shape the future; that is, chronological time is not a given of strategic planning, but a construct of the rhetorical strategist. We suggest that understanding such rhetorical framing as attempts to establish kairos, initially defined as 'the right time' or 'opportune moment' (Sutton, 2001), may contribute to already existing knowledge of 'temporal work in strategy making' (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013) by showing how rhetorical framing works to establish the conditions of possibility for 'the strategic event', the moment in which organizational decision makers will, indeed, make strategic decisions.

While organizational and managerial scholars are aware of the concept of kairos (see e.g. Orlikowski & Yates, 2002; Garud et al., 2011; Dougherty et al., 2013), it has not been fully established in relation to organizational members' use of persuasive discourse to strategize. Originally named from the Greek god of the favorable moment (Rämö 1999, cited in Garud et al., 2011), kairos has recently appeared in organizational research as "the experience of the opportunity-becoming-opportune" (Hjorth et al., 2015, p. 605), "a sense of timeliness or appropriateness" (Holt & Johnsen, 2019, p. 1562) and, simply, 'event-time' (Reinecke & Ansari, 2016). Nuancing these definitions, we conceptualize kairos as the *rhetorical* framing of temporality that both exploits and constitutes what organizational decision makers come to view as 'the opportune moment' for deciding on a strategy. In the words of the rhetorical scholar Carolyn Miller (1994, p. 83), kairos "refers not to the specific responsiveness of discourse to situation but to the dynamic relationship between discourse and situation, to the qualitative nature of the situation itself as it is shaped in and by discourse." We will apply to and develop this duality, kairos as both the right moment for rhetorical intervention and the moment made right by persuasive effort, in the context of organizational strategy making.

Thus, we argue that kairos is central to what managers and other organizational members actually do when they engage in the temporal work of strategy making, especially when organizational actors advocate strategic decision making in times of no evident need for change—that is, when a proposed strategy is, indeed, a choice rather than a necessity (Sonenshein, 2010). Seeking to develop this argument, we ask: How do proponents of a strategic initiative establish the present as the right time for strategic decisions?

Seeking answers to this question, we examine how proponents of a new IT strategy in a financial firm engage in temporal work to initiate a strategic change that is not an answer to any apparent organizational need. Within the financial service industry, IT has played an important role for decades, and in recent years even more, as online banking and other technology-driven innovations challenge traditional business models (Gomber et al., 2018). Therefore, our case organization finds itself in a dilemma; on the one hand, the current ad-hoc approach to IT has served the organization well on its path of continued growth and prosperity; on the other, developing an IT strategy seems prudent as the organization seeks to ensure future success. Against this backdrop, investigating how members of the case organization frame the need for strategic change may develop our understanding of temporal work in strategy making.

Working iteratively with our field study and conceptual framework, we analyze the data through a rhetorical lens of framing, aiming to explain and conceptualize how organizational members use temporality to navigate the certainty of what worked in the past and the uncertainty of what will work in the future. We find that divergent frames were developed and employed over time and that several competing frames can exist simultaneously (Kaplan, 2008). More specifically, the identified frames establish the present as the right time for decision making in different ways; that is, they each connect past experiences to future actions based on distinct interpretations of the present. While advocates of change may be relatively free to rhetorically construct their interpretations of the present, we find that the persuasiveness of their constructs is constrained by dominant organizational perceptions of reality. Thus, would-be strategy makers have limited success when their attempt to create 'the opportune moment' for decision making hinges on radically re-framing current organizational perceptions.

We find that our informants engaged in a process of 'trial and error', constructing three different rhetorical framings of kairos and gradually moving from a frame of conversion towards one of consistency. Kairos may be framed rhetorically in many ways, but the opportune moment for decision making only arises when the rhetorical framing of temporality matches organizational members' interpretations of the organizational chronology. In developing the conceptual implications of this empirical finding, we advance understandings of the inherent dynamics involved in committing to change before the need for change has become apparent; i.e. strategizing through the discursive application of temporal work. Thus, we show how organizational perceptions of the past, present and future are both constituted by persuasive efforts and constitutive of such efforts' persuasive appeal.

In the following, we first outline the theoretical foundations for positing how rhetorical framing of kairos can constitute strategy making. Second, we present the empirical setting and methods of the field study and develop the analytical framework that will guide the subsequent analysis of the rhetorical attempts to establish the right time for strategy making, as identified in our case study. Finally, we discuss the theoretical implications of the study, detailing how our proposed framework helps overcome conceptual divides between the strategic use of clock-time and event-time, specifically, as well as instrumental and constitutive views of temporal work in strategy making, more generally.

Theoretical Starting Point: The Rhetorical Organization of Time

We define temporality as the "negotiated organizing of time" (Granqvist & Gustafsson, 2016, p. 1009) that establishes "ongoing relationships between past, present, and future" (Schultz & Hernes, 2013, p. 1). As such, invoking temporality in management and organization inherently involves temporal work, understood as "reimagining future possibilities, rethinking past routines, reconsidering present concerns, and reconstructing strategic accounts that link these interpretations together" (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013, p. 973). In seeking to contribute to theorizing the temporal work involved in strategic decision making, we focus on the process prior to formal strategizing in which decision makers perform 'strategic issue diagnosis' so as to determine which developments and events should influence the actual making of organizational strategy (Dutton & Duncan, 1987). Thus, we are concerned with the fundamental question of how one may use temporality to create the conditions of possibility for strategic decision making—to establish the present as the right time for initiating a strategy process.

Working with the empirical phenomenon of how managers ‘decide to decide’, we aim our contribution at two particular discussions within the literature on strategy and temporal work; one concerning the conception of time in relation to strategic change and the other relating to the rhetorical use of time in strategy making. In this section we will, first, present the two discussions and, second, consider their interrelations. Finally, we will introduce the concept of kairos, suggesting that it provides a particularly pertinent lens for studying the trilateral relationship of time, rhetoric and strategy. On this basis, we will develop the empirical and conceptual links between kairos and strategy making in the analytical section and the discussion, respectively.

The question of how to conceptualize time in relation to strategic change is central to the study of temporal work as such and, hence, directly or indirectly involved in most contributions to the literature. Ancona, Okhuysen and Leslie (2001) provided an overview of research on time in organizations, generally, in which they find that conceptions of time vary according to the types of time involved and the social construction of time (see also Hernes et al., 2013). Simplifying their distinctions somewhat, we may present two axes along which time can be conceptualized: chronological or linear clock-time vs non-linear event-time, on the one hand, and objective vs subjective conceptions of time, on the other. While the latter axis is certainly relevant, the consensus within the field seems to be that time is socially constructed, meaning one can move directly to the study of specific constructions of time in the social setting(s) of concern. Here, the axis of clock- and event-time comes to the fore as temporal work becomes more or less synonymous with the emergent process of organizing (Hernes et al., 2013), which involves the strategic construction of a chronology of past and present so as to create the event of ‘now’—or simply ‘situated activity’ (Hernes & Schultz, 2020).

This position implies that both forms of temporality are central to strategy making, but lest we get ahead of ourselves let us first present the two alternative views. In favor of clock-time, Brown and Eisenhardt (1997) suggested that continuous change is best managed by ‘links in time’, defined as “the explicit organizational practices that address past, present and future time horizons and the transitions between them” (p. 29), thereby setting the direction, continuity and tempo of change. Staudenmayer, Tyre and Perlow (2002), to the contrary, favored event-time in their argument that change only becomes possible through ‘temporal shifts’ as triggered by particular events. While these opposing positions clearly link to broader discussions concerning the conception of time in relation to strategic change, we will not pursue this general line of inquiry (but see inter alia Gond et al, 2018; Panayiotou et al.s, 2019; Schultz & Hernes, 2020). Instead, we focus on the interrelations of clock- and event-time in rhetorical framings of temporality, asking how such framings may support strategic change. More precisely, how may both ‘links in time’ and ‘temporal shifts’ be articulated rhetorically and, hence, frame strategic decisions?

Here, Suddaby, Foster and Quinn Trank’s (2010) concept of rhetorical history is pivotal. Within this conceptualization “history is assumed to be more biased by the present and future than previous views of history have allowed, and the construction of any particular history is deliberate and strategic” (Suddaby & Foster, 2017, p. 31). Strategic actors construct the version of organizational history that may best serve their agenda, meaning the past becomes a potential tool for advocates of stability (‘let us continue on the successful path of our predecessors’) as well as change (‘let us not repeat the mistakes of the past’). Interestingly, while Suddaby, Foster and Quinn Trank (2017) paid close attention to the “strategic use of the past as a persuasive strategy to manage key stakeholders of the firm" (p. 157), they seemed to place less emphasis on temporality, in itself, as rhetorically constructed. Thus, it is not the conception of time that is rhetorical, but the use of history, implying a quite instrumental view of rhetoric (and language, more generally) that locates agency with the rhetorical agent (or human communicator) rather than dispersing it across rhetorical processes (or communicative dynamics). In this view, "rhetorical history is not an emergent, but a deliberate product of firm strategy" (Suddaby et al., 2010, p. 160).

Within rhetorical studies, however, the dynamics of deliberate actions and emergent processes have long been of central concern, the apparent consensus being that rhetoric is always both strategic and constitutive (Leff & Utley, 2004). Discussions concerning the instrumental and/or constitutive character of rhetoric in relation to time are often tied to conceptualizations of the rhetorical situation, defined simply as the context of a persuasive attempt. This context may be understood as a given, the situation which communicators seek to address and to which they must adapt to achieve their persuasive ends (Bitzer, 1968), or it can be viewed as a rhetorical construction in and of itself, the result rather than the starting point of rhetorical interventions (Vatz, 1973).

The classical concept of *kairos*, most readily translatable as 'right time' or 'opportune moment' for accomplishing the communicator's persuasive intent (Sutton, 2001), combines these modern extremes as it denotes both the time that is right for speaking and the time made right by speech (Kjeldsen, 2014). Kairos is often opposed to *chronos* or chronological clock-time and, as such, links to event-time, and this is how organization studies have usually adopted kairos (Dougherty et al., 2013; Reinecke & Ansari, 2016). However, the issue of how one seizes the opportunity or gets the timing right may involve clock- as well as event-based arguments and construct the right moment on a time-space-continuum as well as in the here and now. Thus, "…people enact both chronologically based temporal structures and those shaped kairotically by the people's sense of opportunity at hand" (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002, p. 690). Meaning, kairos appears within chronos and chronos may be used rhetorically to create kairos (Hawhee, 2002).

In sum, "a discourse characterized by *kairos* attempts to make the interior of the text the exterior of the audience's world and heighten an audience's sense that *this* moment is the right moment for the course of action or judgment being proposed" (Bisbee, 2018, p. 495). Rhetorical appeals to 'the right time', then, work both *in* and *through* time. Or as Miller (1994) pointed out, "as a construction, the kairotic dimension of discourse offers both assurance about the unknown by extrapolation from the here and now and also control of the uncertain by opportunistic shaping of both present and future" (p. 92). The rhetorical framing of kairos both extends the present into the future and shapes the present to match a desired future, creating 'links in time' as well as 'temporal shifts'. In sum, creating kairos is certainly a deliberate effort on the part of the communicator, but the realization of such strategic intent (the actual creation of kairos) is a much more emergent matter, as communicators cannot control the uptakes nor the effects of their rhetorical framing of temporality (Miller, 2007).

Within management and organization studies, this issue of the interrelations between instrumental and strategic uses of temporality has been taken up in a number of ways. Applying the concept of kairos directly, Garud, Gehman and Kumaraswamy (2011) concluded from their study of sustained innovation in 3M that "*kairos*-driven moments of serendipity did not lie outside or apart from *chronos*-driven moments of routine work; in fact, they were created in and through those moments" (p. 761). Similarly, Dodd, Anderson and Jack (2013) found that family firm managers apply linear chronologies in their constructions of meaningful events: "Stretched out to ever embrace the heritage of the past, and always anticipating the trans-generational future, the family firm exists by making these ever present" (p. 44). And, working within the empirical context of the financial sector in which our study is also located, Garcia-Lorenzo (2020) found "…the past was brought differently into the present by different organizational groups depending on the future each group imagined, counteracting the impact of a generic management narrative" (p. 9), meaning the strategic use of time was not restricted to management, but became a much more contested and, hence, emergent process. Similarly, Luisiani and Langley (2019) concluded that achieving 'strategic coherence' within and organization is both a prolonged and collective socio-material activity. These and related studies (for an overview, see Hatch & Schultz, 2017) all demonstrate that temporal organizing is always both deliberate and emergent.

Returning to the concept of rhetorical history, it becomes clear that this notion might fruitfully be supplemented with a broader and more constitutive perspective on rhetoric and temporality so as to provide a fuller explanation of the rhetorical organization of time. That is, the ability to persuade in the present is as constituted *by* the past as it is constitutive *of* the future. Successful interplay of speaker intention and discursive effect, we propose, may be conceptualized as *the rhetorical framing of kairos*, which we provisionally define as persuasive appeals that both adapt to and seek to shape the organizational context of strategy making, constructing the future by appeal to the past in the moment of the present. What rhetorical frames look like, more specifically, and which conceptualizations of time they draw upon and create is a matter of, first, empirical analysis and, second, conceptual discussion. Before turning to these two tasks, however, it is time to present our methods of data collection and analysis.

Research Setting and Methodology: Framing IT Strategy in FiFi

Agreeing on the need for a strategy can be a long process, involving many different rhetorical attempts at creating kairos, the opportune moment for change. Empirically, we studied different rhetorical framings of kairos in the making of an IT strategy in a financial firm (FiFi, a pseudonym). When the first author entered FiFi, the idea that an IT strategy was needed had circulated in the organization for close to four years, but no decision to commence a formal process had been made. In other words, despite key organizational members' view that FiFi needed an IT strategy, inertia had prevailed. Over a one-year period, we closely followed individual actors' efforts to move the organization from this state of stagnation towards the initiation of a strategy-process.

Research Setting

FiFi is a customer-owned company, offering a variety of financial services. In recent years, FiFi has pursued a business strategy of acquiring smaller firms and building a joint company that provides financial management and investment management services. During the study, the integration of a recent acquisition was well underway and took up considerable organizational resources, including the efforts needed to integrate IT systems and customer data.

A key feature of FiFi's organizational structure is its apparent lack of a single chief responsible for the IT area. Instead, two departments (A and B) have split the responsibilities for IT operations and IT development (see figure 3, below). Such a split might leave FiFi, depending as heavily on IT as it does, with potential organizational struggles in terms of coordination across departments, but it could also allow for deeper IT-integration across departments.

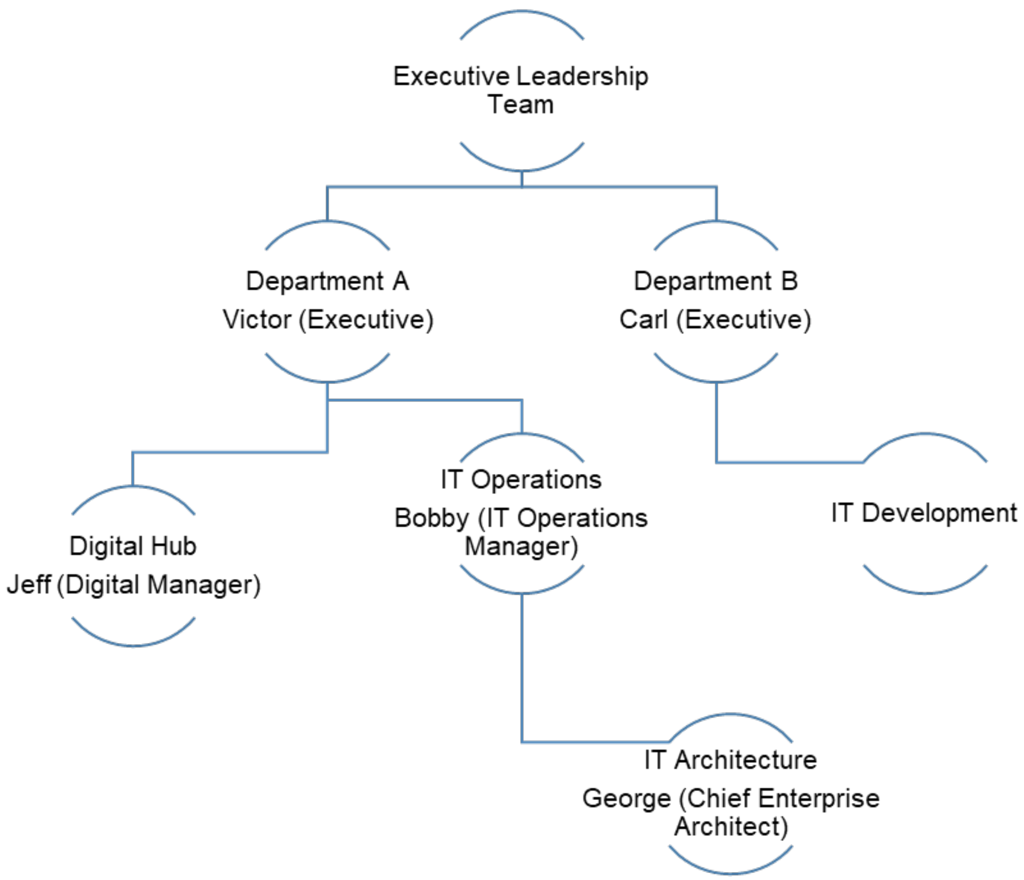

Figure 3: Organizational IT responsibility in FiFi and key informants

Four years ago, the company took steps to begin work on replacing an existing IT strategy, which, according to Victor (a pseudonym), the Executive of Department A and our point of entry to the organization, was a 'technical document' rather than a strategic vision. FiFi has a history dating back +20 years of investing in IT in due time, which all our informants agree is a main reason the organization has neither had to invest as heavily as some competitors nor taken the losses experienced by others. In sum, IT has been a strategic issue for years, but top management has repeatedly postponed its diagnosis of the issue and, hence, no new strategy has been implemented nor has a formal strategy-process been commenced. Therefore, FiFi appears to be a fitting case for studying how proponents of change frame temporality rhetorically in their attempt to create reasons for making a new strategy in a moment of corporate prosperity.

Data Collection

Through a qualitative field study, conducted in the period from December 2018 to January 2020, we were able to follow developments in leading organizational members rhetorical advocacy of an IT strategy. The first author's interaction with participants in this process of pre-strategizing revolved around the ambitions, uncertainties, and dynamics of rhetorical efforts aimed at convincing the organization and its executive decision makers (see table 2 for overview of all data sources).

In addition to informal interviews with Victor, the first author conducted six formal interviews with members of Department A as well as with Carl (also a pseudonym), the Executive of Department B (see figure 3 for informants' positions in relation to each other).

The reasons for this sample were both substantial and pragmatic: Substantially, all informants either had direct responsibility for or worked with IT in the organization. Pragmatically, we were relying on Victor, being the main gatekeeper, to provide access. The aim of the interviews was to enable the informants to share their views on IT and its strategic significance in FiFi. Given that Victor was the main advocate for a new IT strategy, it was paramount that the informants could independently describe their opinions of and visions for IT in FiFi. By engaging in follow-up conversations with several of the informants and performing one recorded follow-up interview with Victor, we were able to include the ongoing interpretation of events that followed the first round of interviews in our analysis.

As part of the ongoing observations and conversations with FiFi, we received copies of draft memos, meeting notes, strategy documents and PowerPoint presentations highlighting the work that had already been done towards commencing an IT strategy-process (see figure 4 for a timeline of the process including key data sources).

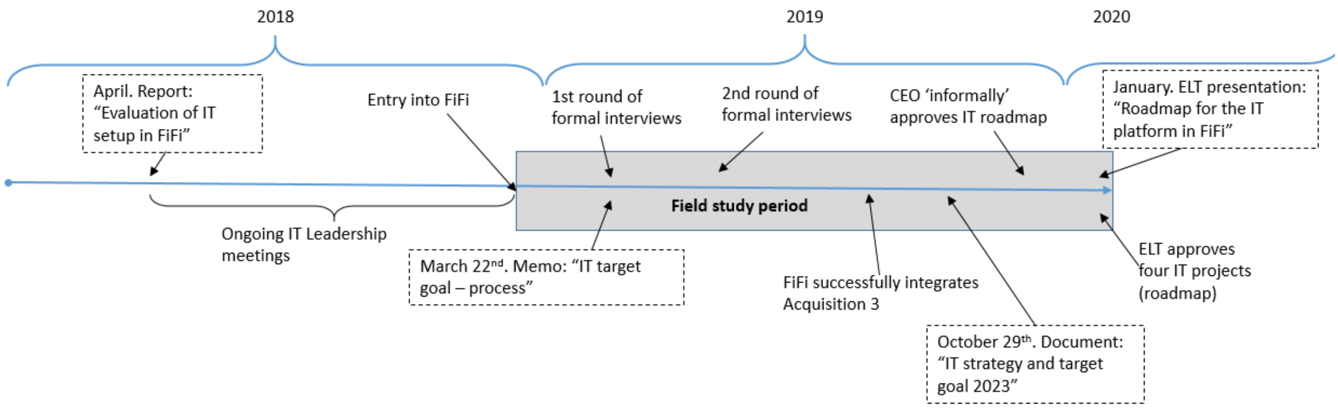

Figure 4: Timeline and key data sources

Notable are the 2018 report "Evaluation of IT setup in FiFi", meeting notes from the internal IT Leadership forum, and Victor's own working document, outlining his vision for the process of making an IT Strategy. Towards the end of the field study, two new strategy documents were formulated and conveyed to us. These two documents establish the formal starting point for the development of a new IT strategy in FiFi and, hence, mark the success of Victor and his allies' rhetorical efforts. These two documents are evidence of the rhetorical frame that persuaded top management to initiate the strategy-process, thereby setting the agenda for this process as it continues to unfold beyond our time in FiFi.

Data Analysis

In our analysis of the data, we applied what Berends and Deken (2019) termed a 'conceptualized' case-study approach for generating theoretical insights (see also Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt et al., 2016). Thus, we began from our initial conceptualization of kairos as key to the rhetorical framing of strategy making and went back and forth between the data and the theory, developing our understanding of each through this dynamic exchange.

Using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo for coding of interviews, observations and documents, we applied a modified version of the recursive 'Gioia Methodology' in order to distinguish between First Order Concepts, Second Order Themes and Aggregate Dimensions and gradually build our understanding of these (Gioia et al., 2013). In the first round of coding the data, which began during the data collection, our primary focus was on the rhetorical framing of strategy. Based on ongoing observations and conversations, the first author noted a gradual shift within FiFi from an alarmist framing of imminent organizational crisis towards a framing that lent more weight to the merits of the past and the functionalities of the present as constitutive of future goals. Hence, in a second round of coding, we introduced the more specific perspective of strategy making as temporal work and focused on the rhetorical frames involved in establishing and developing competing interpretation of the organization's past, present and future. This prepared the ground for our application of the classical rhetorical concept of *kairos,* meaning the final analysis emphasizes how rhetorical framings of chronological time are employed to establish the present as the right moment for strategic decision making (Miller, 1994).

As the concepts of frame and framing guide our analysis, it is pertinent to provide definitions and clarify our use of them. Scholars from various fields have contributed to the development of framing as an interdisciplinary and multifaceted analytical approach, and several contemporary organization scholars apply its various dimensions in their empirical investigations (see review by Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). Across studies that view framing through a lens of rhetoric (Kuypers, 2010), communication (Entman, 1993), social movements (Benford & Snow, 2000), and strategic change (Fiss & Zajac, 2006; Kaplan, 2008), frames are conceptualized as defining and diagnosing problems and causes, making future prognoses, providing solutions and/or making moral judgments, thereby motivating action. More specifically, framing has been found to play an important role when executives imagine future scenarios and envision the decisions that enable reaching (avoiding) such positive (negative) scenarios (Logemann et al., 2019).

Here, two dimensions of framing are particularly relevant. First, “to frame is to *select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in the communicating text…*” (Entman, 1993, p. 52, emphasis in original). Second, a frame is a guide for the interpretation of social cues (Goffman, 1974). We may link the former understanding to clock-time as the communicator selects the elements that are to become salient in a chronological account. The latter, correspondingly, can be linked to event-time as framing helps shape reality, for communicator and audience alike. Rhetoric, we propose, combines the two, as the communicator deliberately seeks to promote one version of clock-time so as to advocate a certain projection of the present into the future and, in so doing, draws on already available interpretations of both the past and the present in order to make the advocated vision of the future persuasive. In sum, we define framing as the persuasive process of contextualizing choice by means of “rhetorical tool[s] for resonating with an audience” (Giorgi, 2017, p. 733).

Thus, framing may be analyzed as the rhetorical scoping (intentional or non-intentional) of any given topic; in contexts where several characterizations of the issue might be equally true, framing works to propagate one diagnosis of reality as more compelling than alternative interpretations. Accordingly, the “systematic use of a set of keywords, catchphrases, metaphors, and idioms [may] provide an interpretive frame of reference for a change” (Logemann et al, 2019, p. 3). Following this interpretative and interactional understanding of framing (Reinecke & Ansari, 2020), our analysis emphasizes the processual dynamics of diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames that aim at generating collective action (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 615). This approach matches the rhetorical understanding of framing in which frames diagnose and make salient a past or present exigence, i.e. “an imperfection marked by urgency” (Bitzer, 1968, p. 6). Based on the diagnosis, proponents of change can suggest and substantiate the course of action (prognosis) that might resolve the imperfection, thereby motivating collective action on the part of those affected by and able to resolve the issue.

Applying this concept of framing as rhetorical attempts at shaping audiences' interpretation of temporal developments, enabled us to identify a number of recurrent themes and, hence, establish our data structure (see figure 5 and appendix 3 for a full mapping of the 2nd order themes and representative quotes in support of the 1st order concept).

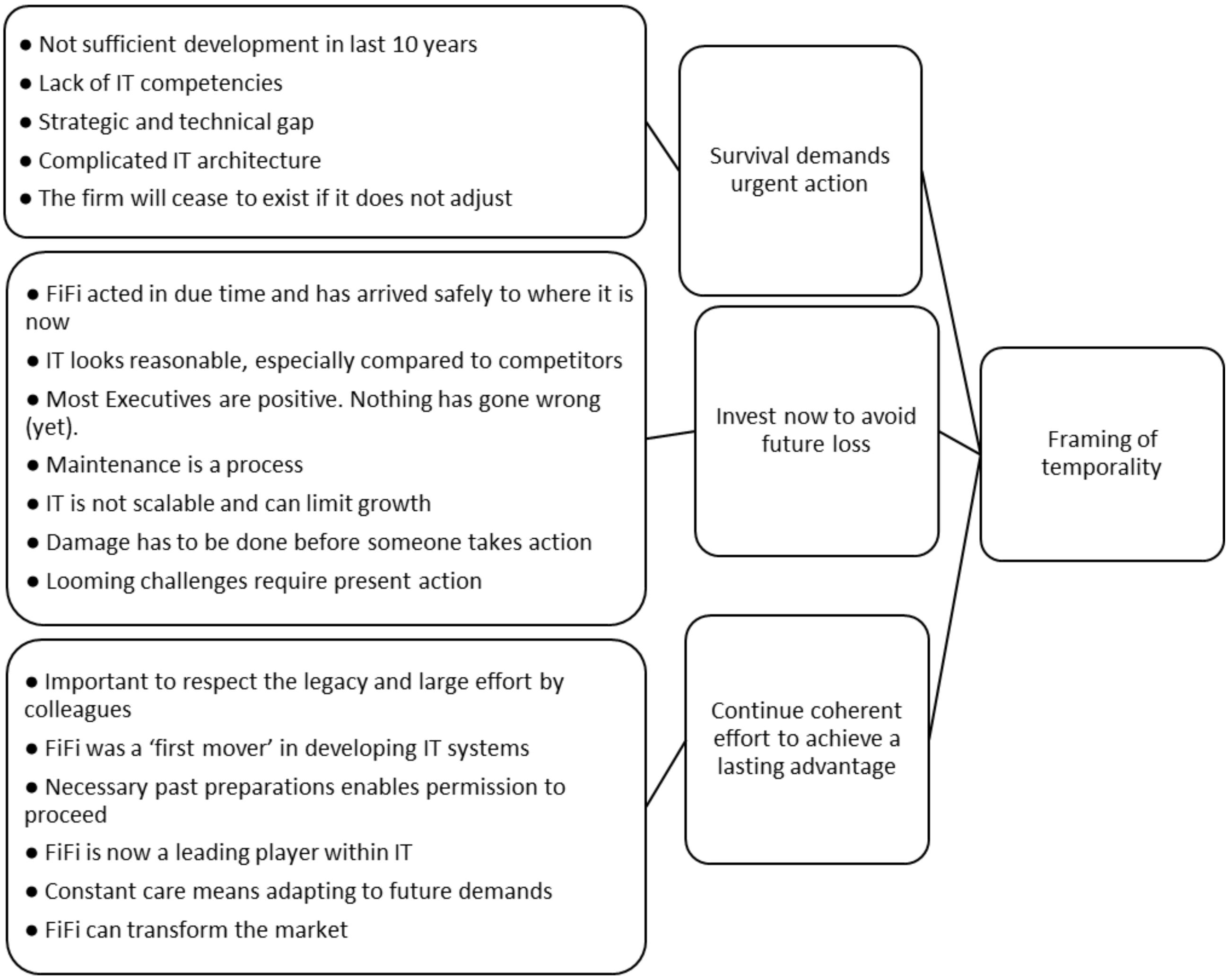

Figure 5: Data structure, Getting the Timing Right

Hence, we found three distinct strategic frames, or patterns of the rhetorical organization of time, that function as potential sources of stability and change in our organizational setting (Vaara et al., 2016). We have labeled these 'burning platform', 'smoke on the horizon' and 'tend to the fire', respectively.

As table 4 illustrates, each strategic frame is established through specific forms of rhetorical framing, and the analysis aims to unpack the use and dynamics of these forms, showing how they diagnose the past and present so as to make a prognosis of the future that supports a 'necessary action'. In the subsequent discussion, we turn to the question of how rhetorical framing becomes kairotic—how it not only offers a temporal frame but also persuades an audience that the time is right for the advocated action.

Table 4: Strategic frames

	Metaphor →	Burning platform	Smoke on the horizon	Tend to the fire
Rhetorical framing of temporality	Diagnosis (past)	We have not done enough	We did well in due time	We were first movers
	Diagnosis (present)	We are in trouble	We are doing reasonably well now	This led us to where we are now and we are doing good
	Prognosis (future)	FiFi will become a 'discontinuation company'	But there is trouble ahead, growth is in jeopardy	Future looks promising
	Necessary action	Therefore, survival demands urgent action	Therefore, let us invest now to avoid future losses	Therefore, let us continue the coherent effort to achieve a lasting advantage

Findings: The Rhetorical Framing of Temporality

When we entered FiFi, IT did not play a significant role at the strategic level of the organization. That is, while IT is ubiquitous in finance, saturates all its operations and has done so for decades, FiFi's 2019 strategy does not mention IT one single time. Victor estimates that "approximately every fourth year one of the players in our business crashes with their IT," and George stresses that "in 2019 every company has to assume that it is an IT company; otherwise, it will lose". Accordingly, members of Department A viewed the elevation of IT to a strategically more significant level as a central means to the goal of strengthening the competitive position of FiFi and gaining resilience against future challenges. However, not all members of the organization shared this view, and proponents of the IT strategy faced the task of convincing the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) that a new IT strategy was necessary. The decision to be made at this stage, then, did not deal with the content of the strategy; instead, the issue to be resolved was the more basic one of whether or not the time was, indeed, ripe for initiating a strategy process.

As mentioned, we followed Victor and his allies' attempts to put IT on the strategic agenda of FiFi and have identified three frames upon which they base these attempts and within which their positions are challenged and changed. We label the first frame "burning platform" as it aims to create a sense of urgency; a need for change now. We call the second frame "smoke on the horizon" as the desired outcome of this rhetorical framing of temporality is a state of vigilance; a situation in which constant care is crucial. The last frame we designate "tend to the fire" as it shifts emphasis from establishing a new situation to a temporal framing of consistency; therefore, the focus appears to evolve from external threats that demand a reaction to the inner motivation that drives organizational decision makers. We set the scene for each round of analysis with a short representative story, or vignette (Jarzabkowski et al., 2014), that, we hope, will illustrate the over-all strategic frame, the rhetorical mechanisms of which we then go on to detail.

Burning Platform

> At the end of January 2019, I had asked for a meeting with the managing team in Department A to find out more about which strategic projects they were working on and struggled with. Three of our five key informants, Victor, Bobby, and Jeff were late to the meeting. When they finally arrived, they showed an eclectic mix of excitement and anxiety. The reason, they explained, was that they had just been in a meeting with George who had presented an analysis of the status of the IT system, and, the three managers agreed, 'this mess is much more complicated than we expected.' (Field notes, January 30th, 2019)

The meeting that we reference here imbued the efforts to initiate an IT strategy process with new urgency, but several of our informants trace their conviction that a new strategy is needed back to a consultancy report from April 2018. Victor explicitly refers to the report as a 'burning platform', but when talking about it in hindsight (as mentioned, our field work commenced in December 2018) he concedes that it did not have the desired effect. Reflecting on the process, he says: "The report tried to start a burning platform by igniting a lot of small fires. They were too easily put out. Maybe we should have just focused on one fire." In this section, we will unpack the attempted temporal organization of this first frame and discuss why it did not have the desired effect.

First, we may note that the metaphor of a 'burning platform' originates from management consultancy (Conner, 1993), which may explain our informants' explicit use of it in reflecting upon the process. In much of change management literature, the metaphor is used to underline the need for creating a 'sense of urgency' in order to stimulate the courage needed for organizational change (e.g. Kotter, 2008). From a rhetorical perspective, such an approach relies on a consequential logic in which a problem (a gap) prompts action towards its solution (closing the gap). Basing one's persuasive attempt on arguments from consequence is commonly observed in practical reasoning (Walton, 1996; O'Keefe, 2013). In short, the applied form may be illustrated as follows: 'If you carry out action A, then good/bad consequences C will occur. Therefore, you should/should not carry out action A'. Translated to language that is closer to our case: 'If an organization wants to grow (goal), and the current IT setup prevents this (premise), then the organization should change its IT setup'. As with any logical argument in this causal mode, if the premises are true, the conclusion necessarily follows. Therefore, let us examine how the FiFi employees who advocate the need for an IT strategy establish the premises of their argument. In so doing, we focus on the aforementioned consultancy report, detailing the framings of diagnosis, prognosis and necessary action (see table 5):

Table 5: Rhetorical framing, Burning platform

Diagnosis (past and present)	We are in trouble: past (in-)action means FiFi is not equipped to deal with current challenges
Prognosis (future)	If we fail to act, FiFi will become a 'discontinuation company'
Necessary action (present)	Therefore, survival demands urgent action

We Are in Trouble

The scope of the report is to "judge whether the IT set-up in FiFi in an appropriate fashion supports customer and business needs and delivers cost-efficient operations, development and maintenance." The report also explicitly states that this external evaluation should enable FiFi to work on "revitalizing the IT strategy and target goal" and "establishing a target goal for the IT set-up in FiFi in order for the right competencies to be put into play, creating the most value at a sector level benchmark."

The report begins from 10 so-called 'observations' that are all, in fact, 'critical judgements' or identifications of problems or short-comings of the organization, e.g. "a lack of alignment for the strategic direction for FiFi has a negative consequence on collaboration and communication in IT" and "the technical foundation appears non-satisfactory, and there is not sufficient focus on raising its level." Thus, the report clearly bases its conclusion that a new IT strategy is necessary on a certain framing of reality, selecting and highlighting some aspects at the expense of others. It creates a sense of urgency based on an interpretation of the present situation as deeply problematic, but does not in itself provide much backing for this claim.

FiFi Will Become a 'Discontinuation Company'

The forecast in this frame is one of imminent catastrophe. Our informants speak of an "executive illusion" manifested by the ELT's belief that IT works well, which overshadows part of the reality and results in the executive decision makers' failure to see how it 'actually' is. As Jeff concludes, "FiFi will go from being a development company to a discontinuation company." Although the ELT does show awareness of a certain need to change, several of our informants feel that they are doing too little, too late. According to this view, as for example expressed by Bobby, the severity of the situation has not dawned on the main decision makers: "There has been a mantra that everything looked really good, but now it is 2019. We have developed a lot of features but not consolidated anything, and that means that the platform is sanded up."

Survival Demands a New IT Strategy Now

With the 'observations' as a starting point, the April 2018 report makes seven recommendations for a new IT strategy that would amount to a comprehensive make-over of the organizational set-up as well as the employed technology at FiFi, e.g. "define clear target model and direction for IT and FiFi" and "establish solid technical foundation and architecture."

It is important to stress that such recommendations include presuppose a certain state of affairs, assuming a base from which arguments can evolve (Macagno, 2016). If an organization should define a “clear target model,” from a logical perspective this implies that there is no such model at present or that the existing model is not adequate. Several of the informants agree that problems existed and still exist in FiFi, meaning action is needed here and now. For example, Carl, Victor’s counterpart in the current organizational set-up with split IT responsibility, acknowledges some of the challenges and accepts their urgency:

> Well, we have problems that make themselves felt. We have, for example, some code that is so outdated that we cannot get anyone to code it anymore. Those kinds of things. This we are able to understand and therefore we have to act on it.

Equally, Bobby, one of Victor’s two immediate subordinates and main allies in Department A, underlines the need for action now:

> There is a latent danger that we cannot just keep on talking. I would say the most important thing right now is to create this feeling of “now we are going to do something about it.” Let us put a person in charge, create this team that can handle it.

Nevertheless, the strategic frame of the burning platform did not lead to the decision to create a new IT strategy. One possible explanation for this failure is that the problems articulated in the report—and by some employees—were not acceptable to the majority of the organization. They simply did not match their experience of the organizational reality and, hence, did not amount to a persuasive interpretation of this reality. That is, the organizational decision makers were not persuaded to apply this frame as the basis of their own understanding and judgment. As the notion of a burning platform did not hold sway in the organization, our informants, who were interviewed a year after the consulting firm delivered the report, mostly spoke of the burning platform as a failed frame.

Smoke on the Horizon

> In April, I had a one-on-one meeting with Bobby. During the meeting, he expressed the belief that a shift had occurred in how key actors talked about IT and the need for change. In particular, he said, Victor had changed his strategy. Instead of talking about an 'executive illusion', the focus had shifted to the need to act in due time before it turned out to be too late. (Field notes, April 10th, 2019)

During the Spring of 2019 a stronger emphasis on the existing strengths and competencies of the two departments (A & B) emerged in the framing of the IT strategy, and the frame of the burning platform was gradually replaced by an alternative vision of how to move from the present into the future—from urgent and decisive action towards gradual change. While Bobby, along with other members of the organization, was sympathetic towards this move, it also worried him; as he explained: "You know, you cannot un-ring the bell." For more than a year, proponents of an IT strategy had supported their position in the deficiencies of the existing IT systems, and the rhetorical maxim that consistency is credibility (Baumlin & Scisco, 2018) should dictate continuing this framing of IT as in dire need of comprehensive replacement. However, this strategic frame had also proven largely ineffective and un-ringing a bell that very few had heeded might not, after all, be so difficult.

Thus, IT was still not a key topic on the agenda of the ELT, and yet FiFi continued to thrive; explaining this situation seemed to invite a new frame rather than demand consistency with the temporal framing of the burning platform. We label this second rhetorical attempt to create the necessary conditions for strategic decision making 'smoke on the horizon' in order to reflect the informants' (new) understanding of the present as 'quite reasonable', but with a potential catastrophe looming in the uncertain future.

As already indicated, the frame of the ‘burning platform’ was not consistent with competing organizational positions, and, more importantly, factual circumstances did not clearly warrant the conclusion that ‘we need decisive action now’. That is, although the logical structure of the argument from consequence was upheld, the substantial argument failed because organizational members did not believe there was data to support it. In response, Victor began framing the present IT system as functional but limited. Thus, he maintained a rhetorical framing of the future as risky:

> We see limits to what we can do with the foundational IT architecture. How many customers we can onboard, how mange calculations we can make, how many processes we can run. We are not able to use data appropriately. All our systems communicate one to one, which means that if one system goes down, then all systems go down. […] So, there are plenty of alarm buttons that light up right now without me being able to say that something will happen within one year or three years or five years.

The frame of ‘smoke on the horizon’, then, seeks to emphasize looming dangers that FiFi has to divert in due time. The rhetorical form of this frame is also that of argument from consequence, albeit with the delicate ‘twist’ that a crucial premise is conditional on future uncertain outcomes (see table 6). However, this is often the case, as Walton (1996) pointed out: “Quite often, D [for danger] is a long-term consequence that may well occur at some future, unspecified time” (p. 307). Therefore, the argument involves an implicit choice between maintaining short-term status quo and ensuring long-term safety.The overall argument contains the following elements in which diagnosis and prognosis function as premises (or grounds) from which it is possible to conclude that acting now is immanent to achieving(/avoiding) future growth(/recession):

Table 6: Rhetorical framing, Smoke on the horizon

Diagnosis (past and present)	We are doing reasonably well
Prognosis (future)	But there is trouble ahead, growth is in jeopardy
Necessary action (conclusion)	Therefore, let us invest now to avoid future losses

We Are Doing Reasonably Well

Explaining that the system is not impressive, but that it does work and allows FiFi to service its customers, George exemplifies the 'pragmatic' diagnosis of the present:

> I do not think there is anything critically wrong in FiFi. There is a culture that has been allowed to live and develop over time and because it is an old company, it is clear that something is very well anchored, and it is difficult to change, even just with IT […] And then fools like us come in from the street and we have tried other things within IT. And then we say, oh no, you are in the wrong lane.

Carl shares the view that the organization is doing quite well but could do better. He also applies the notion of constantly moving forward as an explanation of the failure of the 'burning platform':

> I understand what [proponents of an IT strategy] mean, but I also get a little provoked when someone tells me that IT is all 'sanded up'. It bothers me because there is nothing strange in the need to always keep up to speed. That is how it works, but generally we are in good standing, and therefore we need to be aware of how we talk about our own world.

But There Is Trouble Ahead

The second aspect of 'smoke on the horizon' consists in emphasizing how risks will increase if action is not taken in due time. Several informants use the same example to substantiate their claim that although IT is functional at the moment growth is in jeopardy. They called it ‘the story of the marine’ and the gist of the story is that once a month one employee (‘the marine’) attends work when the rest of the organization sleeps in order to run a query that is necessary for the IT system to be fully functional. George presents the story as follows:

> Our marine, he’s one of the people who every month when we make payments to the customers…but it is a heavy process, unnecessarily heavy process, to conduct, and he gets up a bit past three in the night, drives to work to be here at around 3:30 AM, then he does the payment query […], but before eight, which is the opening hour of FiFi, because otherwise FiFi would be unable to run. And this is just the amount of people we are paying now. What if it were ten times the customers? […] and that is why FiFi does not have scalability. That’s the example I use to say we can’t get any further in FiFi. Don’t believe it can take in 100,000 more customers. We simply cannot. We wouldn’t be able to solve the tasks.

This example provides a clear link to FiFi’s strategic interest in terms of growth, whereby it supports the argument in favor of a new IT strategy. Thus, the example forms part of an argument hierarchy in which the claim of one argument, ‘the company cannot grow,’ functions as proof of another argument that supports the conclusion: ‘change the IT infrastructure.’ Connecting these claims pushes the argument from definition (or diagnosis) to advocacy (cf. Brockriede & Ehninger, 1960).

Let Us Invest Now to Avoid Future Losses

Unpacking the process of rhetorical framing shows that the recommendation (conclusion) to establish an IT strategy now rests on the presupposition that scalability precedes growth. Here, proponents of a new strategy use ‘the Marine’ as an illustration of what happens to a system that is close to its maximum capabilities. Hence, the framing follows the form of the ‘slippery slope argument' in which FiFi is approaching a limit as to how far down 'the slope' it can go without taking damage. If one accepts this claim, the time is now if FiFi wants to avoid larger hazards and unforeseen expenses.

However, if we examine what happened in FiFi prior to and during the field study, it turns out that the firm acquired two other companies and was in the middle of a third acquisition, including IT integration processes. According to our informants as well as publicly available information, these acquisitions went as planned, despite some indications that they could have been more (cost) efficient. Therefore, there might be smoke on the horizon, but skeptics counter the example of the Marine, which is presented as evidence that FiFi cannot grow without causing a systems meltdown, with their general experience that the organization is actually growing and that IT remains functional. Whereas 'the burning platform' failed because of a framing based on the selection of too many indicators of failure that simply did not match the dominant interpretative frame of the organization, hinging 'smoke on the horizon' on one prime example seems to present too little evidence.

Still, evidence was accumulating, and Victor describes developments in May 2019, this way:

> I have at no point in time felt that we were not progressing. I wish that we could move faster, but I do think that we are in constant movement. We are raising some good flags. For example, Margaret, our Risk Manager, recently presented the operational risk analysis to our CEO and almost half of the risks relate to outdated IT, and he accepts the premise that we have to address this. So, we are pushing the original understanding of how we think about our IT. Something can actually destabilize us if we do not act in time.

To summarize, the frame that we label "smoke on the horizon" provides an interpretation of the organizational present as "reasonable" while the future is uncertain, thereby seeking to persuade decision makers to take preventive action now. The main obstacle to the persuasiveness of this frame is that its key premise—that growth requires a scalable IT system—is challenged by organizational members' experiences of the near past and ongoing present. Thus, proponents of the IT strategy had yet to frame their call to action in a way that the organization might adopt.

Tend to the Fire

> Today I had my last meeting with Victor. He looked tired but also seemed pleased. The meeting took place more than a year after our first meeting. Earlier this month, Victor said, the ELT had finally accepted four IT projects. This seemingly simple decision was the culmination of months of work, during which Victor and his team translated a rather technical 'roadmap' into the proposal that had now been accepted. Victor seemed particularly proud when he mentioned that in the decisive ELT meeting, the CEO had defended the proposal when other members challenged it. (Field notes, January 17th, 2020)

To understand how FiFi reached a point at which Victor could count on the CEO as his ally in the process of developing a new IT strategy, we must go back to the late Spring of 2019. Back then, Victor had to recognize that his persuasive attempts had once again been thwarted by the prevailing organizational experience of continual progress, which led him and the other proponents of a new IT strategy at FiFi to base their advocacy of change on a perspective of consistency. While this frame only gradually emerged as the dominant one, let us stress that Victor already brought it up in our first formal interview—only back in December 2018 he did not favor this view. Hence, the process we are following does not amount to a sudden change of heart on the part of our informants. Rather, they changed their view of how they might persuade the organization, especially the ELT, informed by organizational development. For the proponents of an IT strategy, finding such common organizational ground involves a concession to settle for small projects that, if successful, might eventually lead to a fully-fledged strategy.

Hence, the strategy is now framed as a *gradual change* that may ensure consistency between the perceived past, the ongoing present, and the desired future. Victor describes his new ambition of prioritizing strategic IT initiatives—instead of insisting on the development and implementation of a full IT strategy once and for all—in the following manner:

> So, we have to say, and I think that is an important premise in order to make the right IT target goal, that we need to be aware that we are going to prioritize this to create a bigger advantage, a lasting advantage, not just to clear the road of a future problem.

This statement clearly re-frames the future in positive terms; now action is not just aimed at avoiding harm or compensating for existing deficiencies but could lead to actual advances. Expressing his support for this long-term approach of gaining a lasting advantage instead of avoiding a future loss (as in the two former frames), Carl explains why it was counter-productive to focus too heavily on what currently did not work.

> My biggest anxiety is that the more you start talking about that everything is ‘sanded up’, then you come to a halt and ask yourself: ‘Do you mean that we need to change everything?’ That is just the worst you can do. That is the sure way to utter chaos.

Thus, the new frame focuses on how a continuation of present initiatives may gradually lead to future opportunities, meaning the advocates of a new IT strategy shift their emphasis from avoiding an external threat towards exploiting an internal potential. The advantages, they now argue, will emerge if IT is uses properly to ‘tend to the fire’; that is, to maintain existing organizational strengths and develop new advantages (see table 7):

Table 7: Rhetorical framing, Tend to the fire

Diagnosis (past and present)	We have done well in the past and this had led us to where we are now
Prognosis (future)	Future looks promising
Necessary action (conclusion)	Therefore, let us continue the coherent effort to achieve a lasting advantage

We Have Done Well in the Past

The main evidence in support of this frame is the acquisition and integration of three companies that took place before and during the field study; the third of these processes, according to Carl who was centrally involved in all three, happened in half the time of the former two. This adds credence to the organizational interpretation of the current state of affairs as the successful result of prudent past actions. As Carl puts it:

> For me, it inevitably is because I compare with other firms. When I make this judgment of where we are, when I say that it looks good, then it is because I have a feeling of how it looks around us, and based on that, I can say that FiFi is doing well.

When comparing FiFi's immediate situation to that of competitors, the evident success makes for a strong pull towards organizational inertia. Similarly, Victor has become aware of how damaging a framing that is at odds with the dominant organizational interpretation can be when trying to convince fellow executive decision makers at the very top of the organization:

> We cannot show up and say, now listen up: We have always said that our IT has been well-functioning, we have said that our systems are good, and that our products for financial advisors are fantastic. Now it is crap, now we are going to change it all. No, it is actually quite reasonable and solid, but now we are going to embrace the new era and take control because we have the good preparatory work. I think that is an important

part of getting a permission to proceed.

Although Victor continues to believe that there is a need for increasing the speed with which FiFi "takes back further control of strategic IT initiatives," with the new framing he emphasizes existing organizational success as the basis for doing so. Instead of seeking to change the dominant organizational frame, he now attempts to base his proposal upon its, meaning his expressed view of the future has also changed.

The Future Looks Promising

Whereas the two first frames position development of an IT strategy as a means of staving off future threats, it now aims to realize future opportunities for FiFi. As Victor says, "FiFi can transform the market and make it much more transparent—enabling customers to compare prices and allowing FiFi to grow due to its prices and products."

The question is how such potential might be actualized? Here, May 1st 2019 marks a turning point. On that day Victor announced that instead of seeking to raise the necessary support and funding for a full-blown process of developing a new IT strategy, he would propose smaller initiatives and ask for 10% of the initially prospected sum in order to make the firm 'fit for the future'. By then, it had become clear that a dramatic appeal to future threats did not fit the perception of the CEO nor did it match the broader organization's generally positive experiences of development at FiFi, as most recently encountered in the successful integration of newly acquired companies.

A few weeks later, in preparing for an ELT strategy excursion in which IT was *not* on the agenda, Victor shared that he was fully engaged in the process of making the decision 'small enough' for the ELT to accept it. Thus, his stated aim had become the continuation of already ongoing IT projects, which might, at a later stage, provide adequate good grounds for supporting a new strategy within an overall argument of continuity.

Let Us Continue to Make the Firm Fit for the Future

Recent research has found that visions of continuity are effective tools of change management because they reduce uncertainty (Venus et al., 2019). Our case supports this conclusion by showing how executive decision makers are only persuaded by frames that match their existing interpretation of organizational reality.

Hence, the new rhetorical framing is one of temporal coherence and consistency in which the warrant is that in order to remain competitive, an organization has to be able to sense, seize and reconfigure itself without losing its core identity. One important development, which indicates the success of this new frame, occurred during the autumn of 2019. After integrating Acquisition 3 within FiFi, Victor and Carl had assigned a senior project manager (who until then had been in charge of this integration) to lead the IT strategy work. As a result, alignment between key organizational members from both Department A and B had increased, and a so-called roadmap of existing and future IT projects and initiatives was finally under way (such a roadmap had been part of the discussion since the April 2018 report but had not yet been produced). This is the process to which Victor refers in the vignette, with which we began the section. As the vignette indicates, the finished roadmap became a key enabler of the decision to begin making changes to the IT system. Rather than taking on a full strategy-process, FiFi eventually opted for direct but gradual implementation of new initiatives.

In seeking to explain the success of the roadmap, the differences between the rhetorical framing of this document and earlier persuasive attempts are compelling. In stark opposition to the 10 'observations' of the 2018 "Evaluation of IT setup in FiFi", the roadmap includes a detailed heat map analysis of the interdependence between business processes and IT systems (the entire IT architecture in FiFi consists of 90 individual systems!). Distinguishing between "OK" (green), "Unharvested benefits or unsolved challenges that better IT could solve" (orange), and "Large unharvested benefits or critical challenges that better IT could solve" (red), it evaluates only 12 out of a total of 117 specific business processes or IT systems as critical (red). This is enough to act on, but also a much more positive evaluation than the one supporting the 'burning platform'. Given the criticism of Carl and other key organizational actors who did not trust the negative evaluation of the 2018 report, basing the new strategy of a more nuanced picture that also highlighted the strengths of the current situation proved to be a much more persuasive frame.

In the end, the persistence and adaptability of the strategy-advocates paid off. In January 2020, at conclusion of our field study, the ELT decided to accept a proposal, based on the roadmap. Thereby, FiFi formally initiated a process that could eventually become a full-fledged IT strategy. However, one question remains: Is the rhetorical framing of small steps strong enough to provide momentum throughout the strategy-process or will it, once again, be overtaken by inertia? Maybe the threats of the burning platform frame will have to become reality before the organization acts decisively? And by then, will it be too late or may the organization become aware of the signs and act in due time? Only time will tell. What we can confirm, is that the words 'IT strategy' were nowhere to be found in the final proposal to the ELT. All the ELT accepted was the "First draft to an actual IT target goal", which involved four specific projects that would update and replace old IT systems.

Concluding Discussion: Creating Kairos for Strategy Making

The rhetorical framing of kairos is a persuasive process in and through which communicators work to adapt their strategic frames to an existing organizational context while also shaping that context to make it fit their proposals. It is, as Miller (1994, p. 83) aptly put it, 'the dynamic relationship between discourse and situation'. Hence, kairos is neither solely retrospective nor prospective, but the rhetorical shaping of the very present as the moment in which a certain decision is the fitting response to an urgency marked by imperfection (Bitzer, 1968). Hence, framing kairos is about saying the 'right words at the right time' in the dual sense of fitting the words to the situation and shaping the situation with one's words. This rhetorical practice involves use of the past to interpret the present and guide the future, meaning kairos in itself may be an event, a moment enabling 'temporal shifts', but creating kairos involves chronos; persuasive efforts at creating a temporal shift are only successful if they establish strong 'links in time'.

In seeking to create kairos, managers and other organizational actors may use the past strategically, as Suddaby and his co-authors emphasized (2010), but history also operates as a constraint, limiting what an organization will perceive as an adequate representation of past events as well as how the past may be used to advocate a certain future course of action. Similarly, the future may be envisioned as an extrapolation of the current situation onwards or it may present new opportunities waiting to be seized (Granqvist & Gustafsson, 2016). Again, Miller (1994) provided important insights in reminding us of the human need to take control of the uncertain; the rhetorical framing of kairos offers audiences a sense of such control. In sum, successful invocations of kairos draw the past into the present thereby enabling a certain vision of the future—and pointing out the course of action needed to fulfill this vision. If and when a communicator achieves such framing, it will, in Bisbee's words (2018, p. 495), "heighten an audience's sense that *this* moment is the right moment for the course of action or judgment being proposed."

Persuasive attempts, however, do not necessarily lead to persuasion, and in the analysis, we detailed two unsuccessful attempts to create the 'opportune moment' for the making of a new IT strategy. Thus, our study reinforces Kaplan's (2008) point that framing is a contested process; as Kaplan and Orlikowski (2013) showed, successful frames fit organizational members' experiences of the past and expectations of the future, thereby making the communicator's interpretations and recommendations acceptable to the audience. We add to this point by showing how communicators themselves are influenced by their frames; thus, in finally framing the proposal of an IT strategy in terms that ‘resonated’ with the organization (Giorgi, 2017), the proposal itself was significantly altered. Rhetorical framing is not only about finding the right form; the strategic ambition is shaped and altered in the process. In our case, it shifted from the decisive action of establishing and implementing a new strategy towards a gradual implementation of new technologies that does not have to involve an actual written strategy but could be carried out incrementally as a series of smaller decisions rather than at one decisive moment.

This may seem like a failure on the part of those who advocated more radical change; a pre-strategy that never developed into an actual strategy process. However, we believe that the advocates of change in FiFi would have had no organizational impact, if they were not themselves willing to be affected by the process in which they were involved. Thus, the provisional outcome of the process reflects what was rhetorically possible at this time in this organizational setting; ‘strategic coherence’ between the organizational reality and the proposed change (Luisiani & Langley, 2019) was, in this case, only possibly through the frame of gradual change.

Furthermore, while there was no ‘big bang’ strategic decision to undertake an IT strategy-process in FiFi, our analysis details how the process of strategy making gradually developed in and through a multitude of smaller decisions whose consequences only begin to reveal themselves through the ongoing negotiation of the temporal work of strategy. In this light, we can understand the organizational indecision on IT strategy as a strategic opportunity. As we demonstrated in our analysis, the dichotomy between the initial framing of IT strategy as ‘survival demands urgent action’ and the largely justified interpretation of FiFi as a successful company was simply too big for the organization to take action. However, this gap enabled organizational members to continue the process of exploring their rhetorical and strategic options—and the strategy process is likely to continue as a series of small steps, as the situated activity of tying past and future together in the event of 'now' (Hernes & Schultz, 2020).

Turning from the empirical to the conceptual discussion, we develop the conception of temporality in relation to strategic change by detailing the rhetorical use of time in strategy making. Thus, we supplement existing conceptualizations of temporal work and rhetorical history by highlighting that the rhetorical framing of kairos is deliberate *and* emergent; one does not create kairos freely, but persuasive attempts are successful when they both give shape to and take shape from the situation. In offering a detailed account of how temporality is harnessed by prospective strategy makers in their attempts to develop a persuasive rhetorical frame, we have shown how the strategic positions of these would-be strategists is itself constituted by the rhetorical framing in which they are involved. Thus, we have established a conceptual framework for the close analysis of rhetorical framing of temporal work in strategy making in which the concept of kairos refers to the felicitous constellation of the multiplicities of temporality that enable the emergence of the 'opportune moment'.

The duality of kairos as both deliberate *and* emergent, we believe, offers an important contribution to conceptualizing the temporal work of strategic change. In our case study, we show that strategy makers cannot rethink and (re-)define temporal relationships as they please. Creating a compelling opportune moment, the rhetorical framing of kairos, requires both a fit with existing organizational interpretations and shaping what the organization aspires to achieve; hence, kairos enables strategy making, which in itself is an attempt to shape a projected future that only exists (Kornberger, 2013) and is experienced (Vesa & Franck, 2013) in the present. Hence, strategy-work is first and foremost situational; different contexts require different (rhetorical) strategies that enable different interpretations of the past, present and future. Thus, the dual process of giving shape to and taking shape from the organizational kairos is constitutive of all strategy making. Further, creating kairos is an ongoing endeavor; the time is never just right, but has to be constituted as such in a process of continuous timing.

Regarding the rhetorical use of time in strategy making, in our case, the framing of change as being consistent with past actions and present circumstances proved to be the stronger persuasive strategy, the frame that created kairos by matching general perceptions of the current situation with suggestions for future actions. The details of how our informants reached this framing, underlines that we should not understand kairos as the practice of a single communicator. Rather, the rhetorical framing of kairos is an ongoing and collective process in which organizational actors come to influence the organization while also becoming influenced by collaborators as well as adversaries. While we focus our attention on a few main characters, it is an important finding that the process is more influential than all the people involved. Again, we take this to be a common trait of the process through which temporality comes to work strategically. Rhetorical history may be a tool for organizational strategists, but they themselves are also products of their organizations' rhetorical histories, which in turn both constrain and enable how persuasive their strategic projections of future states can be in the moment of decision making.

To conclude, the very positions available to organizational actors emerge from the process of temporal work. We have shown how organizational perceptions of the past, present and future are both constituted by persuasive efforts and constitutive of such efforts' persuasive appeal. Thus, kairos is neither purely determined by the organizational context nor can it be freely constructed by communicators. Instead, the rhetorical framing of kairos is successful when striking the right balance between a communicator's strategic ambitions for the future and decision makers' perceptions of the past, thereby constituting the present as an 'opportune moment' for strategizing.

5. Strategic Resonance in Management Decisions

Invoking Confidence Through the Rhetorical Framing of Emotion

Author: Marcus Lantz

Abstract

Uncertainty is often high in the early stages of innovation processes. A concomitant lack of robust evidence further challenges top management teams as they seek to make decisions that can pave the way for strategically important projects. In such uncertain situations, framing and emotion play vital roles in decision making. Through a qualitative field study in the product development unit of a large multinational corporation, the paper shows how executives view frames that invoke a feeling of confidence as crucial when deciding to proceed with a project. The paper contributes to the existing literature on the role of framing in strategic decision making by defining the concept of strategic resonance as a key mechanism allowing the emerging accordance of ambition and achievability.

> Framing, I would say, is the absolute most important! (…) In reality, it is deep down about moving the picture, the interpretation inside the head of the project manager, into the heads of the decision makers. To make us say, ah yes, we can see those assumptions. Then maybe our conclusion is different, but it is about creating a common picture of what we are here to decide. You can only do that if you frame.
>
> —Benjamin Emerson, Senior Vice President, Branding, Communication, and Strategic Marketing, GBCS[4]

In an exclusive interview for this study, a top management team (TMT) decision maker in the case organization offered this view on the importance of framing. His view aptly reflects current trends in management research, which has shown framing to help managers craft compelling narratives when pitching novel ventures in entrepreneurial settings (Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010). A potent rhetorical tool, strategic framing can mobilize support (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014, p. 185), thus paving the way for decision makers to put their action tendencies (Benford & Snow, 2000) and sense-making (Logemann et al., 2019) into effect, even in TMTs where organizational actors frame decisions as threats or opportunities when attempting to sell issues (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). Although scholars have come to better understand the role of framing in strategic decision making, less is known about how visionaries "frame organizational problems and issues in novel and compelling ways" (Purdy et al., 2019, p. 416) and how interactions and affective judgments shape the meaning of such frames (Reinecke & Ansari, 2020). This recognition that framing requires more exploration parallels calls within the social sciences (Lerner et al., 2015)—more specifically, the field of strategy and organization studies—to focus further research on the role emotions play in decision making involving uncertainty and ambiguity (Ashkanasy et al., 2017; Huy, 2012). Because the decision makers in

[4] Global Building Component Supplier (a pseudonym), the case company in the reported field study. All company and individual names have been changed to protect their identities.

an organization face a plethora of uncertainties and causal ambiguity (Giorgi, 2017), emotion can play a well-documented role in organizational actors' attempts to convince decision makers, including TMTs (Kisfalvi & Pitcher, 2003).

Despite recent conceptual leaps (Giorgi, 2017; Raffaelli et al., 2019), sufficient *empirical* evidence has yet to substantiate the synthesis of how framing resonates with decision makers in uncertain circumstances where emotions play a large role. Accordingly, this paper seeks to explore the practical purview stemming from the recent conceptualization of how framing and emotions are interrelated in TMT decision making. Purdy et al. (2019) define framing as an interaction process that is neither exclusively cognitive nor strictly emotional. Building on this bidirectional understanding, framing becomes a rhetorical balancing act that swings between aspiration and demonstration, and the paper offers the concept of "strategic resonance" as a key mechanism for striking this balance. Applying the concept to the empirical case, the main question is, "How do emotional frames invoke confidence through strategic resonance?"

To investigate this question, a field study took place in the product development unit of a well-established manufacturing company supplying the building and construction industry. Taking an action-research approach, a rhetorical lens of emotional framing emphasized the persuasive human interaction that occurs between TMT decision makers and the project managers responsible for product development. Making a distinction between the diagnostic *what*, the prognostic *how*, and the motivational *why*, project managers can receive continued support for a project, despite its technical challenges, by appealing to its strategic fit, for instance. In seeking to determine the resonant mechanism underlying a TMT's go-ahead for a project, the analysis shows that executives view three behaviors on the part of project managers as crucial in inspiring the confidence required to make decisions: demonstrating project leadership, framing the purpose, and enabling decisions. Resonance occurs when a project manager can credibly invoke emotion to support a favorable view of a project.

Research into pitching to investors (van Werven et al., 2019) and strategy making has produced empirical contributions on argumentation (Bouwmeester, 2013), framing (Werner & Cornelissen, 2014), emotions (Vuori & Huy, 2016), and resonance, as well as on strategy making itself (Knight et al., 2018). This paper adds to this research by conceptualizing rhetoric in organizational settings (Suddaby, 2010) and contributes to understanding the rhetorical framing of emotions in two ways.

First, by examining the human interaction and, hence, multiplicity of interpretations, feelings, and judgments that permeate framing processes—i.e., the interaction of emotional and cognitive framing—the paper contributes to the processual understanding of how an organization and its top-tier decision makers come to view certain arguments as *strategically compelling*. Framing such arguments rhetorically in organizations where "hard evidence" is often the (unattainable) gold standard, the analysis document how decision makers face a dilemma between making decisions in due time and deciding with due confidence.

Second, the paper adds to the research on emotional framing by suggesting that the concept of *strategic resonance* (Brown & Fai, 2006; Knight et al., 2018) can bridge the gap between cognitive and emotional resonance. The concept of strategic resonance, as further developed here, refers to the rhetorical framing that allows for the emerging accordance of ambition and achievability that occurs when probability (appeals that cognitively resonate with achievability) and fidelity (appeals that emotionally resonate with ambition) intertwine to become sufficiently persuasive.

The paper proceeds as follows: First, it presents the theoretical foundation for studying the rhetorical framing of emotion in the strategic decision-making context of product innovation and development. Second, it describes the empirical setting and methods of the field study as well as the analytical frameworks that guided the subsequent analyses before presenting the findings. Third, it concludes with a discussion of the theoretical implications.

Theory: Rhetoric, Emotions, and Framing

Framing is a “rhetorical tool for resonating with an audience” (Giorgi, 2017, p. 733). From a rhetorical perspective, actors who use language as symbolic action (Burke, 1969) to make their case can frame their arguments in ways intended to resonate with an audience. Such resonance, defined as “an audience’s experienced personal connection with a frame” (Giorgi, 2017, p. 716), is not a purely rational process of weighing various arguments, but happens when the arguments invoke foundational beliefs and context-specific emotional states. Resonant rhetorical appeals move their audiences, for which reason this paper focuses on framing as a rhetorical process, in which organizational communicators advance arguments that inevitably affect the frames or “schemata of interpretation” (Goffman, 1974) of mediators of change (Bitzer, 1968).

Theories of rhetoric, emotions, and framing overlap and enable this investigation of human interaction in decision making where uncertainty and ambiguity prevail (Sund et al., 2016).

Rhetoric

Rhetoric, or the art of using persuasive language, enables one to convince others to think, feel, and act differently. According to Aristotle, persuasion occurs through three types of appeals, based respectively on logic (logos), credibility (ethos), and emotion (pathos). The latter relies “on putting the audience into a certain *frame* [emphasis added] of mind” (ca. 322 B.C.E./Garver, 2005, 1356a2). For anyone engaged in a political debate (Gross, 2008), a crucial conversation with a doctor (Dubov, 2015), or a decisive business pitch to investors (van Werven et al., 2019), the power of rhetoric is evident. Importantly, rhetoric can be used to reason about choices with no demonstrable truth-value. Echoing Aristotle, Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca argue that people use rhetoric to deliberate about matters they cannot absolutely prove but must still resolve (1969). Similarly, Kock argues that decisions about specific actions are indeed the distinct domain of rhetoric (2017, p. 31).

Recognizing that organizations depend on decisions (Nutt, 1999), scholars taking the linguistic turn in organization and management studies have sparked a lively academic conversation on how actors use language and other symbolic means to convince others to make decisions and take action (Ihlen & Heath, 2018). These scholars argue, for instance, that rhetoric plays a role in identity construction (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001), the legitimization of institutional change (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005), the rationality behind strategic decisions (Bouwmeester, 2013), institutional decision making (Hoefer & Green, 2015), and entrepreneurial pitches (Clarke et al., 2019). Although other factors such as verbal emotional displays (see, e.g., Liu & Maitlis, 2014) influence human persuasion, I focus here on argumentation in the form of "practical reasoning," i.e., deliberations about strategic choice (Kock, 2017). Because the arguments for and against a case can be equally reasonable in such deliberations, and because each argument depends on the realization of future outcomes (O'Keefe, 2013), decision makers often rely on motivational aspirations and sentiments to guide their choices (Kock, 2017, p. 77).

Overall, "situations of uncertainty and possibility" (Cheney et al., 2004, p. 3) are a defining concern of organizational rhetoric. Indeed, strategic decisions are highly uncertain and ambiguous (Sund et al., 2016), inviting practical reasoning by virtue of their revolving around choices whose outcomes remain unknown. Studying how arguments interact and are framed in strategic decision making might therefore add some facets to the general understanding of such situations. With this in mind, strategic decisions are "infrequent decisions made by the top leaders of an organization that critically affect organizational health and survival" (Eisenhardt &

Zbaracki, 1992, p. 17). In line with the strategy-as-practice tradition, strategic discourse processes are constitutive parts of strategic decisions (Hendry, 2000). Such strategic decision processes concern not only what to do next but also what course the organization should set as it moves into the future (Kaplan, 2008).

Emotion

When venturing into an unknown future, emotions help express and guide decision makers' inclinations towards uncertain (strategic) choices (Li et al., 2014). As such, they have been a subject of study ever since Aristotle proposed that persuasion entailed appeals to emotions like anger, hope, and fear. Recent decades, however, have seen "a veritable revolution in the science of emotion" (Lerner et al., 2015, p. 800), and developments in this science have accordingly begun to appear in literature on organizations (Vuori & Huy, 2016), management (Ashkanasy et al., 2017), and strategy and decision making (Hodgkinson & Healey, 2011). In the context of this literature, emotions are "adaptive responses to the demands of the environment" (Elfenbein, 2007, p. 316). More specifically, following cognitive appraisal theory of emotion (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003), emotions are *processes* that comprise three crucial components required for understanding emotional framing in a decision-making context. These are *appraisals* by which a person evaluates the environment and interaction with other persons, motivational *action tendencies* or other forms of action readiness, and the *subjective experience* of feelings (Moors et al., 2013, p. 119). A cognitive appraisal theory of emotion follows the rhetorical tradition in which emotions are not mere irrational impulses but involve both a cognitive and an emotive component (Garver, 2005, 1378a19). The cognitive (often-factual) component and the way a speaker emphasizes certain arguments and frame salient characteristics can resonate with the audience's emotions, thus paving the way for decision and action. This view also reflects the notion that emotions seldom arise in a social vacuum, their being a result of human social interaction (Kleef, 2016), such as the presentation of a project to TMT decision makers.

Framing

Framing enables contextualization. As such, although framing has been broadly defined and practiced over time, whether viewed through a lens of rhetoric (Kuypers, 2010), communication (Entman, 1993), social movements (Benford & Snow, 2000), or strategic change (Fiss & Zajac, 2006), frames are conceptualized as defining and diagnosing problems and causes, making future prognoses, providing solutions or making moral judgments, and motivating action.

In "Review of Framing and Frame Analysis across the Management and Organizational Literature," Cornelissen and Werner underline that discursive framing processes and cognitive frames—what they call "knowledge schemas"—may be separate concepts, but are nevertheless "reciprocally and recursively interconnected in the construction of meaning in context" (2014, p. 183). The importance of context is what makes framing so pivotal a concept in the rhetoric of decision making: In using language symbolically, frame articulators not only describe reality (Bitzer, 1969) but also construct a situation in which decisions can happen (Vatz, 1973). The instant a person uses specific words or catchphrases, they can evoke affective cues; conversely, by simply negating a frame, that person can activate an assertion—for instance, "I am not a crook" (Lakoff, 2004).

Two recent conceptual papers connect framing and emotion: one concerns emotional resonance in frame effectiveness (Giorgi, 2017), the other "emotional framing" as part of frame flexibility in innovation adoption (Raffaelli et al., 2019). Taking a strategic management perspective, Raffaelli et al. conceptualize emotional framing as connected with cognitive framing in the sense that "frame flexibility"—defined as "the TMT's ability to reframe an innovation's potential fit with the firm" (2019, p. 1023)—allows a TMT to view non-incremental innovations as strategically relevant. In this sense “striking a responsive chord, or being emotionally resonant” is enabled by emotional framing and is thus the key to its effectiveness (p. 1025). From the perch of management studies, Giorgi (2017) proposes that frame effectiveness relies on how well frames *resonate* with an audience, making a distinction between cognitive and emotional resonance. Literature addressing framing in social movements had already established the concept of frame resonance, but rather surprisingly had not incorporated emotion despite emphasizing that “motivational frames” function as a call to arms and defining resonance as the combination of frame credibility and salience (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 619). Giorgi advances the understanding of resonance by defining emotional frame resonance as “a felt alignment of a frame with the audience’s passions, desires, or aspirations” (2017, p. 717).

Finally, framing affects whether issues resonate as threats or opportunities (Jackson & Dutton, 1988) and therefore how decision makers interpret various options. The socio-psychological literature on judgment and decision making maintains that emotion is integral to the context, thus influencing what individuals come to view as constitutive of either a threat or an opportunity (Lerner et al., 2015). As Kaplan (2008, p. 730) contends in her study on framing contests, framing is not merely an act of *issue selling* (Jackson & Dutton, 1988) or *impression management* (Elsbach & Sutton, 1992), because individual cognitive frames constrain what is possible, thereby underlining the interaction between organizational actors. The concepts of *opportunities* and *threats* found in the issue-selling literature link to the present inquiry into emotional framing. Whereas Jackson and Dutton make no mention of emotion in their seminal piece on “Discerning Threats and Opportunities” (1988), Dutton and Ashford (1993) highlight emotion in their review on selling issues to top management. Crucially, pairing emotion *with* evidence successfully promotes new ideas (p. 415).

The theories and traditions outlined above enable an analysis of emotional framing that extends beyond a 1:1 causal model between appeals to emotion and emotional reactions. Such nuanced conceptualization is paramount because when it comes to persuasive communication, the degree of causal ambiguity between input and output is often high. To help provide an understanding of these ambiguous dynamics, let us turn to the empirical inquiry.

Methods and Data

A decision to continue or shut down a development project at an early stage depends on whether decision makers can see a compelling case in the midst of "unknown unknowns" (Snowden & Boone, 2007). In keeping with recent developments in management and organization studies (e.g., Lusiani & Langley, 2019), this in-depth qualitative field study takes a practice view of strategic decision making as a process in which numerous variables, including discourse, can influence the output. Accordingly, the study adopts a strategic perspective to examine emotion in organizations (Zietsma et al., 2019, p. 8) where high levels of uncertainty and causal ambiguity (Giorgi, 2017) constrain decision makers—situations in which emotions affect judgments and decisions (Lerner et al., 2015).

Research Context

Empirically, the field study investigated the process of preparing and presenting development projects to TMT members and top-level middle managers, with the broad aim of understanding the role of emotions and framing. The specific site was the product development unit (PDU) of GBCS, an international producer of building components supplying the construction industry, with a history dating back more than 75 years and an explicit company value of experimentation rather than reliance on what it labels "expert assumptions." As an established and well-performing firm that risks falling prey to "incumbent inertia" (Benner & Tushman, 2003), GBCS was a relevant site for studying the empirical phenomenon of strategic decision making carried out in situations marked by uncertainty. The specific decision setting was the stage-gate process. A well-described method for advancing and maturing, for example, product innovation (Cooper, 2017), the stage-gate model consists of five decision steps, or gates, that can enable organizations to decide whether to proceed with innovation projects in their pipeline or not. GBCS distinguishes between group gate meetings (GGM), which include the CEO, COO, VP Sales, and VP Branding, and product gate meetings (PGM), which include the COO, VP Product Management, and VP Product Development.

The stage-gate setting presented a natural decision process in which advancement to the next stage requires acceptance from "gatekeepers". Every stage-gate presented decision makers with a strategic choice (Treffers et al., 2020) to continue, stop, pause, or revise a project—what the stage-gate literature labels "Go/Kill/Hold/Recycle" (Edgett, 2015, p. 5). The main interest in this study was not to determine if the stage-gate model benefits product development. Rather, the stage-gate model provides a realistic empirical setting for understanding strategic choice as a process of consecutive framings of decisions marked by a multitude of financial, technical, and strategic uncertainties.

Data Collection

Close to the Action

Upon the first entry into GBCS, TMT members had voiced their dissatisfaction with the lack of "project leadership" performance in the PDU. Drawing on the collaborative nature of action research (Cox, 2012), close proximity of the decision-making processes provided insight into how the informants understood and voiced their experiences (Anteby, 2013). At the start of the field study, I was already working for GBCS as a strategic communications consultant and became a full-time researcher during the field study. GBCS hired a senior colleague (who holds a PhD in management, politics, and philosophy) and myself to facilitate workshops and hold individual sessions with project managers before gate meetings. This formed what Langley and Klag call the "involvement paradox" between actual field involvement and the expression of it in a research paper (2019). As GBCS was only looking to improve how project managers performed and presented proposals to TMTs, remaining an unobtrusive observer was not feasible. I chose to engage with project managers to co-create knowledge, a key element in action research (Bradbury-Huang, 2010), to enhance their engagement in and my understanding of the stage-gate decision process. In exchange for anonymity, GBCS allowed the collected data to be the subject of fully independent academic research.

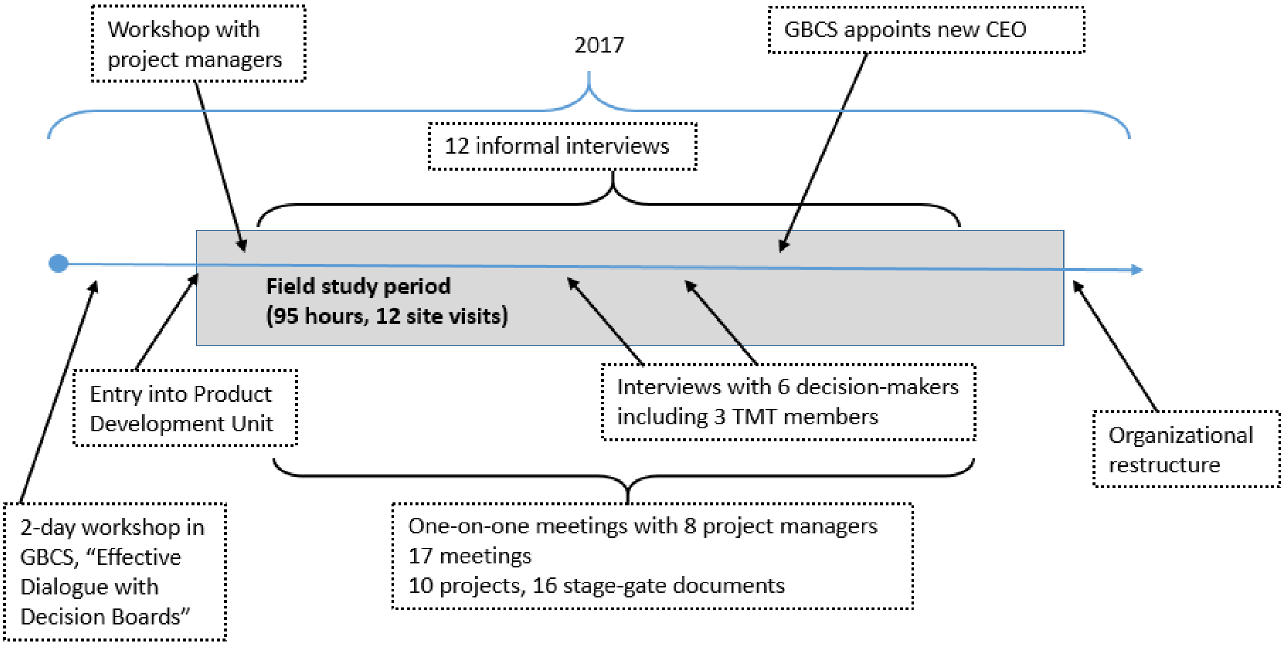

Figure 6: Timeline and data sources, Strategic Resonance

Field Study

The core field study lasted 9 months, from March to November 2017. Before the first entry into PDU, several units of GBCS's project management organization had participated in a workshop on "Effective dialogue with decision-boards," which later aided engagement with the PDU.

During the field study, a research journal and notes after each visit to a GBCS site (see figure 6 for a combination of timeline and key data sources, in addition to table 2) documented events, conversations and impressions. The main data sources for the study are stage-gate documents, obtained as part of one-to-one sessions with project managers before and after gate meetings, and interviews with key decision makers, including three TMT members. The two data sources provided the perspectives of both project managers and TMT decision makers. Decision makers read transcripts and main conclusions from each interview, and all concurred with these. Subsequently, passages from interviews with non-English speakers were translated as part of the analytical coding process, acknowledging that although some nuances can indeed become "lost in translation" (Esin et al., 2014, p. 208), the benefits of performing the interview in the native language of both myself as a researcher and informants clearly outweighed the potential costs.

Strategic Decisions as Discourse

Understanding rhetoric as constitutive (Vatz, 1973), the traditions of hermeneutic (interpretivist) organizational research accept that discourse can construct and maintain the social world (Heracleous, 2004). This theoretical underpinning is especially salient when discussing strategic (future-oriented) matters where outcomes are uncertain, as strategic discourse shapes decisions (Langley & Abdallah, 2011, p. 219), and organizational actors only come to understand decision implications retrospectively.

Data Analysis

From the outset, the goal was to uncover *how* framing evolved in relation to emotion during the decision-making processes. Understanding how project managers and decision makers viewed interactions became crucial because such a view reflected framing as a process, while the role of strategic resonance gradually emerged as a key concept worth pursuing. At a workshop held in the first stage of the field study, a senior project manager expressed explicit frustrations with navigating how to present projects to the TMT:

> How can we know what to do and how to present projects in gate meetings when one day gatekeepers tell us that we presented too much data and too many details and in the next meeting it is not enough. I mean, what do they expect? (Field notes, workshop, March 2017)

The analysis consisted of two sub-analyses: one focusing on how decision makers view project framings (interview data) and the other on how projects frame their decision proposals (stage-gate documents). These analyses combined a two-step abductive approach enabling the best possible explanations (Frost & Shaw, 2015). The first step was inductive, allowing identification of patterns across the available data that would not have emerged if only searching to find "evidence" confirming initial assumptions about the role of emotions. The existing conceptualization of emotional framing as "striking a responsive chord" that *resonates* as an opportunity (Raffaelli et al., 2019) guided the largely deductive second step. Therefore, in the interview data, focus was on descriptions related to threats and opportunities (Jackson & Dutton, 1988), which inferences of the dominant emotions arising in the decision-making process (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). When analyzing the stage-gate document data, emphasis was on how projects framed decisions, drawing on Benford and Snow's distinction between diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames (2000), as this framework highlights how rhetorical framing processes can, in fact, lead to decisions and action.

Interviews With Decision Makers

The first open coding generated overarching themes that covered emotions, facts, decisions, solutions, and demands. The subsequent "in-vivo" coding (Saldaña, 2014) revealed that informants themselves used words and phrases emphasizing affect, such as "put feelings into the project," "fight for what you believe in," "ideas that change the world," and "we can see the fear painted on the faces." An initial observation was how project managers either "conquered the room" or "crept along the panels." These dimensions reflect a view by Albert Frederickson, Head of Product Development: "Personal relations and trust means a lot. How you act, how confidently you stand up, how good you are at answering questions. That is exactly what gives decision makers the safety and confidence!"

Dimensions of confidence and safety illuminated emotion as a key driver in framing decisions, as emotion involve dimensions of certainty and control (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985) and hence frames projects as opportunities worth pursuing, threats that an organization must avoid, or ambivalence that leaves decision makers confused. The connection between appraisals and avoid/approach behavior stems from the idea that when humans experience an event, they assess whether the event is *benign, threatening*, or *irrelevant*, and whether they can cope with it (Lazarus, 1993). Subsequent coding relied on the characteristics of threats and opportunities, as their appraisals constitute an affective component of cognition (Jackson & Dutton 1988, p. 375).

This coding elicited an emerging theme of "Creating confidence: invoking a feeling of safety and security". To accept a link between confidence and behavior, emotions can be legitimate reasons for action (Greenspan, 2004). Further, making a distinction between evoking and invoking emotion is helpful (Brinton, 1988). Evoking emotion is a matter of simply arousing an emotion, whereas invoking emotion concerns appealing to emotion as providing a reason for action; for instance future pride, "Due to the positive test results and low production costs, this product will enable us to establish our position as the leading provider." Three overall themes reflected the key behaviors that decision makers believed either supported (opportunity) or undermined (threat) the feeling of confidence that a project manager was able to invoke: *demonstrating project leadership, framing the purpose*, and *enabling decisions*. To understand the emotional experiences involved, a cognitive appraisal theory of emotion (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Tiedens & Linton, 2001) informed the subsequent analysis, hereby seeking to rely on more than just the emotive words chosen by the informants themselves, such as "fear" and "integrity". This approach dovetails with Elfenbein, who in her comprehensive review of emotions in organizations argues: "Cognitive appraisal theory is underappreciated for its power to shed light on phenomena central to organizations" (2007, p. 323). Decision making is arguably such a key phenomenon. Finally, the following analytical framework guided the analysis of emotions in stage-gate decisions (see table 8, including an illustrative example for each theme):

Table 8: Analytical framework: Emotions in stage-gate decisions

Illustrative quote	Meaning condensation	Appraisals	Inferred emotion
DEMONSTRATING PROJECT LEADERSHIP			
(Opportunity) Take command in the room instead of excusing yourself (Threat)			
"Too many project managers enter the room, creep along the wall and present their projects without securing my **confidence** that this is the 2nd best thing since sliced bread. You have to **believe in it** yourself as a project manager, and if you do not, and if you are not willing to fight for it, how are you going to get others to do so?" (Benjamin Emerson)	Decision-maker **confidence** relies on project manager's **willingness to fight**.	Unpleasant state. **High attention** and some **uncertainty** about willingness to invest sufficient energy.	**Frustration** when project managers fail to show that they believe in a project. **Interest** when they invoke belief.
FRAMING THE PURPOSE			
(Opportunity) Crystallize the purpose instead of assuming that decision makers can read your mind (Threat)			
"It is a double-edged knife. As a decision maker, I can have the feeling that this project is strange, we do not want to **waste time** on stage one and two with a product that **appears stillborn**. You would rather want an understanding that it is **relevant**. We can also play with an even bigger interval. We might not know enough about the market, but let us just say that we sell half of expected, then it looks like this, that is couching your assumption in a kind of **sensitivity analysis**. But at stage 3 then we begin to invest in production equipment and that puts a strain on the product." (Dennis Connor)	Double-edged knife to make early phase decisions	Ambivalence. Some **uncertainty** about future relevance. High **effort** that might go wasted. Lack of own control. Interval assessments can provide some degree of **certainty**.	**Anxiety** of continuing failing projects that constitute threat. **Hope** of investing in relevant project

ENABLING DECISIONS			
(Opportunity) Focus on decision consequences instead of irrelevant technical details (Threat)			
”You can see right from the beginning that this is going bad. It is typically also when project managers chose a wrong presentation strategy. They present **too many complicated things**, and you can see that the gatekeepers start to get **bored.** They pull out their IPads, when project managers do not get **to the point**, and a negative spiral emerge, where you can feel that this is not going well, and then the project managers react with more and more panic.” (Albert Frederickson)	Getting **to the point** quickly is crucial for keeping atten-tion. Excessive complicated details leads to **boredom** and lack of belief.	**Unpleasant** state. Certainty that the presentation will ‘go bad’ leads to **low effort** and **low attention**	**Boredom** and **frustration** due to project managers’ **anxiety**

Project Framings

The second analysis examined how projects framed decisions in stage-gate documents. Here, a rhetorical understanding of framing guided the analytical framework. In other words, frames function *rhetorically* because they filter information and put messages into a certain perspective that allows them to persuade audiences (Kuypers 2010, p. 301).

In initial readings and subsequent open coding of the stage-gate documents, three levels of *purpose framings*, often indicated by a why or the explications of a purpose, stood out: the *specific meeting*, the *overall project* itself, and/or its connection to long-term *strategic business aspirations*. Furthermore, it was possible to detect three *thematic frames* relating to the project managers’ justifications of their recommendation; these are *technical*, *commercial*, and *strategic*—terms that also corresponded with the choice of concepts in stage-gate documents.

All GGM projects applied technical, commercial, and strategic frames, whereas only a few of the PGM projects included strategic frames to support their recommendation to continue to the next stage. This provided a clue to the initial puzzle of how some framings have an emotional effect because they resonate with strategic sentiments and aspirations (Raffaelli et al., 2019). I chose to focus on the four GGM projects with the highest budgets, as they would be having gate meetings with the TMT decision makers. The projects were SWITCH (stages 1–3), ENERGY, and UPGRADE (both stages 1–2), in addition to CURVE (final stages, 4 and 5).

When further examining the *purpose* frames across the four strategic projects, Benford and Snow's distinction between diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames (2000, p. 615) stood out. Where some frames *diagnosed* a present problem (e.g., customers de-select existing products) or an expected problem (e.g., mitigating expected losses), other frames *prognosed* the impact of a proposed solution (e.g., expediting a current implementation plan to secure successful phase-out of an existing product), and a third group of frames provided a *motivating* rationale for further engaging in a project, often tied to strategic goals (e.g., differentiating GBCS from competitors in an increasingly competitive market). Neither Entman (1993), nor Kuypers (2010), nor Kaplan (2008) mention motivational framing, which is key to understanding emotions in framing. Rhetorical argumentation theory directly labels appeals to emotion as motivational arguments in which "the warrant provides a motive for accepting the claim by associating it with some inner drive, value, desire, emotion, or aspiration, or with a combination of such forces" (Brockriede & Ehninger, 1960, p. 51). Furthermore, rhetorical stasis theory enables one to distinguish between categories of disputes ranging from questions of facts and definition to those of evaluation and policy (Just & Mouton, 2014). When analyzing emotional framing with a rhetorical function it allows one to identify the dynamics between frames. A rhetorical framing lens that used the adapted distinctions between diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing guided the analysis of the four identified strategic projects. Table 9 below, which includes examples from each of the four GGM projects, illustrates the differences in framing:

Table 9: Analytical framework: Rhetorical framing of decisions

			Rhetorical framing		
		Decision	Diagnostic *what*	Prognostic *how*	Motivational *why*
		Which decision does the project propose?	What do we know? What is the problem?	What do we expect? How do we plan to solve the problems and/or mitigate risks?	What will we achieve? Why should we make this decision?
Project	ENERGY Gate 2	GO to gate 2	- Need to align requirements with sales companies - Improve product concepts	(Technical risks)	Set the standard: Differentiate from competitors, increase installer loyalty, and mitigate expected future loss
Project	UPGRADE Gate 2	GO to gate 2	- Lifting device is pushed to its limit - Only 85 % of products live up to our customer promise	- Improve performance on lifting device - Better product robustness	Functional performance upgrade incl. durability
Project	SWITCH Gate 3	Accept revised budget + GO to gate 3	- Switch is overly complicated, both for customers and installers - Existing switch is expensive	- Replace existing control with low cost pre-configured switch - Flexible market introductions	Offers opportunity to improve product relevancy + reduce cost
Project	CURVE Gate 4	Go to gate 4	- 17 % budget increase - Substantial technical issues since gate 3 - Time pressure - Project does not comply with gate criteria	- Alternative solution: Final product tests finalized 1 week before market launch	- Regains product leadership and establish position as market leader - Ensure strategic goal of 100,000 units in 2020

In sum, two iterative analytical processes enabled assessments of how decision makers felt about project framings as well as how project managers specifically framed decisions. This, in turn, enabled analyzing whether framings resonate with decision makers' underlying emotions.

Findings

Different framings all operate as potential arguments when project managers attempt to convince decision makers to let projects proceed to the next stage. The findings document the interactive, dynamic nature of the framing process, and how frames resonate emotionally. The first part documents how decision makers feel about the way project managers frame decisions; the second examines the degree of resonance between decision makers' emotions and project framings.

Emotional Framing

This section details how decision makers seek to feel confident that further investment in a project is worthwhile, as well as how they express these feelings. Findings on project framings, especially one project, reinforce findings on decision makers' positions. The CURVE project provides a relevant anti-thesis to what decision makers viewed as paramount to a successful project, for although the project in one case failed to meet the gate criteria, it still managed to maneuver through the successive stages to enter the market. Table 10 summarizes observations across the themes to show how decision makers expressed their views about project's (in)ability to inspire confidence (see also appendix 4 for further support of the inferred emotions).

Table 10: Invoking confidence in stage-gate decisions

Opportunity (positive, likely to decide in favor of project)		Threat (negative, likely to decide against project)
DEMONSTRATING PROJECT LEADERSHIP		
Take command in the room (*Happiness* and *interest* in supporting an expected success)	instead of	Excusing yourself (*Frustration* when project managers fail to demonstrate that they are in charge)
Put feelings into the projects (*Pride* when project managers invoke belief in fighting for the project)		Just "managing projects" (*Anger* and even *contempt* that project managers do not even fight for the project)
FRAMING THE PURPOSE		
Crystallize the purpose (the big WHY) (*Interest* in pursuing a project with strategic fit)	instead of	Assuming your audience to be mind-readers (*Anxiety* of continuing failing projects that constitute a threat. *Hope* of investing in relevant project)
Show that the project has examined all relevant angles (*Pride* when the stage-gate model supports *informed* decision making)		Trying to pass the gate at any cost (*Fear* of unobserved facts leads to *mistrust)*
ENABLING DECISIONS		
Provide clear recommendations (*Pride* that project managers value project as their own business)	Instead of	Asking "What do you think?" (*Frustration* and *fear* of lack of own control)
Focus on decision consequences (*Happiness* when project managers made proper impact assessments)		Irrelevant technical details (*Boredom* and *frustration* due to project managers' *anxiety)*

Demonstrating Project Leadership

All decision makers agreed that project managers must take command when they enter stage-gate meetings. Otherwise, the executives find projects to be "uphill" from the outset and thus difficult to believe. However, "taking command" and "putting feelings into a project" are no easy feat. In particular, the findings from the interview data underline that showing and invoking confidence are two different operations, the latter of which is the focus of this analysis.

Take Command. The first aspect of ”demonstrating project leadership” concerns the extent to which project managers take command. If they do not, they are in for a “tough” lesson, as TMT member Curtis Douglas, the COO and Executive Officer for Supply Chain and Product, explained:

> Take command! If you don’t take command, then you’re lost. Here, you are building on mutual respect, but it’s not certain that you’re getting my respect or anyone else’s respect if you’re just floating around. We can wait until you reach a point where you want questions, but if we cannot see a clear connection, then we become impatient, and we have 20 minutes, and then we take over. You have to show a presence and an authority that demonstrates that “you know your shit.” If you don’t … tough! (Own translation; “you know your shit” appeared in English in original)

From the perspective of cognitive appraisal theory of emotion (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Huy, 2011), the situation Douglas described can lead to *frustration* and *anger*. The following observations enables this inference: If the project manager does not “take command,” but rather “floats around,” they signal that decision makers can legitimately be uncertain, and when decision makers cannot see where a presentation is heading, they become impatient and want to cut the presenter short. From this impatience, decision makers can become frustrated and angry rather than, say, fearful because angry people “perceive negative events as predictable, under human control, and brought about by others” (Lerner & Keltner, 2000, p. 479). Therefore, a project manager’s failure to take command signals that the decision makers need to act, and possible action (from the decision makers’ affective perspective) is to interrupt the presentation to obtain solid answers regarding the scope of the project.

Put Feelings Into the Project. Excellent project managers are, in fact, “project leaders,” as Franklin Ahrens, Vice President for Global Product Management, saw it. To ascribe such leadership, decision makers must be able to sense a belief in and willingness to fight for the project. TMT member, Benjamin Emerson, simply rejected projects that failed to give him this impression:

> As a project manager, you have to be ready to put your feelings into the project and fight for what you believe in. If you’re not certain that what you bring to the table is really good, well, then you leave that interpretation up to the decision makers. “This thing, they [project managers] don’t even believe in it themselves.” Should we then say yes? No way!

When project managers fail to “put feelings into the project,” they create an unpleasant situation that can arouse anger in decision makers. Inferring from the quote and Emerson’s tone of voice in the interview, the rejection and the certainty with which he declared it are clear. If project managers are not passionately certain of their projects, then decision makers, in turn, will feel certain that they should terminate the project. This presentation can thus be viewed as failing to instill an emotional belief (Mercer, 2010) through emotional contagion, defined as “the transfer of moods among people in a group” (Barsade, 2002, p. 644). Emotional contagion, understood as social influence, relates to the previous dimension of taking command, and here verbal and non-verbal cues (at the actual gate meeting) can play a significant role. If the impression of how a meeting unfolds correlates with what project managers communicated in their pre-reading material, and if negative impressions (cognitive and emotional), like those above, resonate, there is little reason for decision makers to let a project proceed. In other words, if project managers who doubt their projects emphasize this doubt, decision makers will terminate the project before the meeting has begun, because they can regard future expectations as being implausible (Garud et al., 2014). Curtis Douglas expressed this opinion clearly:

> You can never begin a presentation by downgrading yourself and telling us, well, maybe we haven't achieved what we should, but we hope it's good enough. If you begin like that, then forget it! Or if you begin by saying "I haven't really had the time that maybe I should have to prepare myself…" If you begin like that, then you have already sent the signal "this is crap."

One project that signaled the opposite of "crap" was the CURVE project. In the very first paragraph of the gate 4 pre-read, the project framed the purpose in the following way:

> **Why** In this document, you will be presented with one of the most exciting projects at GBCS and with three important decision points that must be answered in order to powerfully bring the new, unique, and innovative GBCS CURVE product to the market in 2017. (Pre-read for gate 4, p. 1)

"Most exciting," "important," "new, unique, and innovative" certainly raise the bar, thus showing that the project managers believe in the project. However, the notable choice of words are also highlighted because of their potential effect on critical decision makers who, besides putting feelings into projects and project presentations, also value certainty and consistency. When the CURVE project team and the project manager raised expectations, they also exposed themselves to a reasoning trap; by making such bold statements, they raised expectations and created a demand that these must be fulfilled. Demanding that project managers "put feelings into the project" is one thing; however, other than starting their oral presentations with self-confidence and presenting their projects with evaluative words capable of eliciting an emotional reaction like that above, how do project managers frame their strategic communication to invoke a sense of confidence in decision makers?

Framing the Purpose

To answer this, let us begin by further elucidating the importance decision makers put on project managers' ability to contextualize projects and connect the multifarious pieces of the puzzle to create a coherent story, in essence to "frame" the project.

Crystallize the purpose: For the decision makers, framing was primarily about frontloading the purpose, but as will show, projects can fulfill various purposes across time, which makes the choice of which purpose to emphasize even more important—and possibly more difficult. Albert Frederickson underlines the importance: "The big WHY. Why are we doing this? Too often, it gets mixed up with technical solutions and a small side-note about why we make this product."

When project managers explain and substantiate the overall reason for pursuing a project, decision makers may enter a pleasant state in which they can experience some certainty, despite the inherent contradiction in feeling certain about uncertain outcomes. As such, framing a project's role in the bigger (strategic) picture helps to stimulate an *interest* that can impel decision makers to see why the project should continue. Conversely, project managers that fail to generate such interest risk reinforcing a pervasive sense of uncertainty about strategic relevance, and although greater uncertainty correlates with feelings of hope and surprise, it can similarly lead to *fear* and *frustration* (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985, p. 827).

"Telling" was not enough to make decision makers believe. Project managers had to clearly show that they had examined their projects from the relevant angles. How does one achieve this in the 20 minutes slotted for a gate meeting? The short answer is that no one can do this in any real detail, but, the decision makers' actually did noy expect this.

Show that the project has examined all relevant angles: If project managers failed to show that they had examined all the facts relevant to their projects, *insecurity* prevented decisions:

> For me, it's important how the process of building a decision foundation has been. What are the premises available to us when we are to make these decisions? One of the things

that make me insecure is if I cannot trust that all facts have been presented. (Dennis Connor, Head of Quality)

Connor’s remark helps illustrate how a fear that crucial—at least in his and other decision makers’ eyes—facts had been overlooked reflected their lack of control over the situation. Decision makers without a sense of control ultimately felt mistrust. However, they felt that they could exert some control by putting pressure on project managers and “acid testing their argumentation” to make sure that they did not “take a random project and try to force it through the gates just because it’s their baby” (Curtis Douglas). Decision makers that experience uncertainty push a little harder, which leads to further questioning. In this process, mistrust breeds further mistrust, creating what Franklin Ahrens refers to as a “self-perpetuating effect that increases the inquisitiveness of other gate members.”

Strategic Purpose as Goal-Framing. It is now time to dive deeper into an illustrative example from the CURVE project and unpack the dynamics and potential tensions between *strategic* and *project* frames, for this purpose applying the distinction between diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing (Benford & Snow, 2000). At gate 4 of the project, there were tensions. The framing of long-term commercial goals and strategic ambitions clashed with the project manager’s request for a transition to the next stage despite not meeting the formal requirements for gate 4. For an excerpt of the analysis, see table 11 (bold emphases added to highlight frames):

Table 11: Framing decision proposals, Project CURVE at stage-gate 4

	Rhetorical framing		
Decision	Diagnostic *what*	Prognostic *how*	Motivational *why*
Which decision does the project propose?	What do we know? What is the problem?	What do we expect? How do we plan to solve the problems and/or mitigate risks?	What will we achieve? Why should we make this decision?
Main claim: GBCS CURVE is a revolutionary product (p. 13)			
"Project recommends passage to Gate 4, conditioned by GGM acceptance of described decisions."	"Gate criteria is fulfilled: No" "overall economy has increased from an approved limit of 17.65 million EUR to 20.6 million EUR i.e. a total **increase of +17%**." "Since gate 3 the project has experienced **substantial technical issues** with the bonding between glass and the aluminum surface." "However the issues has caused that the project is now under **time pressure** and is working with a **higher risk level**. Additionally the alternative solution is **more expensive** that what was presented at gate 3." "All stage 3 activities have been conducted. However, due to failed motor test and failed bonding test on sealant, project does **not comply with gate criteria**."	"The project has worked extensively on the issues and has with success identified an **alternative solution** enabling the project to continue towards market launch." "Never the less the project team is **proud** to say they still believe in launching the new unique and innovative GBCS CURVE product to all European markets in April 2017." "Hence, in order to **avoid postponement** of market launch, GGM will be **asked to approve** that motor lifetime tests finishes after motor ramp-up and that final external product tests are finalized **one week** prior to actual market launch."	The launch in April 2017, on all European markets, **will secure** that GBCS **regains product leadership** and further **establishes our position as market leader** specifically within the residential segment. Furthermore, this launch will ensure our **strategic goal** of selling 100.000 units a year in 2020.

The diagnostic framing highlights challenges to financial, technical, and project-related dimensions—in this instance an increase in project costs due to technical difficulties, in other words problems related to the project itself and not to customer- or business-related issues that the project was helping to solve. Most importantly, the technical failures meant that the project did not meet the gate criteria, which would normally constitute prevent going to a gate meeting.

However, the prognostic framing showed that the project had "identified an alternative solution" that could "avoid postponement of market launch." Lastly, the motivational framing provided an overall strategic ambition to re-consider whether failed tests should prevent the project from proceeding to the next stage. To invoke a sufficient sense of confidence, the project manager appears to have handled this tension between certainty (a diagnostic frame underlining a failed test) and uncertainty (prognostic and motivational frames proposing the launch could be delayed) by relying on what decision makers find an acceptable risk—in this case the completion of tests (just) one week before market launch.

This leads us to the last theme, which relates directly to how decision makers felt when they judged projects and how project managers proposed decisions, especially when such decisions meant that TMT members would have to re-consider normal procedures, as the CURVE project documents.

Enabling Decisions

Provide Clear Recommendations. Decision makers unanimously asked for clear recommendations, acknowledging that this required courage given the apparent power asymmetries between top management and project managers, responsible for the projects but in this study with no direct management responsibilities:

> It requires the courage from them [project managers] to say: "What does all of this information tell us, and which decisions do we believe that we should recommend?" And then provide a well-reasoned recommendation for a decision. (Dennis Connor)

When project managers are able to provide a well-reasoned recommendation to guide decisions, decision makers are left in a pleasant state where other people's courage protects them from engaging in too risky projects. Courage is an multi-faceted emotional concept, as it stems from the French word for heart, *cœur,* defined as "mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty" (Merriam-Webster, 2020). The immediate danger in the decision making is epistemic uncertainty about future outcomes. However, when project managers show that the projects are in control, they may reduce the anticipated effort of having to explain badly invested resources. Further, when project managers provide a well-reasoned recommendation, a feeling of pride in the stage-gate model can emerge from witnessing project managers take upon themselves the responsibility that decision makers expect. In short, well-reasoned recommendations ease the burden of decision making under uncertainty.

Focus on Decision Consequences. Decision consequences were the other dimension that decision makers valued highly:

> The kind of argumentation that convinces me is when we have verified, or we have an indication of, when I'll be talking with our sales companies, are they going to completely abandon the idea and tell me, "We just can't sell it, we won't remain cost-competitive, or are we going to lose share?" That's decisive for me. That somebody did the homework, what are the consequences? It's in reality about impact assessments. (Franklin Ahrens)

Impact assessments may create a pleasant emotional state where decision makers can appear knowledgeable in their conversations with GBCS's internal sales companies. When a presentation lacks such impact assessment—the risk mitigation model used by the CURVE project encompassed impact and probability—uncertainty about outcomes can grow, causing decision makers to anticipate that a greater (future) effort will be required to move the project from idea to market.

Let us return to the CURVE project to see how its project manager depicted decision consequences as part of the framing. The motivational framing ties the argument together by presenting a conditional argument-from-consequence (Walton, 1996). If GBCS launches the CURVE product in April 2017, then it "will *secure* that GBCS *regains product leadership* and further *establishes our position as market leader*" and "ensure our *strategic goal* of selling 100,000 units a year in 2020" (Pre-read for gate 4, p. 1, emphases added to underline the argument).

How the project manager chose to frame the promised outcomes is interesting: Whereas *regaining* product leadership implies that GBCS either lost product leadership or never had it, further *establishing* its position rests on a premise that it is a current market leader. As such, both frames in the motivational framing revolve around future outcomes and expectations, as well as subtly establish two premises that audiences (unknowingly) can come to accept in choosing to continue the project. This echoes Benford and Snow's description of strategic framing processes as "deliberative, utilitarian, and goal directed" (2000, p. 624). The project manager framed the project's potential gains as outweighing the increased risks of continuing a project that did not meet internal technical requirements (failed test results), arguing that achieving the desired outcomes depended on an April launch. The decision makers weighed which warrant was strongest: complying with the stage-gate model (a project that does not meet the gate criteria cannot pass) or pursuing a promising project that could increase sales (a project with commercial potential warrants a search for alternatives)?

The decision log for gate 4 shows that the decision makers approved a transition to stage 4 but not within the proposed timeframe: "Go for gate 4—but instead of announcing market launch in April 2017, we announce that the product is available in autumn 2017—no specific month to be mentioned" (p. 11). The next project document (gate 5.1, last gate before market launch) provides further insight into why an April launch (on some product lines) still happened. TMT members Curtis Douglas and Eric Bergson, Senior Vice President for Market & Product Support, had allowed the project to progress towards the planned market launch: "Despite the fact that the new motor has not met all internal requirements, a *dispensation* has been given by

Douglas and Bergson" based on a "thorough risk assessment resulting in a risk of 1.6% claims of total sales" (Pre-read, gate 5.1). Accordingly, "the economic gains from an accelerated market launch significantly outweigh both monetary and intangible costs" (Pre-read, gate 5.1). It appears that the "gamble" to work on an ultra-tight schedule actually paid off—at least measured in the project securing the market launch. At stage 5.1, the project could deliver the expected test results, acquire the necessary dispensation, and thus uphold a belief in achieving the strategic goal of selling 100,000 units in 2020. In the last stage-gate document (gate 5.2, after market launch), the project could—almost triumphantly—prove that the tactic had paid off. Despite the test failures and technical difficulties, the project actually ended up under-promising and then over-delivering on the sales goal, as the following excerpt from the gate 5.2 pre-read shows:

> The new unique and innovative GBCS CURVE unit and extensive commercial efforts have resulted in hype around the product, resulting in *an increase in sales of +54%* on average compared to forecasts at Gate 5.1. Our strategic goal of selling 100,000 units a year in 2020 is estimated to be reached in *2019*. (Emphases added)

Demonstrating Project Leadership, Framing the Purpose, Enabling Decisions

In summary, the decision makers all described certain behaviors, analyzed as rhetorical framing capable of invoking feelings of confidence, safety, and security. Using a cognitive appraisal theory of emotion, the primary negative emotions influencing decision processes were *anger*, *fear* and *frustration*, especially as they related to uncertainty and lack of control from the decision makers' perspective, and on the positive side, *happiness* and *pride* when project managers were able to demonstrate project leadership. Equally relevantly, there is an absence of *hope*, an emotion related to uncertainty that one might therefore have anticipated to occur. Moreover, recent research has demonstrated that hope is a powerful emotion in situations of uncertainty and can “trump fear” when one is deciding whether to continue an otherwise failing venture (Huang et al., 2019, p. 1852).

Furthermore, the specific examination of the CURVE project, which partly functions as an anti-thesis to the explicitly articulated framing preferences of the stage-gate decision-making process, illustrated how a project could bypass otherwise necessary gate criteria by making risks appear sufficiently small. Thus, the CURVE project invoked a feeling of sufficient confidence when it combined ambitious strategic goals (“*powerfully* bring the *new*, *unique*, and *innovative* GBCS CURVE product to the market in 2017”) with a solution deemed unlikely to cause customers claims.

How Do Frames Resonate With Decision Makers?

The concept of *resonance* may further explain under which conditions frames connect with decision makers’ aspirations, as it occurred in the CURVE project, and to provide a preliminary explanation of how the prevalent frustration was expressed. Why resonance? The initial interest came directly from how Raffaelli et al. phrase their propositions on emotional framing: “Nonincremental innovations that *emotionally resonate* [emphasis added] as an opportunity among the TMT and members of the extended management team are more likely to be adopted” (2019, p. 1026).

When exploring the role of emotions in framing processes, Giorgi’s distinction between cognitive and emotional resonance is helpful, especially regarding potential obstacles to achieving resonance (2017, p. 717). The purpose (why) of appealing to audience cognition is to “overcome uncertainty and attract attention,” and that of appealing to audience emotion is to “overcome indifference and foster emotional experiences” (Giorgi, 2017, p. 727). Considering the dynamic interaction between reason and emotion (Damasio, 1994; Li et al., 2014), separating life experiences from emotional experience appear difficult, but for theoretical purposes, the distinction shall remain for now. The two dimensions of resonance dovetail with two of the reported findings: decision-makers seek a feeling of confidence, and they emphasize the need to frame the purpose. Whereas *confidence-seeking* on the part of the decision maker relates to convincing oneself that the uncertainty of the available (empirical) data and the (bad) impression given by the project manager is less important than the advantage of pursuing the opportunity, *purpose-framing* relates to overcoming the feeling of indifference if one cannot grasp the bigger picture or the "big WHY". These two dimensions prompt further examination of the cognitive and emotional construct of resonance, namely empirical credibility and emotional contagion.

Empirical Credibility

Do project frames fit decision makers' experiences? Although empirical credibility refers to the apparent fit between framings and events in the world, the paramount dimension is whether the audience reads the evidence that frame articulators present as indicative of given claims (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 620). Moreover, to make qualified inferences as to why decision makers view some frames as (empirically) credible, one should also take the credibility of the project managers (their ethos in the decision makers' eyes) into account. In short, do the frames and frame articulators appear credible to the decision makers?

Before answering this question, we shall revisit which experiences decision makers say influence their judgment of projects. Project managers who recommended closing down projects in the face of insufficient facts to support their continuation earned the decision makers' respect and would therefore "win in the long run" (Curtis Douglas). Decision makers asked for clear recommendations (whether positive or negative) based on "thorough factual and objective analyses of a need for what we deliver" (Albert Frederickson). The analysis of project framings found that only one of 16 gate documents recommended that a project be "killed" due to its insufficient test results. However, on closer examination, several project managers postponed scheduled gate meetings, asking for status meetings instead because they were not ready. Such consecutive delays may decrease empirical credibility, as they confirm decision makers' prior experiences with delays and thus amplify a *frame inconsistency*, even though everyone agreed that high quality and robustness are key to long-term commercial success. The experiences with delays served to further decrease the overall frame credibility despite there being good reasons for the unexpected delays. However, project managers that initially set an unrealistic market launch date ended up "becoming your own worst enemy by overestimating volume to get it through, which in turn affects the investment that Supply Chain has to make. You do not do yourself a favor" (Curtis Douglas). Consequently, decision makers came to view necessary corrections to an initial (early phase) plan as breaking a promise.

However, is this not also exactly what happened to the CURVE project? The project manager broke the initial expectation of launching all product lines in April 2017, but also managed to gradually deliver on prognostic framings (from gate 4 to 5.1), thus creating a counterweight that resonated with the decision makers' ambition of reaching a strategic sales goal. Benjamin Emerson summarized how invoking confidence relies on a project manager's considering and mitigating potential risks, thus emphasizing the empirical (cognitive) aspect of credibility:

> The more you can create confidence that "we have thought about it," the better. But, if you arrive at every meeting and tell us you haven't had time, so the market launch will be delayed, and you've found out that costs have increased by 8%. Last time you told us about a 4% increase. Is it on top of the 8%, so we are now at 12%? "Yes, we're at 12% now." Then you risk that we close the project. It's about taking responsibility!

This emphasizes the interaction between cognitive and emotional resonance. The analysis of project framings found a dynamic between diagnostic (facts and a definition of what constitutes, for example, a problem), prognostic (evaluation), and motivational (advocative) frames. At gate 4 of the CURVE project, no one could deny that the product had performed inadequately on tests and failed to meet the gate criteria. The project team had neither questioned nor challenged the legitimacy of this diagnosis, but simply accepted it and provided an alternative (prognostic framing) for reaching the original strategic goal. Had the project team not insisted on framing the initial launch date as a requirement for reaching this goal (motivational), it would have had little reason to pursue it. Still, the project would have probably reached this goal, because at gate 5.2 the project team could report the 54% hike in average sales compared to the gate 5.1 forecasts. GBCS could then project that it would hit its sales target of 100,000 units already in 2019, as opposed to 2020, as previously forecast.

Emotional contagion

When project managers “put feelings into projects” and “fight for what they believe in,” they are more likely to pass on such aspirations to decision makers. Hence, there is a direct link between project managers’ showing a willingness to fight and decision makers’ believing that a project can deliver on the strategic purpose, for such emotional contagion helps to assure a decision maker that the project manager understands and respects the emotional weight of making the decision. Curtis Douglas provided a telling account of how much understanding this pressure meant to him as the person holding the responsibility:

> They lack the ability to thoroughly understand that we have limited time. It’s this *understanding of another person’s feelings* [emphasis added]—that they become better at understanding the situation we’re in. We’re the ones who put our necks on the line and say, let’s do it. That’s where we’re not good enough.

However, this dynamic adds complexity, as it indicates that emotional resonance arises not only between framer and frame, as Giorgi states (2017, p. 727), but also between frame articulator (project manager), frame, and frame recipient (decision maker) across time. A primary role of project managers, as well as other middle managers, is to navigate the often-contradictory logics between technical, commercial, and strategic concerns (Heracleous, 2002). As described in the previous section, project managers who navigate well are capable of instilling belief in—and increasing the credibility of—a project by demonstrating how the actions of today (prognostic how) will enable future strategic ambitions (motivational why) despite existing constraints (diagnostic what). Simultaneously, project managers must also demonstrate, even physically in meetings, that they identify with both the subject (project) and object (strategic purpose) of framing, thereby spurring "a passionate involvement that goes beyond the experience of a specific emotion" (Giorgi, 2017, p. 721).

To summarize, emotional contagion can lead to emotional resonance (while resonance does not, per se, lead to contagion), and separating emotional from cognitive resonance is difficult because proving credibility and envisioning a strategic fit relate to a cognitive-affective aspect of decision making. This brings us to the concluding discussion, in which the concept of strategic resonance can bridge cognitive and emotional frame resonance.

Concluding Discussion: Emotional Framing and Strategic Resonance

This qualitative field study on the framing processes between project managers and decision makers has sought to expand an emerging perspective on management decisions that combines research on framing and emotion to further elucidate strategic processes.

The study makes two contributions. First, it adds to a process view of framing (Purdy et al., 2019; Reinecke & Ansari, 2020) and further illuminates the interactional dynamic between emotional and cognitive framing. Second, it theorizes strategic resonance as an emerging iterative mechanism that can help explain how decision makers come to view a project—and likely other organizational phenomena that deploy temporality, such as strategic change processes (Kunisch et al., 2017)—as sufficiently promising despite inherent strategic uncertainty. On the basis of this empirical inquiry, I propose a theoretical model that provides a nuanced understanding of strategic resonance as a framing process as well as invites further research in management and organization studies.

Emotional Framing

The study adds to the growing understanding and appreciation of emotional framing in strategic decision making, including in innovation development. In relation to recent conceptualizations (Raffaelli et al., 2019; Giorgi, 2017), this study highlights how emotional framing often takes place as an interaction between organizational actors, thus adding both complexity and realism. Further, unlike Jackson and Dutton (1988), who see a dichotomy between threats and opportunities built on a valence-based understanding of emotion (negative–positive), this study took advantage of a cognitive appraisal approach where distinct emotions relate to evaluations of environment and interaction with other persons (Moors et al., 2013), such as certainty, a crucial factor in decision making. In the study, decision makers across functions generally searched for a feeling of confidence, safety, and security—a sense that they were doing the right thing. The contribution made here intersects cognitive and emotional framing to uncover how organizational actors invoke credible feelings of safety and security without falling prey to producing rhetorical fantasies of certainty (March, 2006).

Whereas much recent organizational research has examined fear (Vuori & Huy, 2016), happiness, and sadness (Treffers et al., 2020) and explored the combination of fear, hope, shame, and anger (Goodrick et al., 2019), this study examined the mechanism of invoking emotion as felt reasons for action (Brinton, 1988), with the focus being on confidence. This emphasis on how framing invokes feelings enables a dynamic view of framing that encompasses emotional and cognitive interaction. It shows that saying “everything is under control” is not enough to invoke a feeling of confidence and convince a managerial decision maker; one has to "show it." Such showing resembles a "rhetorical proof," which entails making a proposal both probable and desirable and thus connecting cognitive and emotional resonance. When one accepts that emotions can be legitimate reasons for action (Greenspan, 2004), invoking emotion provides an emotionally compelling reason for action (Brinton, 1988). Although a fine line can exist between the two constructs, invoking confidence, which the decision makers in the current study underscored as essential, relies on providing *adequate grounds* for believing in taking the next step, and thereby reflects the need to pair emotional reasoning with the available evidence (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). Hence, to invoke a feeling of confidence, one must cross the theoretical border between cognitive and emotional framing and accept that, to invoke such a feeling, a manager has to convince decision makers that they have examined all available explanations. Project managers cannot eliminate all lingering doubts simply because TMT decision makers are gazing into a future that only exists in the present (Kornberger, 2016).

Strategic Resonance

Reflecting this interaction between emotional and cognitive framing, the concept of strategic resonance can help to explain when projects *progress* despite experiencing a reduction in empirical credibility, as the analysis of the CURVE project indicates. Recognizing earlier conceptualizations within technology innovation (Brown & Fai, 2006) and strategy making (Knight et al., 2018), the notion of dynamic emergence suggest that when framing strategic decisions, strategic resonance is "the emerging accordance of ambition and achievability" (see figure 7).

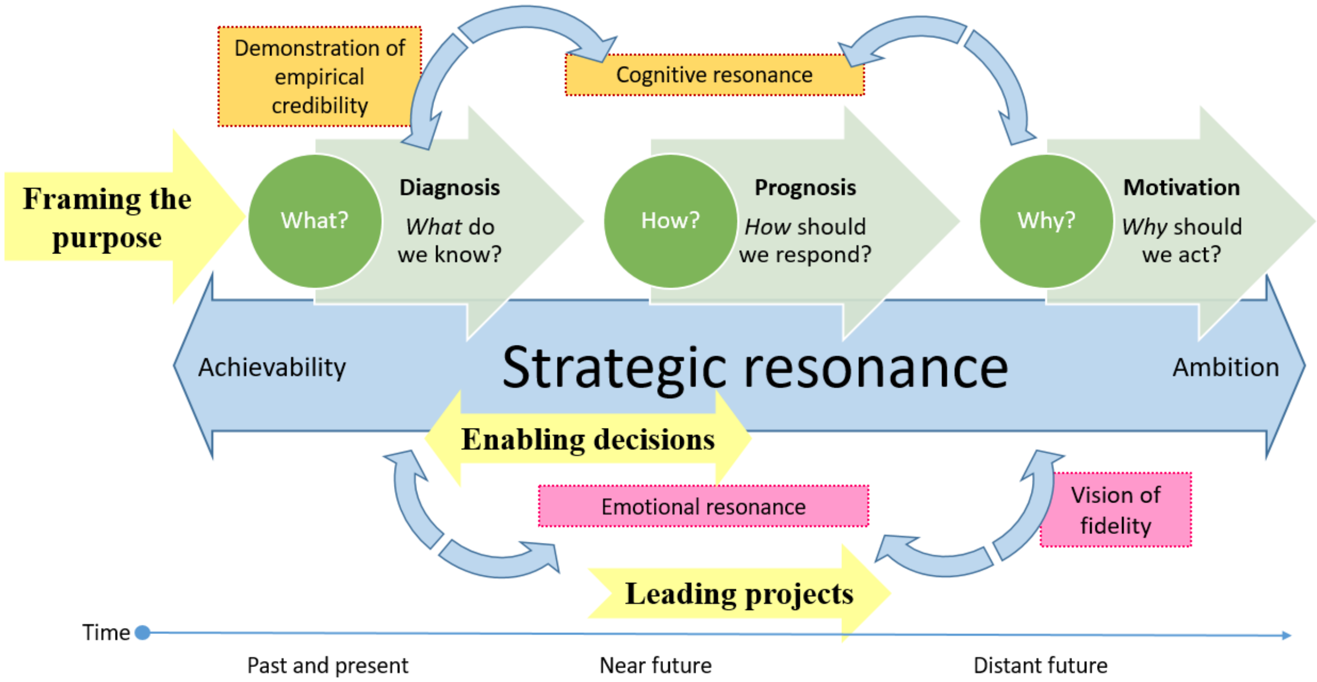

Figure 7: Strategic resonance as the emerging accordance of ambition and achievability

Strategic resonance arises when empirical credibility (appeals that cognitively resonate with achievability) and visions of fidelity (appeals that emotionally resonate with ambition) interact in a manner persuasive enough for decision makers to allow a project to proceed towards its strategic purpose, despite the inevitable uncertainties that come with exploring uncharted terrain (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013). When decision making under uncertainty is viewed from a framing perspective, strategic resonance becomes the outcome of a dynamic epistemic interaction between framings of what we know to be(come) true (the diagnostic *what* and prognostic *how)* and what we want to realize in a distant future (the motivational *why*). To resonate with decision makers, the framing of an innovative product has to both fulfill an ambitious strategic purpose and credibly frame the means of reaching this goal. Building on the specific findings of this study, the enablement of decisions resides in the tension between diagnostic and prognostic framings, and that project leadership (or other organizational phenomena that include temporal work) depends heavily on the creation of emotional experiences that both warrant identification (Giorgi, 2017) and strengthen the empirical credibility. Ultimately, this mechanism is an emerging accordance of emotion and reason.

This study provides a more nuanced understanding of the emotional foundation for achieving frame resonance. Naturally, further research aimed at examining under which conditions the interactive understanding of cognitive and emotional framings holds true are necessary. One particularly relevant issue to explore is what the boundary conditions of strategic resonance are. For instance, how far can one stretch an ambition to achieve a strategic goal if the empirical credibility of the prognostic frames intended to lead the way to the goal decrease? Take, for example, vision statements that fail to provide an identity consistency (Venus et al., 2019). Investigating such mechanisms through even more detailed process studies (Langley, 1999) could open up for an examination of the ways organizational actors temporally translate distant events to influence present activities (Hernes & Schultz, 2020).

In conclusion, this study focuses on the rhetorical dynamism and organizational interactivity of framing. A field study showed that to invoke emotions of confidence in TMT decision makers, managers must lead projects, frame purposes, and enable decisions. Although living up to such demands to fit the simplistic managerial fantasy of “decisiveness, certainty, and clarity” (March, 2006, p. 71) can be hard, the study demonstrates that, to achieve support for a proposal, one must construct an emerging accordance of ambition and achievability to drive decision making under conditions of uncertainty. Achieving such a degree of *strategic resonance* requires that cognitive and emotional frames interact, for only then can one strike a balance between demonstrating the feasibility of a proposal and projecting its strategic potential.

6. Affecting Argumentative Action

The Temporality of Decisive Emotion

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Abstract

This paper explores the interrelations between temporality and emotion in rhetorical argumentation. It argues that in situations of uncertainty argumentation affects action via appeals that invoke emotion and thereby translate the distant past and future into the situated present. Using practical inferences, a three-fold model for the interrelation of emotion and time in argumentation outlines how argumentative action depends on whether speakers provide reasons for the exigence that makes a decision necessary, the contingency of the decision, and the confidence required to act. Experiences and choices from the past influence the emotions experienced in the present and inform two intertemporal mechanisms that allow speakers and audiences to take the leap of faith that defines decision making under uncertainty: retrospective forecasting and prospective remembering. Retrospective forecasting establishes a past-future-present link, whereas prospective remembering establishes a future-past-present link, and, together, the two mechanisms provide a situated presence that transcends the temporal constraints of uncertainty. Finally, the applicability of the model is illustrated through an analysis of a speech delivered by Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a time where the need for decisive, yet argumentative action was crucial.

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (W.H.O.) declared the ongoing outbreak of COVID-19 a pandemic, leading politicians around the world to advocate for decisive action. In Denmark at 8:00 p.m. CET that same day, the Danish prime minister and leader of the Social Democratic Party, Mette Frederiksen, thus began what politicians, industry leaders, and commentators shortly after dubbed “a historical press conference” (Schulz, 2020), stating: “What I will say tonight is going to have major consequences for all Danes.” She then went on to announce the most drastic lockdown of Danish society in peacetime.

Forty-four minutes later, an opposition member of the Danish Parliament, Mette Abildgaard of the Conservative People’s Party, tweeted: “Good press conference by the Prime Minister. Will possibly hate myself for this tweet at the next election, but I trust her as prime minister in these very serious times.”[5]

Abildgaard’s tweet illustrates that while emotions may exist and change across time (present trust, future hate), they also shape opinion and agency in the present. To make decisions under uncertainty is to feel one’s motives well up inside oneself and then act upon them (Helm, 2009). While the safest bet for any decision maker might be to hold out for more data and their tantalizing promise of predictability, novel and uncertain situations amplify the dilemma between an epistemic waiting game and a prudential willingness to act incisively. Existing argumentation research suggests deliberation about *choice of action* (Kock, 2017) under uncertain circumstances (Walton, 1990; Tindale, 2018) define rhetorical situations.

Uncertainty has a both epistemic and practical character in rhetorical argumentation (Zarefsky, 2019), which emphasizes the critical importance of time because a practical choice has prospective outcomes, whereas demonstration leads to true conclusions, independent of the

[5] Unless otherwise stated, I have translated all quotes. Where necessary, I explain the reason for using a specific word. In this case, Abildgaard used the Danish word “tryg,” which in this context translates as “trust,” although one could also translate it as confident, because confidence stems from the Latin *confīdere, that is* “to put trust in, have confidence in, be sure.” “Tryg” stems from Old Norse, “tryggr,” and German “true,” underlining the etymological connection with trust.

passing of time (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2010). Indeed, emotions are inevitable, especially in situations of uncertainty, but a person's decision-making capacity also depends on them (Damasio, 1994). Building on Damasio's groundbreaking work, Barrett underlined: "Affect is not just necessary for wisdom; it's also irrevocably woven into the fabric of every decision" (2017, p. 80).[6]

The rhetorical tradition has always embraced emotion in persuasion (Katula, 2003), just as it recognizes the centrality of time to persuasion (Miller, 1994; Tindale, 2018, p. 182). Although Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca hinted at the emotional nature of temporality in argumentation (2010, p. 319), and emotion scholars mentioned the past and future orientations of emotion (e.g., Helm, 2009; Lerner et al., 2015), the temporality of appeals to emotion in argumentation studies remains largely unexplored.[7] Scott has recently encouraged further research "thematizing the essentially temporal idea of ethos" (2020, p. 35), but he and other argumentation scholars appear silent about the need to connect pathos and temporality in relation to decision making. This paper seeks to shed light on this blind spot by exploring the connection between emotions and time in argumentation.

This aspiration begins with Micheli's call to further examine "the discursive constructs of situations and their emotional orientation" (2010, p. 15). Such discursive constructs of situations involve not only the present situation but also future projections, which argumentation may affect and act as grounds for choosing one option over another. Given that decisions happen in the now, one must understand how speakers successfully make the future—which their

[6] In line with a well-established distinction within emotion research, I use *affect* as an umbrella term covering mood and emotion, in which emotions are discrete and intense but short-lived experiences, and *moods* are longer, more diffuse experiences that lack an awareness of the eliciting stimulus (Elfenbein, 2007).

[7] In a recent special issue of *Argumentation* on time and place (Tindale, 2020), emotions play an insignificant role despite their role in practical argumentation that focuses on the future (e.g. Walton, 1992, 1996; Tindale, 2018, chapter 8; Kock, 2017). However, see Cigada (2006) for a valuable exception and Macagno and Walton (2014, p. 68) for a brief mention.

decisions will affect—present, using the past as a central resource. My main argument in this paper is as follows: In uncertain situations, argumentation affects action via appeals that invoke emotion and thereby translate the distant past and future into a situated present. Emotions make arguments about the future appear present, creating an opportunity for action that enables people to believe in and act on them.

I seek to contribute to rhetorical argumentation in two respects. Theoretically, understanding the temporality of emotion can strengthen our appreciation of the *logos of the passions* (Brinton, 1988a; Waddell, 1990; Micheli, 2010), which, I argue, is necessary in any deliberation about choice where emotions and incommensurable values render a common yardstick for reaching a "true" conclusion futile (Kock, 2017, p. 60). Societally, the year 2020 marks the outbreak of a global pandemic and the rise of a social movement against systemic racism, not to mention an ongoing climate crisis. Such consequential global crises stir the emotions, and emotions must be harnessed rhetorically to engage citizens in both the necessary decision making and to mobilize support for solutions. Now more than ever, it is apparent that emotions inevitably influence decision making (Vohs et al., 2007); the question is how to harness them rhetorically in a way that enables such decision making to be wise.

In terms of making a conceptual contribution, a three-fold model for interrelating emotion and time in argumentation can illustrate how speakers must provide reasons for (i) the exigence that makes a decision necessary, (ii) the contingency of the decision, and (iii) the confidence required to act. Experiences and choices from the past influence the emotions experienced in the present and inform two intertemporal mechanisms that allow speakers and audiences to take the leap of faith in decision making: *retrospective forecasting*, which establishes a past-future-present link, and *prospective remembering*, which establishes a future-past-present link.

To investigate the connection between temporality and emotion in argumentation, I first review the roles of time and emotion in argumentation, and then combine insights from two strands of argumentation theory to substantiate my synthesis and propose a conceptual model of temporality and emotion in rhetorical argumentation. To illustrate the empirical import of the theoretical work, I have focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, for this sudden and dramatic development has already profoundly affected societies, putting humanity on an impending "tightrope walk to recovery" (OECD, 2020). As such, the coronavirus crisis also provides a pertinent lens through which to understand how people interact and reason about which decisions to make and how to act in a situation marked by uncertainty. To illustrate this applicability, I briefly analyze Mette Frederiksen's opening speech at the March 11 press conference.

Temporality and Emotion in Argumentation

Argumentation is an unfolding process in which the audience is an active participant, not a "mere passive receptor" (Tindale, 2018, p. 30). Although I emphasize this aspect of audience agency because of its prevalence in contemporary rhetorical theory (Hoff-Clausen, 2018), I also stress that creating adherence in decision making depends on whether people are committed to carrying out the (future) actions they decide on in the very present (Scott, 2020). The uncertain nature of rhetoric makes time an essential factor (Zarefsky, 2019). Humans do not deliberate about matters where their words have no power, but a rhetorical situation (Bitzer, 1968) implies an exigence, an urgency-laden imperfection that the audience, here defined as a mediator of change, possesses the agency to resolve, despite the existence of various constraints that reflect uncertainty about the outcome of the decision. Largely because of this uncertainty, emotions play an important role, as they emphasize salient agentic clues about what to do (Pfau, 2007).

The following sections briefly present contemporary conversations on temporality and emotion in argumentation to provide a foundation for developing the subsequent synthesis.

Temporality in Argumentation

Time and temporality are not synonymous. Rather, temporality is the "negotiated organizing of time" (Granqvist & Gustafsson, 2016, p. 1009) that establishes "ongoing relationships between past, present, and future" (Schultz & Hernes, 2013, p. 1). This definition stems from organization studies but clearly resembles that used in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's seminal paper on rhetorical argumentation, in which temporality is "the intervention of time":

> The oppositions that we notice between classical demonstration, formal logic, and argumentation may, it seems, come back to an essential difference: time does not play any role in demonstration. Time is, however, essential in argumentation, so much so that we may wonder if it is not precisely the intervention of time that best allows us to distinguish argumentation from demonstration. (2010, p. 310)

I emphasize that the "intervention of time" plays an essential role in distinguishing argumentation from demonstration and stress that rhetorical argumentation revolves around practical choice (Kock, 2017). Furthermore, where demonstration leads to true conclusions, independent of the passing of time, argumentation is an action one performs with words when seeking adherence to a proposal. Seeking adherence concerns influencing an audience to make a decision that will impact the shape of an unknown future. Hence, the notion of "argumentative action" underlines the dynamism of persuasive symbolic action, which provides compelling reasons both for taking action and for the very action that stems from such argumentation.

A key aspect here is the question of *how* the concept of temporality, as a constituent part of argumentation, is capable of "translating" or moving the past and future into the present:

“Argumentation confers simultaneity on elements that normally would be distant in time, a simultaneity that derives from their integration in a system of ends and means, of projects and obstacles.” (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2010, p. 329).

This simultaneity exists when an audience comes to understand that the decisions it makes have future consequences, vague though such distant futures might seem when viewed from the present: the future simply lacks presence, one could say. The ability to invoke *presence*, a key term in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s theory of rhetorical argumentation (1969, p. 115), is crucial in argumentation involving future considerations. Persuasion hinges on the question of how imagination of the future becomes present in the moment of deliberation. As a rhetorical ability, then, creating presence revolves around the choice of certain salient elements and their presentation to the audience, as persuasive appeal arises from the importance with which a speaker endows these elements simply by choosing to focus on them (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 116).

Although people exchange arguments in the ongoing present, rhetorical argumentation aims at the future, yet draws on the past. Given the foundational role of emotions in decision making (Damasio, 1994; Barrett, 2017), one thus ought to ask how emotion and argumentation are related.

Emotion in Argumentation

When time is limited and outcomes are contingent on decisions, emotions affect decision making (Pfau, 2007), but such decision making is therefore not irrational. A key assumption is that reasonable grounds for an emotion can exist, so emotion can hence function as a legitimate reason for action (Greenspan, 2004; Nussbaum, 2015).

Emotions are “adaptive responses to the demands of the environment” (Elfenbein, 2007, p. 316), and since antiquity such responses have figured in reasoning about actions because “emotions are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgements, and are accompanied by pleasure and pain” (Aristotle, 2005, 1378a20). Speakers may argumentatively describe and construe such environmental demands as establishing a connection between the situation, the audience’s values, and the need to react to those values. To assess a situation as “good” or “bad” and hence worth approaching (pleasure) or avoiding (pain), an audience must have a system of values that gives it reasons to desire and act in ways that achieve the goals or avoid the threats corresponding with those values (Macagno & Walton, 2014, p. 65).

The inclusion of emotion in decision making is a source of long-standing dispute between rhetoric and ethics, because emotions can indeed prompt one to act with affect without considering the ramifications. The challenge is to distinguish well-grounded emotional appeals from manipulative trickery. As Villadsen aptly noted:

> Persuasion may as well be used to inflame passions and cloud judgment as it may speak to reason and justice. With rhetoric there is always the threat of deterioration into deception and manipulation, but it is accompanied with the possibility of insisting on sound reasoning and relevant emotional and moral appeals. (Villadsen, 2016, p. 48)

As emotions and values are necessary and unavoidable in rhetorical argumentation about practical choice, below I describe how an appeal to emotion *(pathos)* is conceptualized.

Although Aristotle underlines that the speaker should put “the audience into a certain frame of mind” (2005, 1356a2), several scholars (Lee, 1939; Brinton, 1988b; Micheli, 2010; Welzel & Tindale, 2012) have pointed out his telling vagueness on exactly *how* a speaker stirs an audience’s emotions. However, as Brinton explained: “Generally by pathe Aristotle means (in the Rhetoric at least) feelings which influence human judgment or decision making and which are accompanied by pleasure or pain” (1988b, p. 208). Yet, when a speaker presents an argument capable of stirring, say, confidence within an audience (confidence, according to Aristotle, being the opposite of fear), but uses factual grounds to do so, logos and pathos seem difficult to separate. Simply put, “logos and pathos interact in that emotional appeals are generally built on a rational foundation; conversely, logical appeals generally have an emotional component” (Waddell, 1990, p. 383).

Brinton labeled such an interaction a *pathotic* argument, understood here as a “drawing of attention to reasonable grounds for the passion or emotion or sentiment in question.” (Brinton, 1988a, p. 79). Hence, a pathotic argument includes a dimension of reason-giving for why a certain emotion (or combination of emotions) is appropriate, and these reasons allow one to examine emotion as lending an argument acceptability, relevance, and adequacy (Gilbert, 2004).

Still, emotions have several functions in argumentative contexts (Carozza, 2007) and a variety of normative roles. The dominant view within argumentation and logic has seen appeals to emotion as fallacies. Take, for instance, fear appeals that impose a threat on an audience and function as an *argumentum ad baculum* (Walton, 1996). However, as Walton (1992), Govier (2010) and O’Keefe (2012) have all argued, appeals to emotion such as fear are not necessarily fallacious and are thus not unreasonable, because they “invoke consequences of an action as a basis for justifying performing or not performing that action” (O’Keefe, 2012, p. 27).

According to Micheli (2010), in a “traditional” view emotions function as adjuvants to argumentation, meaning that speakers can appeal to emotions to support a conclusion and thereby promote a judgment, decision, and potentially action. In the convergence between judgment and emotion, I should underline, both are equally important. Emotions affect people’s cognitive judgments, as Aristotle recognized, for “when they feel friendly to the man who comes before them for judgement, they regard him as having done little wrong, if any; when they feel hostile, they take the opposite view" (Aristotle, 2005, 1378a35). However, cognition can also affect emotion, because the emotions that affect decisions arise from grounds pertaining to "the role of judgment in the formation of the passions" (Micheli, 2010, p. 6).

This dynamic understanding, in which emotions have not only cognitive effect but also cognitive origins, provides an important bulwark for assessing emotions as legitimate reasons. For the present purposes, I focus on argumentation that enables an emotional experience to be rooted in the Aristotelian cognitive understanding of emotion (Morreall, 1993, quoted in Pfau, 2007). In sum, in relation to arguments emotion is defined as a specific state of mind directed at others and based on the grounds on which the emotions arise and thereby lead to persuasion.[8]

If the grounds for an emotion are reasonable, then such an emotion can also be a legitimate reason for judgment and action (Greenspan, 2004). Because beliefs and cognition can both function as grounds for emotions and give rise to them, it can be helpful to distinguish between evoking and invoking emotion (Brinton, 1988b). Evoking emotion is an appeal *toward* emotion, an endeavor to arouse that emotion in the audience and thus *cause* an action, but not per se to provide a reason for taking it, as in reflexive action. Invoking emotion is an appeal *to* emotion that involves a reason on which to base an action, which is to say the speaker gives the audience a reason to feel a certain way on which it can act. In short, to *invoke* emotion reflects how reasoned emotion can prompt responsive action. As such, adhering to a cognitive theory of emotion enables one to view emotion as reasonable in the dual sense of its providing reasons and being grounded in reasons. Having described the roles of temporality and emotion in argumentation let me unfold my main argument.

[8] For further in-depth theorizing on the role and nature of emotion in argumentation, which the scope of the current paper does not allow for, see also Ben-Ze'ev (1995), Gilbert (2004), and Carozza (2007).

The Temporality of Emotion in Argumentation

Argumentation affects action via appeals that invoke emotion in order to translate the distant past and future into the situated present. Such appeals function more than simply persuasively when a speaker appeals to a specific emotion, for an argument that succeeds in invoking an emotional focus can impel an audience to commit to action. As such, an argument has *import* to those making the decisions, thus motivating them to take action (Helm, 2009). For example, to invoke patience persuasively, one must illustrate—provide reasons in support of—that an impending mission is of a magnitude requiring a long, sustained effort, yet is both possible and worthwhile—and, hence, merits patience.

The temporality of appeals to emotion remains largely unexplored in argumentation studies.[9] However, there are a few exceptions: Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca hinted at the emotional nature of temporality in argumentation when referring to "the insistent [appuyé] style, meant to provoke emotions, mainly aims to frame thought" (2010, p. 319). Macagno and Walton underlined that "emotions are both the result of past choices and past experiences, and evaluations of present and future state of affairs" (2014, p. 68). Scott (2020) explored the "internal temporality" of argumentation, understood as the temporal unfolding of the involved actions associated with argumentation, such as speaking, listening, doubting, and judging (p. 33), although he only briefly tied temporality to emotion in argumentation. In fact, the following passage is the only place in Scott's paper where he explicitly mentioned affect (neither *pathos* nor *emotion* appear in the paper):

> The concept of adherence is essentially temporal—in the same way that something like a promise cannot be understood without a temporal reference to a possible future where it is

[9] In the recent special issue of *Journal of Argumentation* on time and place (Tindale, 2020), emotion plays an insignificant role, despite its role in practical argumentation that focuses on the future (e.g. Walton, 1992; Tindale, 2015, chapter 8; Kock, 2017). However, for a valuable exemption to this tendency, see Cigada (2006).

> either honoured or broken. With respect to adherence, this is to say that what a person is intellectually and affectively committed to at a given point in time cannot be reduced to any particular "present." (Scott, 2020, p. 31)

Indeed, adherence depends on both intellect and affect. Moreover, as should be evident by now, a logos of the passion and a passion of the logos converge (Waddell, 1990). The notion of adherence, which Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969, p. 1) stressed as fundamental in rhetorical argumentation, is highly relevant in a decision-making context of uncertainty. To *adhere* to a proposal—say, deciding to keep physical contact to a minimum—is to accept intellectually and affectively that the grounds on which the proposal rests are sufficiently convincing at the time the proposal is made, its building on existing knowledge and experience. By drawing on the past and imagining the future to inform the present in which a decision takes place, the temporality of argumentation gives presence to this moment, but how can one fully grasp such a presence without considering emotions and their temporal orientations?

The rest of this section proceeds as follows: First, a synthesis of temporality and emotion shows how temporal orientations of emotions affect rhetorical argumentation. Second, a conceptual model provides two temporal mechanisms for invoking presence. Third, a brief analysis of the speech in which Mette Frederiksen announced the Danish lockdown illustrates how the model works and may aid future theorizing of the temporality of decisive emotion.

The Temporality of Decisive Emotion

Emotions are "energy for action" (Plantin, 1998; in Cigada, 2006), and decisions made under uncertainty require a willingness to act on arguments despite a lack of data. As such, the temporality of argumentation touches upon the ontological duality of rhetoric (Bitzer, 1968; Vatz, 1973). When a speaker discursively makes the present moment appear to be the right moment in which to act, she draws on the mutual interconnectivity of the past and the future

(Miller, 1994). To make a decision in the present that will affect the future is to argue why the very targets to which people react with emotion warrant attention and action (Helm, 2009).

An Appeal to Emotion Appeals to Time

Before unfolding the temporal orientations of emotions, I would like to highlight why *import* is central to a theory of rhetorical argumentation. Something has import when it is worthy of attention and action, thus leading a person to be "reliably vigilant for circumstances affecting it favorably or adversely and be prepared to act on its behalf" (Helm, 2009, p. 250). Feeling the motivational "pull" of emotions is an aspect of evaluating how to respond to surroundings that impose meaning on humans. One can therefore view appeals to emotion as appeals that invoke an emotional focus of *import* to decision makers and therefore resonate with the cognitive evaluations (appraisals) arising in the immanent situation and affecting the experience of emotion, which in turn motivates a person to decide and act. As Micheli wrote, such cognitive criteria of evaluation involved in experiencing emotion "offer interesting cues for the study of the *discursive and emotionally-oriented constructs of events and situations* [italics in the original]" (2010, p. 15). Of particular importance to a rhetorical understanding of emotion are the appraisals by which a person evaluates the environment and interaction with other persons (such as the speaker or the deliberating audience), motivational action tendencies, and the subjective experience of feelings (Moors et al., 2013, p. 119). Appraisals could encompass goal relevance (I must act to protect what I value), agency (my actions matter), certainty (amidst uncertainty, some signs give me a degree of faith), and coping potential (I have the means to withstand an enemy that initially frightened me).

These are all felt evaluations that undergird *how it feels* to be in a situation. In other words, to feel an emotion like anger, a person will perceive negative events as being predictable, under their own human control (agency), and brought about by others, which may lead that person to engage in riskier behavior because she perceives little risk (Lerner & Keltner. 2000). Here, agency comes to the fore in terms of whether audience members feel they can actually do something about the matter at hand. From a *temporal* perspective, human agency is

> A temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment). (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 963)

Considering that rhetorical agency is defined as "the relative capacity of speech to intervene and affect change" (Hoff-Clausen, 2018, p. 287), I would like to stress the link between the inherent temporality of agency and the role emotions play in rhetorical argumentation. If a speaker is to convince decision makers to decide and even act, and this commitment requires some assessment of agency, several emotions may arise and exist simultaneously. "In short, to feel one emotion is to be rationally committed to feeling a whole pattern of other emotions with a common focus" (Helm, 2009, p. 251). Crucially, these patterns of emotions—arising from appraisals of the situation—stand in relation to the temporal orientation of the emotional focus.

Temporal Orientation of Emotion in Argumentation

When one includes the passing of time and events, the multidimensionality of emotion, which rarely exists independently, becomes part of rhetorical argumentation. For instance, a well-grounded fear of COVID-19 will tend to change as time progresses and events unfold, turning into relief or joy if people avoid becoming sick, disappointment or even grief if they do not, or anger if someone (un)knowingly endangers others, thus making all physical distancing efforts seem worthless.

One can make a preliminary distinction between future- and past-oriented emotions in argumentation by drawing on Helm (2009), Baumgartner, Pieters, and Bagozzi (2008), and

Cigada (2006). Notice that the above emotions are bound together by a common focus of import to the people experiencing them. This binding allows one to view appeals to time as appeals to the interaction between past- and future-oriented emotions and how these make the present worthy of attention and action.

Helm (2009) discussed eight such emotions, distinguishing between positive and negative past and future orientations; for example, satisfaction has a positive past orientation, and fear a negative future one. In a study on emotive communication in the political aftermath of World War II, Cigada (2006) further distinguished between the near-past and distant-past positive (euphoric) and negative (dysphoric) emotions. She underlined that *pride* in a historic tradition of working to ensure freedom and human rights functions as a particular argument in favor of *hope* about a future political situation; for example, if we won our freedom in the past, we can re-win it. This perspective emphasizes the dual argumentative understanding of emotion as both providing reasons to support a conclusion and functioning as a conclusion (Micheli, 2010). Emotions can draw their reasonableness from the re-presentation of shared past events—which function as cause for, say, pride—and from imagined future events, which in turn support a focus on the action proposed in the present.

However, future-oriented emotions are both anticipatory—that is, felt in the present—and anticipated, in other words, to be felt in the future (Baumgartner et al., 2008). Anticipatory emotions such as hope or fear arise in the present at the prospect of a desirable or undesirable future event, whereas anticipated emotions stem from an imagined sense of how experiencing certain emotions will feel once future events have occurred. From an argumentative perspective, both forms of emotions function to provide an affective component when the consequences of an action are rhetorically deployed as a justification for taking or not taking that action. The interplay between instilling beliefs about *anticipated* (future) emotions and arousing *current* anticipatory emotions revolves around both the prospects of the subsequent diminishment or fulfillment of those very emotions and the *reasons* why they arose or are expected to arise (O'Keefe, 2012, p. 28).

The temporal orientations of and relation between emotions brings me to the importance of balancing competing emotions. Sheer terror, for example, can be paralyzing. Pfau (2007) provided an account of how fear and courage interact in what he labels "civic fear", or fear that leads one to deliberate on, recognize, and ultimately respond to or confront contingent events that decision makers find reasons to deem worthy of fear. First, the speaker must be able to portray a dangerous target as a spatially and/or temporally proximate threat to decision makers, for if it will have no apparent impact on their well-being, no action is required. Second, and equally important, one must convey that the object of fear is contingent rather than inevitable, to ensure that decision makers *believe* that taking action could enable them to avert the threat that constitutes their fear. Third, the speaker must encourage decision makers to believe that they are, in fact, capable of taking worthwhile action.

In summary, emotions have temporal orientations and become interwoven as time unfolds. In other words, they do not exist independently of each other, but depend on their temporality and the appraisals with which speakers situate emotions in moments of time. For instance, a person experiencing fear in the present might soon experience the past-oriented emotion of relief if the source of fear proved not to inflict the anticipated pain (Clore & Ortony, 2000).

Model: Affecting Argumentative Action

Building on the idea that emotions have temporal orientations as described above, a three-fold *pathotic* argument outlines how a speaker must present her specific reasons for a decision in a way that convinces an audience to make that decision. The argument must therefore express (i) the exigence that a decision is necessary, (ii) the contingency of the decision, and (iii) the confidence to act. The pathotic argument enables us to present the following conceptualization of temporality and emotion in rhetorical argumentation (see figure 8):

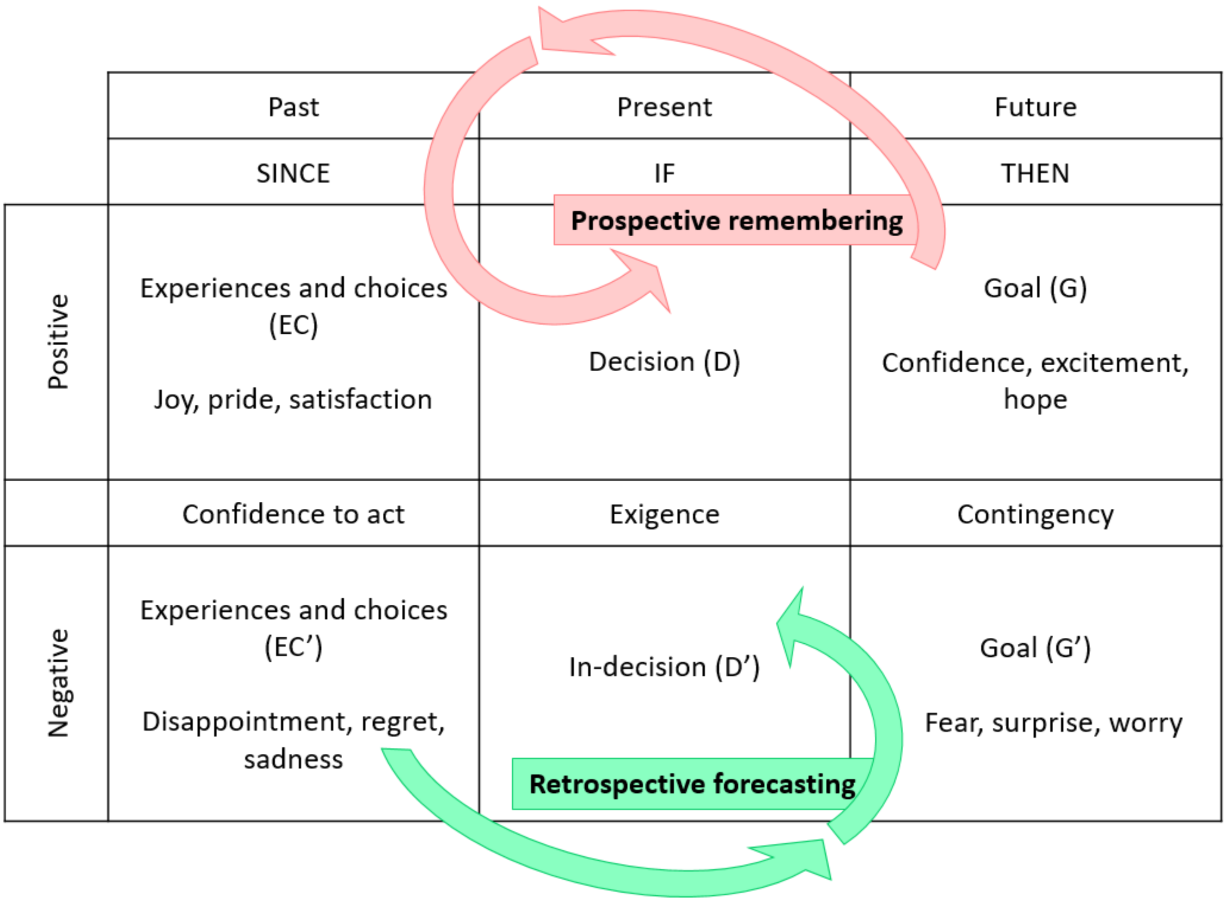

Figure 8: The temporality of affecting argumentative action

In the following, I explain the concepts and mechanisms of the model. Argumentatively, the model reflects two interacting practical inferences (Walton, 2006, p. 300) entailing (a minimum of) two temporally linked scenarios. One scenario involves a future goal, G (worth achieving), which the audience can help realize if making the present proposed decision, D. The goal, G, reflects positive future-oriented emotions. The other scenario involves a goal, G', deemed worth avoiding, which maintaining the status quo—an in-decision, D'—will most likely lead to (hence, the negative emotions). In both scenarios, experiences and choices from the past influence the emotions experienced in the present and inform the two intertemporal mechanisms of *retrospective forecasting*, which establishes a past-future-present link, and *prospective remembering*, which establishes a future-past-present link. Although figure 8 only depicts retrospective forecasting as negative and prospective remembering as positive, both mechanisms can rely on positive and negative valences.

Epistemic and practical uncertainty mean that the inference linking a present decision with a future goal will never be conclusive. The inference is quasi-logical (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 193), and adherence depends on whether the audience accepts the temporal interval between decision and consequence, that is, “the indeterminate wedge between cause and effect” (Bolduc & Frank, 2010, p. 313). Even in cases where the consequences are near-certain, incommensurable values guide decisions (Kock, 2017, p. 68). Hence, the model seeks to illustrate how a speaker might use experiences and choices of the past (EC/EC’) to inspire confidence in making a decision (D) in the present by invoking futures worth achieving (G) and/or avoiding (G’), all as part of the process of making those very outcomes contingent on the advocated decisions. The following conceptualization is guided by the concepts of the rhetorical situation (Bitzer, 1968; Vatz, 1973) and Pfau’s (2007) “civic fear” framework as providing a constructive way of urging an audience to deliberate and take action.

Exigence or the Need to Make a Decision

First, the speaker must diagnose the current situation as one requiring a decision. In situations characterized by high uncertainty, the existing data might dictate that inertia is the only “logical” choice, as nothing in the existing circumstances warrants change (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, p. 106). Yet, the speaker is convinced that action and thus a deviation from the known path are required. In rhetorical terms such a need to act presents an exigence defined as an “imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be” (Bitzer, 1968, p. 6). However, both situation and discourse may constitute such urgency (Vatz, 1973; Leff & Utley, 2004), especially if a speaker encourages present decisions whose consequences remain to be seen—economic reform policies, for example.

How does a speaker “prove” a specific action is necessary, let alone argue in favor of taking it, when she lacks hard evidence? Although uncertainty prevents her from making reliable predictions, affect is based on predictions from existing knowledge and past experience (Barrett, 2017, p. 78) and on the projection of scenarios revolving around futures worth avoiding or approaching. Since convincing an audience that departing from the status quo is worthwhile, or at least marginally better than inertia, the speaker may diagnose the ongoing present as worthy of action by describing how maintaining the status quo—which naturally stems from the past overlapping with the present—can lead to dismal futures worth avoiding (G’). Like loss-framing, such a diagnosis emphasizes the negative consequences of noncompliance (O’Keefe, 2013, p. 123). Similarly, the speaker may emphasize how taking steps towards better futures worth attaining (G) depends on making this decision. Such depictions may then lead to appraisals of goal relevance, including concerns for the well-being of the decision maker, thus prompting experiences of emotions such as hope, fear, and anger (Moors et al., 2013). A key aspect is *how* a speaker then credibly gives the future presence.

Retrospective Forecasting. I suggest that an argument by example works by invoking a known recent past, which then functions as an analogy of an anticipated near future worth either avoiding or approaching. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca distinguished between three approaches taken by a speaker seeking to establish a conclusion through a *particular case:* argument by example, illustration, and model/anti-model (1969, p. 350). Illustration is intended to increase adherence to a well-accepted rule, whereas example is aimed to establish a rule, temporally working by drawing on a particular case sufficiently probable to be one of general principle and thus helpful in avoiding or achieving future outcomes in the present case. I suggest labeling this mechanism *retrospective forecasting*, as it allows a speaker to give presence to what people in the invoked example did in a comparable case, but with the knowledge that now exists in the situated present. Accordingly, such cases allow for both imitation and avoidance, thus warranting appeals to positive and negative consequences, respectively (Walton, 2006, p. 106).

The projection of future goals, whether worth avoiding or approaching, draws its presence from existing cases, and this projection may only provide answers about decision outcomes by virtue of being temporally situated in the crux between the past and the ongoing present, that is, by being temporally compared to the situated present in which a decision is to be made. Examples give credibility to an inherent claim about a future projection made by appraising aspects of certainty even though logical demonstration is futile. This might sound paradoxical when it comes to dealing with decision making under uncertainty. However, there is a point: if a speaker projects a future worth avoiding, but the scenario seems unconnected to existing phenomena and thus utterly unrealistic to the audience, the credibility decreases, and the projection may cease to function as a future scenario worth avoiding. This is the fate of so-called empty threats, not only because the threatened consequences might not come about, but also because the causal mechanism appears either completely unlikely or is unknown to the audience.

In sum, the first dimension is to argue that a decision is necessary. To do so, I propose, a speaker must show how the exigence demanding a decision is temporally close, as in an imminent threat or a passing opportunity. The next task is to show the audience that outcomes are contingent on the proposed decision—in other words, that its decisions matter.

Mediators of Change (Must) Have Agency

To show the above contingency, the speaker must present reasons why the decision makers are "mediators of change," thus enabling the audience to acknowledge and accept that it possesses the agency to actually affect the situation. Humans only deliberate about things within their power to change (Pfau, 2007, p. 227). Accordingly, if an audience has no such power, it will have no reason to care, in which case the speaker runs the risk of unwittingly convincing the audience to be utterly indifferent (lethargy) or give up before it even starts (despair). The speaker has to instill an agentic belief in the audience that it can cope and make a difference that leaves an avenue of hope (Nussbaum, 2018, p. 206).

Prospective Remembering. Another mechanism included in the model is the use of anticipated emotion to support the perception of the agency needed to make decisions in the present. I call this *prospective remembering*, which entails how it feels to be a person imagining herself situated in the future and looking back at the present in which she is to make her decision.

In general, decisions function as attempts to achieve positive future feelings, such as pride, and avoid negative emotions, such as guilt and regret (Lerner et al., 2015). Therefore, the anticipation of an emotion like regret can provide a reason to eschew excessive risk-taking. Notably, anticipated emotion does not appear to function independently of anticipatory emotions like fear and hope, just as the re-presentation of a past-oriented emotion like pride may support a presently experienced anticipatory emotion of hope (Cigada, 2006), which in turn enables one to anticipate a future emotion of relief at overcoming a burdensome challenge.

Although certainty is a key difference between anticipatory (uncertain) and anticipated (certain) emotions (Baumgartner et al., 2008), anticipatory emotions experienced in the present may indeed directly relate to decisions and a pre-factual imagination of future states in which anticipated emotions arise. When decision makers make assumptions about the future occurrence of desired or undesired events and anticipate emotions, they still base these forecasts on both uncertain data and the potential *contingencies* of their own decisions. As such, fear might arise when one faces a dangerous threat like COVID-19, and uncertainty means that no one knows precisely how to avert disaster without jeopardizing democratic freedom. At the same time, however, one experiences a wide array of anticipated emotions, such as relief and joy, if the fear-inducing threat is successfully eliminated, and regret and disappointment if not. Similarly, anticipated emotions can help one stick to long-term goals by, for example, imagining future emotions of accomplishment.

Nonetheless, as with the mechanism of *retrospective forecasting*, which achieves a presence by establishing a past-future-present link, an emotional mechanism of *prospective remembering* still needs presence to affect a decision and, to invoke presence, a speaker must appeal to the audience's existing experiences (Tucker, 2001). Therefore, prospective remembering also draws on the past, but in the reverse order, thus achieving presence by establishing a future-past-present link. A speaker must draw on existing experiences and values from the past to enable decision makers to imagine how it feels to regret a present failure to make a decision that could have precluded undesirable consequences.

Argumentative Action

Third, despite the constraints of a present situation, a belief in the contingencies of one's decision is insufficient. As such, Pfau (2007, p. 224) applied the virtue of courage—which lies between the extremes of fear and confidence—to explain how an audience might move from being inclined to have sufficient confidence to actually making a decision. This movement from civic fear to contingency and a confidence to act on the arguments presented echoes Nussbaum's (2018) point that faith must bolster hope to be worthwhile. She says that if we think “our efforts are a waste of time, we don’t embrace hope” (p. 214). The connection between hope and faith illuminates how faith relates not only to the emotion of hope, but also to aspects of confidence and processes of trust (Khodyakov, 2007). Temporally, the dimension of faith is past-oriented, gathering its reasons from past events in order to qualify whether there is reason to believe in the advocated course of action.

Positive anticipatory emotions like hope rely on some degree of belief that one’s decision (D) might enable better outcomes (G) than if one refrained (D’) from engaging in a given activity involving a worse outcome (G’), all of which again reflects decision makers’ appraisals of agency and coping potential. Nussbaum wrote: “We need to believe that the good things we hope for have a realistic chance of being realized through the efforts of flawed human beings” (2018, p. 213).

Thus, the synthesis of temporality and emotion in argumentation that adheres to a suggested proposal in the present transcends the temporal constraints of uncertainty. Such a commitment arises both because emotions experienced in relation to past events are re-interpreted and because emotions that may arise at future events are re-imagined. Scott (2020) underlined how adherence exists because of its relation to the past and future:

> On the side of the past, what we presently adhere to can be understood as a kind of personal precedent, as the past weighing on the present as a constraint on what we will consider to be argumentatively reasonable (from myself and from others). On the side of the future, we will find that adherence makes reference to a number of possible futures where, under certain conditions, we would be committed to acting in certain ways given our current configuration of value commitments. (Scott, 2020, p. 31)

To this, I should add that such adherence depends on the present emotional experience, which stems from the negotiation of how emotion constitutes the willingness to decide under uncertainty.

COVID-19: It Is Better to Act Today Than Regret Tomorrow

I now use the model to illustrate how Mette Frederiksen on March 11, 2020, portrayed two possible scenarios to show her reasoning in support of her proposal to the Danish population to practice physical distancing.

During her speech, Frederiksen introduced what became a familiar catchphrase of the Danish coronavirus response: “Now we must stand together by keeping a distance.” In this instance, a “principle of caution” underlays the main practical inference (Walton, 2006, p. 300), in which the goal was to protect “the most vulnerable people in our society” (Frederiksen, 2020a). She presented the action of physical distancing as the means of slowing the spread of the virus and thus realizing this goal. Indeed, she emphasized the need to take action today in order to *avoid regret* in the future:

> It is better to act today than regret tomorrow. We must take action where it has an effect. Where the disease is spreading [. . .] Therefore, the authorities recommend that we shut down all unnecessary activity in those areas for a period. We are adopting a principle of caution.

While Frederiksen’s argument rests on acceptable scientific knowledge, four days after the March 11 press conference, she underlined that the decision to lock down much of Danish society was ultimately political: “If I have to wait for evidence for everything in handling the coronavirus, then I am certain we will be too late.” (Frederiksen, 2020b). Although the science says that close physical contact spreads the disease, the consequences of mandating a societal lockdown to avoid such contact are far more political in the sense that “any action that promotes one good or value tends to counteract others” (Kock, 2017, p. 58). Frederiksen stressed: “We must minimize activity as much as possible. But without bringing Denmark to a halt. We must not throw Denmark into an economic crisis” (2020a).

Using the developed argument model (figure 8), I can show how Frederiksen constructed two decisions: either citizens decide to follow and support the recommended proposal of physical distancing, D, leading to a desirable future state of flattening the curve, G, or they do not distance, D’, which will lead to an undesirable future state worth avoiding at almost any cost, G’. The movement from D to G appears consequential despite the uncertainty of a novel disease. Equally important from a temporal and emotional perspective, an allusion to the distant and recent past makes the consequences of deciding to show public spirit and comply with physical distancing more credible, while the argumentative force of the outlined consequences depends on the emotions they invoke (see figure 9):

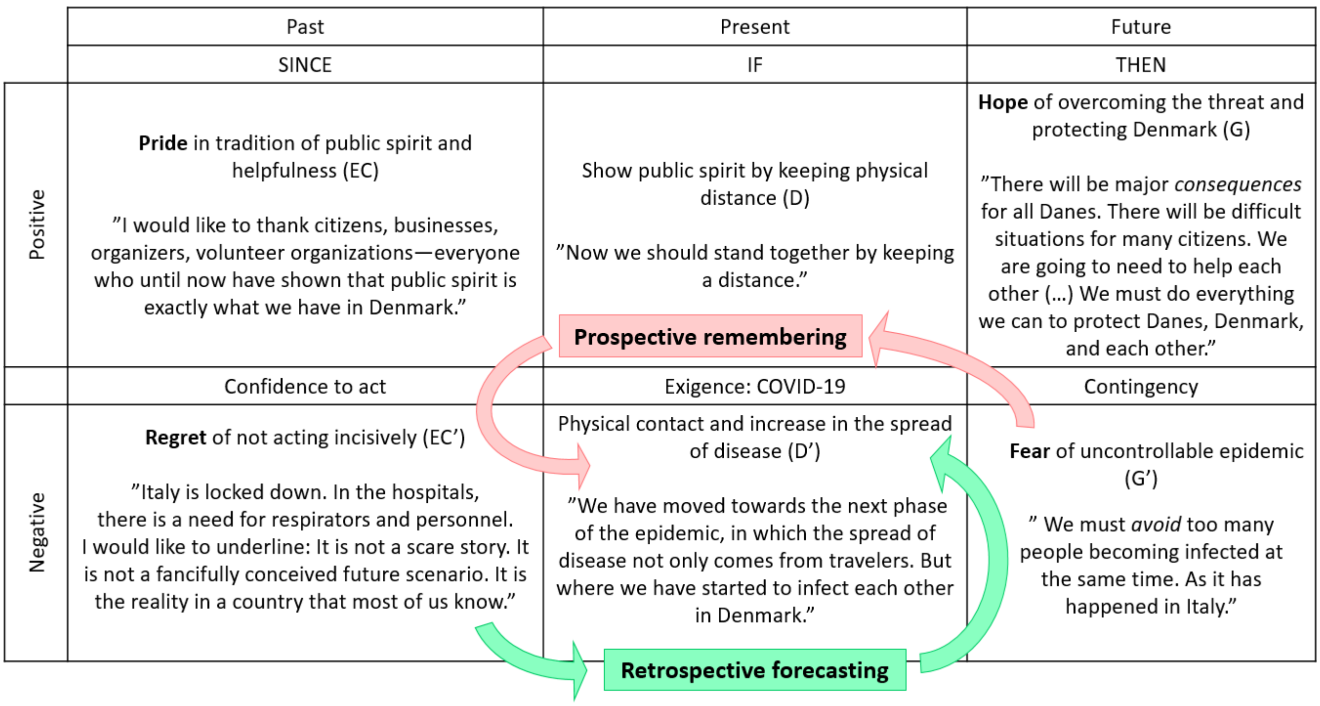

Figure 9: An illustration of the temporality of affecting argumentative action

In the following sections, I detail how Frederiksen sought to connect the threat that COVID-19 posed, while also instilling a degree of belief that following government guidelines could make a difference. As such, she established the threat as contingent and invoked an element of courage that spurred decisive readiness.

Exigence

Frederiksen sought to establish the danger of COVID-19 and demanded action at a time when global news stories abounded and the disease was becoming serious in Denmark, but as of March 11, any Dane infected with the virus had yet to die (Sundhedsstyrelsen, 2020).

> When I stood here yesterday, there were 157 Danes infected with corona. Today, we have 514. That is more than a tenfold increase since Monday, where it was 35. The coronavirus spreads extremely fast.

The rapid increase in cases supported Frederiksen's claim that the disease was not only dangerous but also spreading swiftly through Danish society, bringing an inevitable future threat ever closer. Urgent action was required, with the accent on urgent.

At the press conference, Frederiksen used Italy as an argument by example, stressing what Denmark should avoid. The Italian example enabled her to use the temporal mechanism of *retrospective forecasting* by drawing on the known recent past as an analogy for an anticipated near future worth avoiding and therefore as a present reason for physical distancing. Interestingly, Frederiksen rebutted a potential objection that the Italy reference was a scare example, emphasizing its "reality." In doing so, she defined a scare example as a "fancifully conceived future scenario," stressing that in contrast to the recent past, Italy served as a real example, one that could warn a Danish audience of the possible future consequences of present inaction against COVID-19. In the week leading up to her March 11 press conference, the

Italian government had placed several of its northern provinces under lockdown, and on March 11 the cumulative death toll in Italy reached 827 (Remuzzi & Remuzzi, 2020). In this context, Italy served as a well-grounded example capable of warning and potentially scaring a Danish audience because Danes know the country and can thus more easily accept the comparison as relevant and worth avoiding.

Contingency

While the numbers of infected citizens and the speed with which the virus was spreading could indeed support the severity of the situation, the target deemed dangerous and therefore worthy of fear could not be so overwhelming as to cause people to believe that no matter what they did, the crisis would strike (Pfau, 2007). Frederiksen tried to inspire confidence in the potential of action by emphasizing that citizens should act in the present instead of waiting and regretting their inaction, underlining that physical distancing is precisely the measure to hinder the virus in spreading.

Although regret is a past-oriented emotion, Frederiksen contrasted taking action now (present) with a *prospective remembering* of regret. Although regret may stem from both following non-beneficial advice and ignoring beneficial advice (Tzini & Jain, 2018), Frederiksen's appeal to act in order to prevent a future feeling of regret draws its argumentative force from the certainty of physical distancing vis-à-vis the uncertainty of inaction, thus leading to an anticipated regret of how it generally feels to ignore the certainty of beneficial advice. In sum, in this instance adherence depended on an inference stating that sacrificing present freedom was worthwhile to avoid a greater future loss, such as life itself. One can view Frederiksen as attempting to bridge the uncertainty of navigating a "situation that does not look like anything we have tried before" with the certainty of anticipated regret, as this quote illustrates: "But the alternative—not to do anything—would be far worse. I hope there will be an understanding for that. I am convinced that there will be."

In addition to regret, Frederiksen emphasized the opportunity for agency that lay ahead and reinforced such statements by highlighting what was already taking place in the recent past and ongoing present:

> We must help each other. Show strength—think about others. Especially about those who are vulnerable. I would like to thank everyone in our health sector for the great contribution you are making. Thank you for your contribution now. And thank you in advance for your contribution in the coming days, weeks, and months. I am going to tell it like is. It is going to be tough. This situation puts great demands on all of us.

By speaking directly to essential workers, who were far more exposed than other parts of the population that could work from home or had been sent home, Frederiksen acknowledged both the work taking place and what lay ahead.

Confidence to Act

Lastly, while decision makers (e.g., healthcare professionals) must acknowledge the unfolding of events as contingent on their own actions, one needs the confidence to act to avoid the paralysis of what could be labeled well-informed hopelessness. Despite the "extraordinary situation," Frederiksen encouraged citizens to stand up for Danish values when it mattered, underlining the goals of acting with an eye to the common good: "Let us now show what we are capable of when it matters. The Danes are already at it. We are showing public spirit. That is what works."

By emphasizing what was already taking place (drawing on the recent past and ongoing present), Frederiksen stressed that agency and coping potential ("a huge responsibility") were possible if one transcended the future and past into the present. While “proving” the future is inherently impossible in argumentation (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2010), adherence to a proposal of, say, physical distancing, as Frederiksen advocated, depends on whether there are any compelling reasons to believe the future worth achieving will be realized (Nussbaum, 2018). Ongoing action from civil society, drawing on a legacy of public spirit, may well have increased the felt probability of success in protecting the weakest citizens, even though predictions for specific measures were unreliable.

To summarize, I have illustrated how Mette Frederiksen, sought to gain support for her proposal to maintain physical distancing as a means of stopping the spread of COVID-19. Above all emphasizing negative future consequences worth avoiding, she translated these futures into the present by drawing on both the recent past (the Italian experience and lack of decisiveness) as an argument by example and by addressing the need to act now in order to avoid a future feeling of regret.

Conclusion: Taking a Leap of Faith

On March 11 2020, the W.H.O. declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, and Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen told the Danish population that this would have serious ramifications in the near future. Globally, the consequences of the pandemic have varied greatly, in terms of both fatalities and restrictions on freedoms. Two pertinent questions concern, first, the speed with which different governments responded and, second, the reasoning government leaders of democratic societies applied to their preemptive proposals aimed at mitigating the as yet unseen consequences.

To understand how such argumentation under uncertainty functions, this study has combined two strands of theorizing within the argumentation literature: temporality and emotion. Starting from the premise that rhetorical argumentation is practical reasoning about *choice of action*, I have argued that in situations of uncertainty argumentation affects action, such as decisions, via appeals that invoke emotion and thereby translate the distant past and future into the situated present. I have suggested a model of affecting argumentative action and identified two temporal mechanisms—*retrospective forecasting* and *prospective remembering*—as a means of explaining how the distinct temporality of emotion enables argumentative action. For instance, an argument by example functions persuasively in situations marked by high uncertainty through the emotional analogy it makes. This does not happen because an example provides full epistemic certainty about future consequences, but because it minimizes the gap between an epistemic waiting game for certainty and a prudential willingness to act incisively, thus allowing a decision maker to take the leap of faith that is a defining characteristic of human choice.

7. Conclusion

When and how are we compelled to act?

The underlying motivation of this dissertation has been to explore what it means to make decisions—with other people. Thus, I view decision making as an interactive process of persuading and being persuaded and have come to focus on how time and emotion interact, interlace, interfere in these interactions. If humans, like hard working ants, were all instinctive action, there would be no doubt, no discussions, no decisions, only a simple causality between input and output, between stimuli and action. Our creative and cognitive capabilities, however, enables humans to choose between different paths of action, but also renders decision making difficult. Striking the right balance between doubt and determination is always a leap of faith—when should we let our doubts have the final say and refrain from action, and when should we act despite persistent uncertainty?

The 'problem-driven' (Reinecke et al., 2016), empirical approach that I took to this matter makes my own conclusions less certain, since I do not have a grand hypothesis to dis- or confirm. Instead, by focusing on decision making as the 'problem', I have sought to find 'solutions' by examining when and how people actually become capable of making decisions and, indeed, choose to act. Hence, I have examined decision making as both product and process—the single moments in which decisions 'happen' as well as the 'becoming' that leads up to and follows these decisions.

In this final chapter, I summarize what I believe to be the main and combined results of the dissertation in its entirety—both theoretically and practically. I also use this chance to condense and synthesize the lengthier discussions already present in the three separate papers (chapters 4, 5 and 6). At the theoretical level, I discuss how the findings can contribute to a fuller appreciation of the inherently rhetorical nature of deciding when and how to act, as well as to the fields of organizational change, strategy and strategizing, in addition to framing and argumentation studies. At the practical level, I discuss how managers and other organizational decision makers can benefit from a further understanding of the rhetorical heritage of persuasion as a timely countermeasure to the fantasy of "data-driven" and "evidence-based" decision making that is upheld in many organizations and causes decision makers to be deeply disturbed by the apparent irrationality of their fellow humans.

Before unfolding these contributions, however, let me return to the overall research question and show how the combined insights of the preceding chapters answer it.

Concluding the Inquiry

This dissertation aimed at exploring organizational decisions in their particularity and vividness, beyond the non-findings that laboratory experiments could have produced. At its outset, I therefore asked the following main research question:

How does rhetorical argumentation constitute organizational decisions on when and how to act?

Let me revisit the three individual papers (chapters 4, 5, and 6) in order to accentuate the key findings and stress the aspects that are significant in helping us arrive at a satisfying answer.

In chapter four, Getting the Timing Right, my co-author and I examine how proponents of a strategic initiative establish the present as the right time for strategic decisions, understood as the decision to initiate a strategy (specifically, an IT strategy). Through a 13-month field study in a prosperous financial firm with no apparent need to make significant strategic change, we detail how the decision to take (strategic) action is predicated upon organizational decision makers' experience of the present as the opportune moment for such decision making. The key finding is that framing the present as an opportune moment requires both a fit with existing organizational interpretations and an active shaping of organizational aspiration. We conceptualize kairos as the rhetorical framing of temporality that both exploits and constitutes what organizational decision makers come to view as ‘the opportune moment’ for deciding on a strategy.

In chapter five, Strategic Resonance in Management Decisions, I ask how emotional frames invoke confidence and, hence, enable decisions. Through a 9-month field study, conducted in the product development unit of a company supplying the building industry, I was able to investigate the mutual struggles of project managers and senior decision makers who sought to navigate the tensions that arose when determining the fate of potentially innovative products. In the early phases of product development such products can, indeed, be framed in numerous ways, wherefore the uncertainties of the ongoing development exemplify the dilemma between making decisions in due time and deciding with due confidence. The key finding is that decisions depend on the convergent framing of the diagnostic what, the prognostic how, and the motivational why, suggesting that a pivotal mechanism is the emerging accordance of ambition and achievability, which I conceptualize as strategic resonance (figure 7).

In chapter six, Affecting Argumentative Action, I examine how appeals to emotion make arguments about the future present and thereby worthy of attention and action. Being a primarily theoretical exploration, the paper seeks to synthesize two strands of literature (drawing on argumentation, philosophy, and psychology) on temporality and emotion, respectively. The primary finding is that past experiences influence how decision makers feel in the present and inform the intertemporal mechanisms that allow them to take the leap of faith of decision making. This I conceptualize as the temporality of affecting argumentative action (figure 8), in which two intertemporal mechanisms, retrospective forecasting and prospective remembering, work in conjunction to enable and shape decision making. In addition, I apply the developed model on what commentators dubbed a historic speech by the Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen in order to show the empirical relevance of the model.

Having summarized the three papers, I now return to the overall research question and propose a concluding answer. Based on the three independent findings, I argue that organizations decide that it is time to act through the ongoing negotiation of emotion, which constitutes compelling reasons to act. Allow me to unfold. The notion of an 'ongoing negotiation' stems from Granqvist and Gustafsson's definition of temporality as the "negotiated organizing of time" (2016, p. 1009). I link time and emotion in chapter six, showing how emotions have temporal orientation, meaning that organizing time is organizing emotion; each is constitutive of the other. This ongoing negotiation of timely emotion happens through a process in which decision makers find themselves at the shaky middle ground between ambition and achievability, between gazing into the future and glancing back at the past, trying to find out what the 'right' decision is despite the epistemic and practical uncertainty of the present. In chapter four, this moment of decision making is conceptualized as kairos, while in chapter five I explore how the right moment is turned into the right decision through strategic resonance. In essence, time (the when) comes first; decision makers have to view the present as an opportune moment, for if they do not believe that there is a decision to make or that their choice of action will have an impact, they will have no ability or incentive to act. Such a lack of agency can quickly lead to a lack of hope and, hence, despair (Nussbaum, 2018). Second, the creation of opportune presence (the how) depends on a convergent framing of ambition and achievability, which does not happen in the blink of an eye, but rather as a process of interaction and exchange of arguments—combining logical soundness, empirical credibility, and emotional contagion—in which the process determines which arguments resonate with decision makers. Third, affecting action through argumentation happens via appeals that invoke emotion and hereby translate the distant past and future into the situated present.

Contributions to Research

In the 60th anniversary edition of Administrative Science Quarterly, Karl Weick, quoting La Porte, underlined that ‘we’, which I believe should be taken as an inclusive invocation of organizations, scholars and members of society alike, “must act when we cannot foresee consequences; we must plan when we cannot know; we must organize when we cannot control” (2016, p. 333). I would like to discuss my broader contributions along the lines of this understanding of what it means to be(come) human in an organized setting, using Weick’s three imperatives to shine a light on what research—and researchers—stand to learn from my dissertation. Because each chapter includes thorough discussions, I now focus on the cumulative knowledge of the three papers; that is, what can the full argument about decisions understood as an ongoing negotiation of emotion teach us about how organizations act, plan, and organize when consequences are hidden, unknown and uncontrollable? In the following, I let Weick’s reminder function as a guide to answer two overall questions of organizational and strategic decision making. Thus, I consider how the findings contribute to our understanding of how organizations, firstly, act and plan, in which we view decisions primarily as events, and, secondly, organize and strategize, in which we view decisions as processes.

Act and Plan: Decision as Event

At the very outset of this dissertation, I pondered whether a crisis is needed to convince individuals and organizations to make decisions—and to act on them. Equally important, during stable conditions that are seemingly prosperous, how do advocates of change argue for the need to decide—before that need has emerged? These puzzles reflect the prudence-urgency continuum that I used to outline the research questions for each chapter (see figure 2). In times of apparent prosperity, the need to decide on changing the status-quo can be difficult, if not impossible, to prove. By contrast, in situations of urgency where a crisis has already struck or is looming dangerously close, the challenge is the opposite, to slow down sufficiently to allow for wise decisions in which the arguments presented will have sufficient longevity. Within both dimensions, there appears to be an underlying assumption that decision making leads to outcomes. Although these outcomes are uncertain, decision makers rely on a causality between talk, decision, and action—even though, as Brunsson has demonstrated (2007), this causality is itself a construct rather than a given. An underlying question, then, is how decisions become durable, but let us first discuss the implications of how we decide when to act.

When to Act?

While this dissertation has not dealt explicitly with the change management literature, it can contribute, in a broader sense, to the scholarly understanding of how organizations talk about and frame when to act in order to be ready for the challenges of the future. Hence, whether we theorize and draw from existing conversations within change management (Stouten et al., 2018), strategic change (Kunisch et al., 2017), strategic decision making (Kaplan, 2008; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013), or organizational risk (Hardy et al., 2020), the process of framing reasons for when to take the next steps is inherently rhetorical.

Allow me to exemplify by going back almost 60 years. Martin Luther King famously inspired and relentlessly served the American civil rights movement, advocating a peaceful protest full of "dignity and discipline". On 28 August 1963, at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C., he famously uttered the following sentences:

> We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock

> of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children. (King, 1963)

I cannot think of a more forceful invocation of the urgency of ‘now’, and every time I listen to the speech, it not only reminds me of the presence that rhetoric can provide—I also feel the resonance of the words, becoming fully convinced that life is about fighting for what you believe in. The mesmerizing anaphoric repetition of “now is the time” underlines the need to act. However, King’s eloquent and inspiring rhetoric, which manages to criticize obvious wrong-doing without alienating the wrong-doers (Leff & Utley, 2004), did not end racism and segregation. Naturally, there are limits to the power of words, and being convinced does not automatically equal acting on one’s conviction (O’Keefe, 2012). We simply cannot decide to end racism, but we can decide to do everything within our powers to fight it, which becomes rhetorically relevant if and when we forward the societal discussion on how to do so. In 2020, 52 years after King was murdered, protesters around the globe, but especially in the USA, continue to fight against racial inequality, and maybe now is the decisive moment has come, constituted by the ongoing negotiation of the past, present, and future vis-à-vis what society understands to be just and reasonable.

While I personally agree that the time is right—or, indeed, well overdue—for making both structural and individual changes in order to promote equality, the theoretical point is that such agreement, even when generally shared by most members of a society, only has gradual societal impact (Villadsen, 2019). The process evolves around how proponents rhetorically make decision makers view a moment as timely. In their recent review of time and organization studies, Holt and Johnsen (2019) emphasized the importance of such timeliness for organizations. However, they argued, the more organization studies focus on time, the more time, understood as a time-beyond-us, is concealed; what they labeled “a progressive forgetfulness of time in organization studies" (p. 1557). Thus, they emphasized that there is a limit to how much organizational decision makers can affect time. This is relevant, not only in terms of the broader example used here, but also given my specific findings of how difficult it can be to challenge organizational inertia and construct the present as a time of urgent need for taking action. As such, Holt and Johnsen's argument reflects what Hernes and Schultz's (2020) term 'situated activity'—in the present, defining the 'right' moment and proposing the 'timely' actions, can be difficult, if not outright impossible, given the passage, the processing of a time that is beyond us, and hence, beyond predictability and control. Nonetheless, organizational decision makers have to do this all the time. Here, the findings of especially chapter four contribute to a more balanced understanding of what constitutes the opportune moment. I suggest it is located in between the time-beyond-us (Holt & Johnsen, 2019), and what we could label time-within-our-reach—or between what we cannot and what we can affect by our rhetorical agency.

How to Act?

In contrast to King's framing of the reasons for taking action, arising from apparent breaches of fundamental human rights, which make his claims indisputable, this dissertation focused on smaller and more contingent claims. In chapters four and five, I detailed the rhetorical constitution of reasons to act in situations where reasonable prudence is the (only) available justification. A lack of urgency did not prevent the organizations from appealing to the threats of not acting, but creating urgency, as popular change management books underline (e.g. Kotter, 2008), is easier said than done (Stouten et al., 2018).

The dissertation adds to our understanding of how organizations decide to make things happen by following Giorgi's recommendation of viewing framing as a "rhetorical tool for resonating with an audience" (2017, p. 733). When we view framing as a rhetorical 'tool', we can draw on the strong focus on argumentation within rhetorical studies (Morrell, 2012, p. 74), including the emphasis on emotion (pathos). This combination of the classical argumentation literature and the recent framing literature, both emphasizing the significance of emotion, can contribute to a better understanding of how organizations decide to act by underlining that reasons are rational and emotional.

The literature on framing in social movements—with its prevalent and useful emphasis on diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames (Snow & Benford, 1988; Benford & Snow, 2000)—has inspired several studies in organization and strategy (e.g. Kaplan, 2008; Cornelissen et al., 2011). However, and as I also note in chapter five, this literature has, rather surprisingly, not incorporated emotion, despite emphasizing that "motivational frames" function as a call to arms and defining resonance as the combination of frame credibility and salience (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 619). Hence, the need to develop the pivotal role of emotion in framing reasons and motivating decision makers to act. This includes detailing how advocates of change, whether societal or organizational, appeal to emotion to establish the timeliness of their advocacy; hence, the focus on both time and emotion in chapter six.

As Kunisch, Bartunek, Mueller, and Huy (2017, p. 1045) noted, it is "impossible to fully understand the temporal components of strategic change" without considering emotion. Following their call for further research, this dissertation contributes to both the understanding of when and how particular types of emotions influence decisions about strategic change. By bridging the often-criticized dichotomy between cognition and emotion across disciplines (Micheli, 2010; Lerner et al., 2015, Hoefer & Green, 2016; Nussbaum, 2018), the convergence between emotional and cognitive frames, I suggest, is what constitutes resonance and hence persuasion. As I unfold and theorize in chapter five, to understand how decisions are made possible through the invocation of a feeling of confidence, it is necessary to cross the theoretical border between cognitive and emotional framing. When doing so, one also has to accept that organizational actors have to invoke feelings in order to convince decision makers that they have examined all available options and come to the best possible conclusion. As such, that very moment is ”inextricably tied to affective experience of the facticity of time.” (Holt & Johnsen, 2019, p.

Organize and Strategize: Decision as Process

If aspects of when to act reflect contributions to the role of time and temporality in decision making, and the how to act reflects the role of emotions in resonating with decision makers, then the combination of when and how (especially developed in the mainly theoretical chapter 6) reflects the convergence of time and emotion—the timely emotions invoked in the title of this dissertation. This marks a contribution to the framing and argumentation literature in itself, as spelled out in chapter six, and to research on empirical phenomena of organizational decisions and strategy making, as I will now seek to unfold.

Organizing Decisions

By conceptualizing strategic resonance as the emerging accordance of ambition and achievability (in chapter 5) and the temporality of argumentative action as a combination of retrospective forecasting and prospective remembering (chapter 6), I seek to emphasize the ongoing, processual nature of using rhetorical argumentation to influence organizational decision making. In turn, these findings can contribute to further research that seeks to explain the complexity of organizational decision making.

Time becomes emotional. The notion of emerging accordance reflects how cognitive and emotional frames slowly build up over time so as to momentarily achieve resonance. Where demonstrations of empirical credibility draw on the past and cognitively resonate with a sense of achievability, visions of fidelity project a future worth striving towards and emotionally resonate with a sense of ambition. Similarly, adherence does not simply arise in a split second, in which decision makers suddenly find themselves convinced by an irrefutable proof, but emerges as an ongoing process in which moments with sufficient persuasive qualities allow for decisions.

Emotions become timely. The processual nature of such a framing of temporality is also evident in the conceptualization of the temporality of emotion as part of affecting argumentative action. Here, the two temporal mechanisms of retrospective forecasting and prospective remembering draw their reasonableness (as judged by decision makers when they have to make a decision) from the convergence of not only emotion and cognition, but also emotion and time. Hence, temporality as the ongoing negotiation of what an audience can adhere to, which itself is contextual, links emotion and cognition.

In this sense, the framing of temporality that I have outlined in this dissertation and conceptualized across two models (figures 8 and 9) provides an answer to Giorgi's call to understand how a combination of emotion and cognition can create "a robust resonance that lasts over time" (Giorgi, 2017, p. 732). A resonance that lasts over time, then, reflects the durability of the arguments and their ability to both initially resonate with existing fundamental beliefs and resist new arguments that reveal themselves as time passes and assumptions either turn into experiences or fail to materialize:

> Durability concerns the lasting effects of an argument over time. Conversion experiences that characterize some religious positions tend to be long lasting. We might think here that the source of that experience, perhaps in argumentation, was not only persuasive but also created conviction, and that the best way to achieve such an end is to encourage a disposition in a person, that is, to change a person so that they are disposed to act in certain ways. (Tindale, 2018, p. 30)

The above underlines that persuasion begins with the dispositions of a decision maker, underlining that it is adamant to create a timely when before trying to present a compelling how, or as Burke argued; identification precedes persuasion (1969). Finding out whether arguments are ‘good’, requires a process that allows for the organizational decision makers, with whom the arguments initially resonated (identification), to let the test of time determine the persuasive durability of the arguments.

From both of these crossings of emotional, cognitive and temporal framings, we may expand our knowledge and understanding of why organizations, understood as collectives of decision makers, and managers, and individual decision makers, choose to follow certain proposals and not others. Hereby, strategic resonance and argumentative action as concepts, and the convergence between emotion, cognition, and time throughout ongoing processes, in general, illuminate how to navigate the dilemma between deciding with due confidence and deciding in due time—a feat that is not unlike the choice between a rock and a hard place that Langley (1995) famously dubbed "paralysis by analysis" and "extinction by instinct".

Strategy-as-Rhetoric

In relation to the impossibility of proving the value of what has yet to happen, the findings of the dissertation become relevant for pushing the field of strategizing. More specifically, the duality of kairos as both deliberate and emergent offers an important contribution to conceptualizing the temporal work of strategic change (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013; Kunisch et al., 2017). In the empirical process described in chapter four, strategy makers could not rethink and (re-)define temporal relationships as they pleased. Creating a compelling opportune moment required both a fit with existing organizational interpretations and shaping what organizational decision makers aspired to achieve. Hence, kairos enables strategy making, which in itself is an attempt to shape a projected future that only exists and is experienced in the present (Kornberger, 2013; Vesa &

Franck, 2013). In this conceptualization, strategy-work is situational and temporal; different contexts require different rhetorical strategies that enable and guide different ongoing interpretations of the past, present and future. The dual process of giving shape to and taking shape from the organizational kairos is constitutive of all strategy making.

Mintzberg (1987) defined strategy as streams of decisions made over time, and strategizing becomes a communicative process in the sense that ongoing organizational deliberation both foregrounds these decisions and subsequently affects the arguments that shape further decisions in this stream of strategizing (Gulbrandsen & Just, 2016). The perspective on strategy that emerges from this dissertation emphasizes the specific rhetorical features of the ongoing process of strategizing. Thus, rhetoric is a key to understanding how organizations decide on strategy and allow it to unfold; that is, how strategy becomes processual and persuasion occurs throughout the ongoing temporality of this process. In this sense, I posit strategy-as-rhetoric as fitting in between strategy-as-practice and strategy-as-discourse (Langley & Abdallah, 2011). Where strategy-as-practice examines the “doing of strategy” and the activities involved in the practice of strategizing (e.g. Jarzabkowski, 2005), and strategy-as-discourse investigates how language shapes and is shaped by strategy and organizational direction (e.g. Vaara, 2010), strategy-as-rhetoric draws on exactly the distinct rhetorical domain that is deliberations about what to do. All rhetoric is discourse, but not all discourse is rhetorical (Morrell, 2012, p. 74). A key difference is that rhetoric evolves around the persuasive discourse of decision making (deliberation about what to do, Kock, 2017). As such, strategy-as-rhetoric bridges the two critical strategy ‘turns’ in the sense that rhetoric is persuasive discourse between actors that engage in and develop their arguments about which strategy to choose (including the unfolding acts of making the strategy) from existing organizational practices and the practices that emerge from the process of strategizing.

The discussion of what constitutes strategy as ‘a stream of decisions’ also touches upon the distinctions between strategy-as-practice and strategy-as-process. In a recent paper on strategy-*in*-practices, Mackay, Chia, and Nair (2020, p. 26) argued that “a processual understanding of the ‘practice turn’ is necessary for fully appreciating how the everyday operational, the socio-cultural and the strategic can be coherently linked together in an integrative framework for explaining strategy emergence.” Accepting both the instrumental and constitutive nature of rhetoric, the strategy-as-rhetoric perspective, I suggest, fits with and may further contribute to these developments. From the general pragmatist perspective, on which this study is built, we may develop specific rhetorical explanations of how strategy emerges as a contingent, but not entirely random process of deliberation.

To summarize, I make two theoretical contributions. One is to the study of how organizations act and plan. The other is to the study of how to organize for decisions that unfold as open-ended strategies. On this basis, I encourage further research that might unlock the potential of strategy-as-rhetoric as a novel perspective on the process of strategizing and the reoccurring decisions that both shape and are shaped by the rhetorical projections of an unknown future.

Contributions to Practice

Having discussed the theoretical contributions and suggested avenues for further research, I will translate these theoretical points into two pieces of tangible advice for practitioners; one evolving around the rhetorical nature of decision making and the impossibility of achieving full epistemic certainty in rhetorical argumentation, the other about the rhetorical process as contributing to the durability of decisions.

On the Impossibility of Proving Rhetorical Argumentation

As mentioned, I worked as a consultant and advisor for several years prior to entering academia. This experience makes it even more important to me to translate the theoretical contributions above into tangible advice for organizational actors—both decision makers and the specialists who advise them and (in)voluntarily frame the possible scenarios that guide organizational decision making. In beginning this task of translating, one specific experience has come to guide me: In March 2019, I invited Victor, the key informant in the FiFi field study (chapter 4), to a seminar at Copenhagen Business School titled "When do strategists take decision?" with professor of strategy Stéphanie Dameron. After Dameron's presentation, there was a round of questions and comments, and Victor, as 'a person from the real world' was encouraged to share his view on how to make the best strategic decisions. He smiled and replied: "I try to bring smart and talented people with different views on how to solve complex problems together. We regularly talk together and see whether we are heading in the right direction. Usually, it works."

As simple as it might sound—and in that room on the top floor of a modern university building on a Thursday afternoon, it certainly did sound delightfully simple—the answer underlines both the importance of diverse input to complex decisions and the power of the process. Victor acknowledged that regardless of how bright the people who work for him are (and they are, indeed, quite smart as I experienced when meeting them during the field study), the regularity of meeting, checking progress, adapting to the unknown and unpredictable, is as important as the specifics of their analyses and recommendations.

Although it would be fantastic to be able to present an eloquent argument, solely based on 'bullet-proof' logics, which in turn would mesmerize decision makers, the current dissertation underlines two reasons why this will most likely never happen—and if it does, will not lead to anything but a continuation of the status quo. First, rhetorical argumentation is not a falsifiable demonstration (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969), but a weighing of a multitude of different reasons (some emotional, some value-based, some factual, some logical in the formal sense), after which a group of individuals arrive at a decision. It is not a question of whether humans are irrational or not; often, we are irrational, and computers perform better calculations and make rational decisions. Yet, computers remain poor at making the difficult call in situations that organizations face every day—situations that have no one rational outcome but still require a decision. Here, humans fare much better than machines. Second, if decision makers demand evidence-based management, the evidence naturally stems from experiments of the past and under stable conditions (see especially chapter 5). This approach can lead to predictable results and a range of desirable side-effects (e.g. no need to re-invent a well-functioning standard operation procedure). However, in contingent situations, which means all situations that involve choice to navigate the unknown future, given that the only thing we know about the future is that it is not the present nor the past, the past only tells it to continue business as usual or leads to the conclusion that business as usual did not work. What the past cannot provide are good answers for how to respond to an unknown situation, so even though rhetorical practices such as the ones investigated in this dissertation do not lead to perfect decisions, rhetorical argumentation allows for a legitimate decision process based on the available grounds, which brings me to my next point.

On the Importance of Process and the Durability of Decisions

As the my empirical studies show, positioning an organization to be ready for the largely unknown changes ahead, staying innovative and developing innovative products, and making bold decisions when facing a crisis all require arguments that balance the ongoing negotiation of past, present, and future, which is essentially an emotional balancing act. This does not mean that organizations should throw all critical thinking overboard, far from it. But if an organization adopts the thinking it uses when testing, for instance, the durability of a new type of metal to other types of decisions, such as when considering whether the year 2021 might be the best time to begin working on a new strategy, it is bound to fail. Unlike questions of metallurgical strength, questions of “the timely and the illtimed” (Perelman & Johnstone, 1968, p. 16) are essentially political.

What I propose, therefore, is to view strategic decision making as an ongoing process that allows for doubts, emerging learning, testing of assumptions (those that are empirically testable) and re-adjusting of value-based or emotional premises (that naturally resist testing). This might incentivize experimentation and taking the less-treaded path.

In one of our talks, Victor reminded me of Otto von Bismarck’s famous quote: “Only a fool learns from his own mistakes. The wise man learns from the mistakes of others.” I would add that wise humans also learn from the successes of others, but to do so requires interaction, discussion, sharing of knowledge and doubt, which is profoundly easier if accepting that it takes time, and acknowledging that the process is often as insightful as the result.

Epilogue

While I am writing these final sentences, the Danish summer—in all its splendor of 18 degrees Celsius, sparse sunshine, and unpredictable rain showers, which I personally happen to adore—is in full effect. The shock of COVID19 has started to disperse. In Denmark, businesses have re-opened, getting back to 'normal' and praising the increase in Danish tourists spending their summer holidays on home turf, while in others parts of the world, including some states in the USA, Brazil, India, Belgium and Spain, positive COVID-19 tests are on the rise (ECDC, 2020).

On the one hand, and especially for populations in countries where the situation appears under control and very few citizens are dying of COVID-19, including Denmark, it could look like yet another example of out of sight out of mind… Nevertheless, neither global pandemics nor the global climate crisis will disappear just because we cannot see it. On the other hand, the response to the pandemic has clearly demonstrated that global leaders are, indeed, capable of making swift decisions. To mediate between these two views, allow me reiterate Thunberg's point from the introductory quote of this dissertation: We must learn to read between the lines. When the global climate crisis reaches a magnitude (similar to the point reached in the corona outbreak) where decisive action becomes necessary beyond any reasonable doubt, we could have crossed the tipping points, which currently remain invisible to decision makers—either because they knowingly look away or simply fail to look up and face the uncomfortable sights.

My hope is that the research I have carried out during the last three years will help both researchers and practitioners to accept that even when the future appears predictable, ongoing discussions of what we want to achieve, what we want to change, are critical. However, in times like these, it is business unusual. Therefore, human interaction, emotional contagion parred with the best available evidence, is our only possible avenue for making decisions we can live with—now and in the future.

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9. Appendices

Appendix 1: Excerpt From In-Vivo Coding

Interviews with decision makers in GBCS (chapter 5)

DECISIONS	DEMAND	EMOTIONS	EXPECTATIONS
“DIFFICULT DECISIONS” “ESCALATE DECISIONS” ”DECISION MAKERS ARE NOT WELL-INFORMED’” ”DISCUSSION” ”LOOSE FOUNDATION” ”RELATION TO DECISION MAKERS” ”PROGRESS” ”MOVE FORWARD” ”DELIVER” “DISCUSS ASSUMPTIONS” “BIG DECISION” ”INCOMPLETE KNOWLEDGE” ”RIGHT DECISION GROUNDS” “HARD TO CONVINCE DECISION MAKERS” “SAY LET US DO IT” ”FIND MISTAKES” ”LIMITED TIME” ”JUDGMENT” ”DECISION” ”PUT YOUR HEAD ON THE BLOCK” ”RELEVANS” ”WILLING TO WORK”	“INTERNAL DEMAND” “CUSTOMER DEMAND” “SATISFY DEMANDS” “HAPPY CUSTOMER”’ ”ACHIEVE CUSTOMER ADVANTAGE” ”IDENTIFY PROBLEM” ”TO THE POINT” “BIG WHY” ”NEED AN IDEA” “BUSINESS CASE” “IDEAS THAT CHANGE THE WORLD” “PROJECT PURPOSE” “SATISFY CUSTOMERS” “CRYSTAL CLEAR” ”COMMERCIAL” ARGUMENT” ”NOT A MARS MISSION” “RIGHT PURPOSE” “RELEVANT”	”EMOTIONS” ”TRUST” “SECUTIRY” ”CONFIDENCE” ”TRUST” ”PERSONAL PRESENCE” ”BORED” ”ANNOYING QUESTIONING” “COURAGE” “PROVE THEIR METTLE” ”TOO EMOTIONAL” ”RESPECT” ”RESPONSIBILITY” ”CREATE CONFIDENCE” ”PUT FEELINGS INTO PROJECT” ”FIGHT FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN” ”TRUST” ”WE FEEL” ”WE USE TO” “NO WAY!” “THEY DO NOT BELIEVE IT” “JUDGMENT” “FEELINGS” “CRUSADER”	”LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION” ”ALIGN EXPECTATIONS” “PROBLEMATIC FIRST PHASES” ”TWIST THEIR ARM” “CAN’T GO TO GATE” ”WHAT DO YOU THINK?” “DELAYED TIME OF DELIVERY” ”RISK PROJECT CLOSURE” “RECOMMEND STOP” “NEVER HEARD” “STRATEGIC DECISION” “FORGET BUSINESS CASE” “ORDER” ”OVERESTIMATE TO GET THROUGH”

		“CONVERT INFIDELS” “CONQUER JERUSALEM” ”CLOSE TO THE PANELS” “HAPPY CUSTOMER” ”NEXT BEST THING SINCE SLICED BREAD” ”GOOD STORY”	

FACTS	FRAMING	SOLUTION
”FACT-BASED” ”PRESENT COMPLICATED THINGS” ”FACT-BASED ANALYSIS OF DEMAND” ”OBJECTIVE DECISION” KNOWLEDGE: ”WE FEEL” ”WE USE TO” ”GOOD REPORT” ”THUMBS DOWN” ”OBJECTIVITY” “MANAGE FACTS” “INFORMED” ”PRESSURE TEST” ”ACID TEST” “STILL-BORN PRODUCT” “RELEVANCE” “KNOW YOUR SHIT”	“FRAMING IS THE MOST IMPORTANT” ”CLOSE THE GAP” ”DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS” ”ANGLES THAT I DO NOT SEE” ”RE-OPEN DISCUSSION” “CRITICAL POINT” “DOUBLE KNIFE” “WASTE TIME” “PROJECT DEVELOPS”	”SOLUTION EAGERNESS” “CULTURAL PROBLEM” “WHAT TO SOLVE” ”HELD ACCOUNTABLE” ”RISK AVERSE” ”CHOOSE SAFE SOLUTIONS” ”ASK TOO QUICKLY” ”RISK AVERSION” ”BREAK-THROUGHS” ”SAFE SOLUTIONS” “TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS” “TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY” ”TECHNICAL RISKS” “RECOMMENDATION” “STOP PROJECT”

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Interviews with decision makers in GBCS (chapter 5)

1. Interview protocol

i) How is decision making a business critical leadership skill?

ii) Which role do emotions play when you make decisions?

iii) Which arguments are the most important when you judge a development project?

2. Quick round with a focus on performance of project managers

Statements, agree OR disagree

Project managers:

1. Deliver decision-proposals and clearly prioritize them in relation to the needs and agenda of decision makers.
2. Deliver decision-proposals that shortly and precisely present what ’gate-keepers’ should decide or discuss.
3. Include the most important matters into the Executive Summary.
4. Make proposal that they support by both technical and commercial arguments
5. Make their oral presentations in gate-meetings with both conviction and clout.

Appendix 3: Supporting Data for Data Structure

Mapping of 2nd order themes & representative quotes supporting 1st order concepts (chapter 4)

Theme	Temporal dimension	Empirical concept and representative quote
Survival demands urgent action	Past	Not sufficient development in last 10 years: "There has been a mantra that everything looked really good, but now it is 2019. We have developed a lot of features but not consolidated anything, and that means that the platform is sanded up." (IT Manager)
	Past and Present	Lack of IT competencies "Employees in IT Development and IT Operations have limited IT competencies and appear reactive." ('Evaluation of IT setup in FiFi')
	Present	Complicated IT architecture: "The technical foundation appears non-satisfactory, and there is not sufficient focus on raising its level" ('Evaluation of IT setup in FiFi')
	Present and future	Strategic and technical gap: "A lack of alignment for the strategic direction for FiFi has a negative consequence on collaboration and communication in IT" ('Evaluation of IT setup in FiFi') "A more appropriate and anchored approach to strategic and tactical decisions around IT is sought after" ('Evaluation of IT setup in FiFi')
		The firm will cease to exist if it does not adjust: "Everybody gets sucked into the present context. And there we need a business input, which kind of says, hey, the company will run into the fence if we do not do something now. Really, a sense of urgency that the business has to adjust if we should be able to survive this, right?" (Digital Manager)
Invest now to avoid future loss	Past	FiFi acted in due time and has arrived safely to where it is now: "When I compare to our competitors, it looks good. They are struggling with getting to where we are now." (Executive B)
	Present	IT looks reasonable "FiFi has a more simple and better functioning IT-system complex than most competitors" (Strategy paper) "I do not think there is anything critically wrong in FiFi. There is a culture that has been allowed to live and develop over time and because it is an old company, it is clear that something is very well anchored, and it is difficult to change, even just with IT. But we can actually service all of our customers on a daily basis without too many calling in and grunting." (Chief Enterprise Architect)
		Most Executives are positive. Nothing has gone wrong (yet) "I tried talking to our CEO who asked me: "What are you saying, are we in trouble? I had an idea that things are going well with IT. I did not hear that we should have any problems." And well, things are working. But there is a risk…" (Executive B)
		Maintenance as process "Maintenance of a house is, after all, ongoing maintenance. Sometimes it needs a proper round. It is now that we are growing. It makes sense to do it now. We have the competencies. We made our diagnosis." (Executive A)
		IT is not scalable and can limit growth: "I would ask our CEO: What is it that you really want with your business in five and ten years? Does it involve getting more customers, keeping administration cost at the current level but still providing a better service? If the answer is yes, then I would say that we have a problem. And the problem is that we cannot grow this business much more." (Chief Enterprise Architect)

		"We see limits to what we can do with the foundational IT architecture. (…) So, there are plenty of alarm buttons that light up right now without me being able to say that something will happen within one year or three years or five years." (Executive A) "It might sound like we are all going to die tomorrow. We are not because it is actually going pretty good. We can still run a business on a daily basis. But we are eons from a modern system, and we might hit some limits soon that prevent growth." (Chief Enterprise Architect)
	Present and future	Damage has to be done before someone takes action "It has to go wrong before it is interesting to do something about. Or the Financial Auditors arrive and say 'This is not okay!' Then it becomes prioritized, but it is incredibly difficult to prioritize something. If we suddenly lost X million here, then it becomes prioritized right away. Then nobody would even discuss it." (Executive B) "You feel more like solving what is a problem right now, than what is going to be a problem somewhere in the future." (Executive A)
	Future	Looming challenges require present action: "We have five years to save it. (…) But time is flying. That is also why one can say it is about constant care, acting in due time, saying 'Friends, we simply have to do something!'" (IT Manager) "FiFi's systems are half-old, not scalable, and they risk to 'sand up'" (Strategy paper)
Continue coherent effort to achieve a lasting advantage	Past	Important to respect the legacy and large effort by colleagues: "It is important to have respect for what the firm has built up. You cannot just tell your colleagues that they have done a crap job for the last 25 years. You do not get anywhere with that approach." (IT Manager) "I think it is important that we are able to show a consistency in what we do and acknowledge many of the good things we have done in the past." (Executive A)
	Past and present	FiFi was a 'first mover' in developing IT systems: "In the beginning of the 2000s, FiFi was in fact 'state of the art', had control and were on their feet" (IT Manager) Necessary past preparations enables permission to proceed: "We cannot show up and say, now, listen up: We have always said that our IT has been well functioning, we have said that our systems are good, and that our products for financial advisors are fantastic. Now it is crap, now we are going to change it all. No, it is actually quite reasonable and solid but now we are going to embrace the new era and take control because we have done the good preparatory work. I think that is an important part of getting a permission to proceed." (Executive A) "Let us get a frame for saying 'Let us work on our foundational architecture, take back further control over our systems, and replace the ones that hurt the most'. That is going to be the next small step, and I do not think that we should try to formulate a strategy yet. I think we should just say, we are now making our IT future-proof." (Executive A)
	Present	FiFi is now a leading player within IT: "FiFi has done a lot of good things, and we are among the leading financial companies IT wise because we were able to get rid of the darn mainframe. That is the one that all the big players have trouble with." (Chief Enterprise Architect)
	Future	FiFi can transform the market: "FiFi has a unique opportunity to take control over the total IT, prolong the lifespan of the systems and create a large and permanent advantage in the competition with the other financial firms." (Strategy paper)

Appendix 4: Invoking Confidence in Stage-Gate Decisions

Opportunity (positive, likely to decide in favor of project)					**Threat** (negative, likely to decide against project)			
Illustrative quote	Meaning	Appraisals	Inferred emotion		Illustrative quote	Meaning	Appraisals	Inferred emotion
DEMONSTRATING PROJECT LEADERSHIP								
Take command in the room				Instead of	Excusing yourself			
”Personal relations and trust really means a lot! How you act, how **confident** you get up, how good you are at answering questions etc. That is exactly what provides **security** and **safety** for us (decision-makers, ed.)” (Head of Quality)	Personal relations, trust and **performance** creates **confidence**	**Pleasant** state. **Certainty** about positive outcome based on previous occasions and **high attention** to ability to answer	**Happiness** and **interest** in supporting an expected success		”**Take command**! If you do not take command, then you are lost. Here, you are building on mutual **respect**, but it is not certain that you are getting my respect or anyone else’s respect if you are just **floating** around. We can wait until you reach a point where you want questions, but if we cannot see a clear connection, then we become impatient, and we have 20 minutes, and then we take over. You have to show a **presence** and an authority that demonstrates that “you know your shit”. If you do not… Tough!” (Executive Officer, Supply Chain and Product)	If project managers do not **take command**, then they do not gain **respect** of decision-makers who take charge	**Unpleasant** state. High **uncertainty** about expected value of project. Lack of command leads to belief that **project managers** are to blame	**Frustration** and **anger** when project managers fail to demonstrate that they are in charge
Put feelings into the projects					Just “managing projects”			
“We are better at the technical aspects. The commercial part of our projects is still not up to speed. They are the ones who can provide the argument about why we do this. It is not enough that it is technically feasible. The project manager is the one who can **challenge** the commercial lead or technical lead, twist their arm and have the courage to say: ‘Goddam, this is not good enough. I cannot go to gate with that!” (Head of Product Development)	Project manager can **challenge** the organization to align and match technical and commercial capabilities	**Pleasant** state when project managers demonstrate **responsibility** and willingness to fight. Some **certainty** and belief that project manager is in **control**	**Pride** when project managers invoke belief in fighting for the project		“As a project manager you have to be ready to put your **feelings** into the project and fight for what you **believe** in. If you are not certain that what you bring to the table is quite good, well, then you leave that interpretation to the decision-makers. ‘This thing, they do not even believe in it themselves. Should we then say yes? **No way**!” (SVP, Branding, Communication and Strategic Marketing)	Lack of belief creates a **negative emotional contagion**	**Unpleasant** state. **Certainty** about lack of future benefit. **Responsibility** is project managers’ and decision-makers have **control** to stop weak projects	**Anger** and even **contempt** that project managers do not even fight for the project

FRAMING THE PURPOSE								
Crystallize the purpose (the big WHY)				Instead of	Assuming your audience to be mind-readers			
”The big WHY. **Why** are we doing this? Too often, it gets mixed up with technical solutions and a small note on the side about what we make this product. It simply has to be **crystal clear** to the decision-makers, **why** are you here today. That is the most important!” (Head of Product Development)	Big purpose has to be crystal clear, technical solutions are only a means to achieving a strategic end	**Pleasant** state when there is **certainty** about the strategic purpose of developing a product	**Interest** in pursuing a project with strategic fit		”It is a double-edged knife. As a decision-maker, I can have the feeling that this project is strange, we do not want to **waste time** on stage one and two with a product that **appears stillborn**. You would rather want an understanding that it is relevant. We can also play with an even bigger interval. We might not know enough about the market, but let us just say that we sell half of expected, then it looks like this, that is couch your assumption in a kind of **sensitivity analysis**. But at stage 3, then we begin to invest in production equipment and that puts a strain on the product.” (Executive Officer, Supply Chain and Product)	Double-edged knife to make early phase decisions	Ambivalence. Some **uncertainty** about future relevance. High **effort** that might go wasted. Lack of own control. Interval assessments can provide some degree of **certainty**.	**Anxiety** of continuing failing projects that constitute a threat. **Hope** of investing in relevant project
Show that the project has examined all relevant angles (*Pride* when the stage-gate model works)					Trying to pass the gate at any cost			
“It is the advantage of explaining the **alternatives** considered as well as the **recommendation**, to **demonstrate** the thought process. They need to clarify costs and investments **against** product features and benefits.” (SVP Market & Product Support)	Demonstrating thought process by explain alternatives and recommendatio n	**Pleasant** state. Some **certainty** about all available options but yet transparency and **control** for decision-makers	**Pride** when the stage-gate model supports **informed** decision-making		”For me, it is important how the **process of building a decision foundation** has been. What are the premises available to us when we are to make these decisions? One of the things that makes me **insecure** is if I cannot trust that **all facts** have been presented.” (Head of Quality)	If the project has not examined all relevant facts, **insecurity** prevents decisions	**Unpleasant** state. **Uncertainty** about facts leads to insecurity. **Low control** over situation.	**Fear** of unobser-ved facts leads to **mistrust**

ENABLING DECISIONS								
Provide clear recommendations				Instead of	Asking "What do you think?"			
"It requires the **courage** from them (project managers, ed.) to say: What does all of this information tell us, and which decisions do we **believe** that we should recommend? And then provide a well-reasoned recommendation for a decision. Of course, they should **consider** quality, time to market, finance, and what else before making their recommendation. Based on that, this is why we recommend as we do, and if it was **our business**, then we would do as suggested." (Head of Quality)	Well-reasoned recommend-dation to guide decisions **as if** the business belonged to the project managers	**Pleasant** state. Courage of project managers reduces **anticipated effort** of making a decision. An increased **certainty** of outcomes due to thorough consideration	**Pride** that project managers value project as their own business		"It is somewhat of a caricature but the one about going from project manager to project leader. Really, **prove their worth** and show their character, being the one who is in control and also leads the project through. I do have the impression that a **lot of decisions** have to be made, but the project managers do not do it, and then it is up to the gatekeepers, **what do you think**?" (VP, Global Product Management)	When project managers fail to make necessary decisions before going to gate, they end up asking decision-makers what they think – leaving it up to them.	**Unpleasant** state. When project managers do not exceed **control** over projects, it forces **high attention** from decision-makers. **Uncertainty** due to lack of project insights and feeling of high **other-responsibility**	**Frustra-tion** and **fear** of lack of own control
Focus on decision consequences					Irrelevant technical details			
"The kind of argumentation that convinces me is when we have **verified**, do we have an indication of, when I will be talking with our sales companies, are they going to **completely abandon the idea** and tell me, we just cannot sell it, we will not remain cost-competitive, or we are going to lose share. That is decisive for me. That somebody did the homework, what are the consequences? It is in reality about **impact assessments**." (VP, Global Product Management)	Proper 'homework' consists of outlining **decisions consequences** and **impact assessments**	**Pleasant** state. Low anticipated **effort** when **certainty** about outcomes is high due to outlining of consequences.	**Happiness** when project managers made proper impact assess-ments		"You can see right from the beginning that this is going bad. It is typically also when project managers chose a wrong presentation strategy. They present **too many complicated things**, and you can see that the gatekeepers start to get **bored.** They pull our their IPads, when project managers do not get **to the point**, and a negative spiral emerge, where you can feel that this is not going well, and then the project managers react with more and more panic." (Head of Product Development)	Getting **to the point** quickly is crucial for keeping attention. Excessive complicated details leads to **boredom** and lack of belief.	**Unpleasant** state. Certainty that the presentation will 'go bad' leads to **low effort** and **low attention**	**Boredom** and **frustration** due to project managers' **anxiety**

CO-AUTHOR STATEMENT

Title of paper	Getting the timing right: How rhetorical framing of kairos constitutes strategy-making
Journal and date (if published)	

1. Formulation/identification of the scientific problem to be investigated and its operationalization into an appropriate set of research questions to be answered through empirical research and/or conceptual development
Description of contribution: Marcus identified the scientific problem and relevant field of investigation; we refined the research question collaboratively.
2. Planning of the research, including selection of methods and method development
Description of contribution: Marcus conducted all empirical research for the papwer, including seletion of methods for data collection and coding.
3. Involvement in data collection and data analysis
Description of contribution: Marcus collected all data and performed first analyses. We worked collaboratively on refining the analytical strategy.
4. Presentation, interpretation and discussion of the analysis in the form of an article or manuscript
Description of contribution: While Marcus took lead at every step of the process, we worked collaboratively on the final stages of the analysis and both contributed to the writing of the article.

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