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Rethinking NGO Organizing for Sustainability through a Temporal Lens on NGOBusiness Partnerships

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Document Version
Final published version

Publication date:
2021

License
Unspecified

Citation for published version (APA):
Andersen, D. (2021). *Walking through Temporal Walls: Rethinking NGO Organizing for Sustainability through a Temporal Lens on NGOBusiness Partnerships*. Copenhagen Business School [Phd]. PhD Series No. 26.2021

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COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL
SOLBJERG PLADS 3
DK-2000 FREDERIKSBERG
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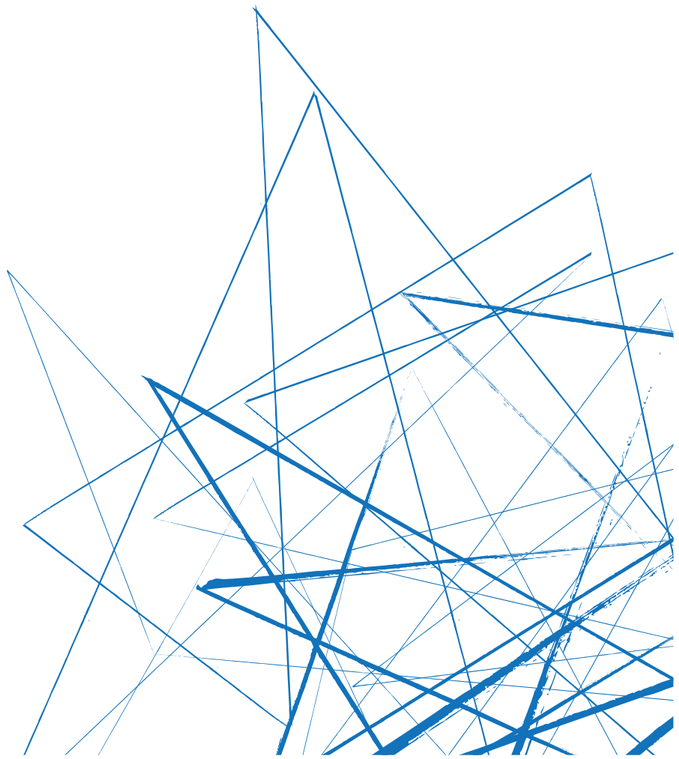
WWW.CBS.DK

ISSN 0906-6934

Print ISBN: 978-87-7568-028-3
Online ISBN: 978-87-7568-029-0



WALKING THROUGH TEMPORAL WALLS: RETHINKING NGO ORGANIZING FOR SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH A TEMPORAL LENS ON NGO-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

PhD Series 26.2021

Dimitra Makri Andersen

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CBS PhD School | **PhD Series 26.2021**

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Rethinking NGO Organizing for Sustainability through a Temporal Lens on NGO-Business Partnerships

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1st edition 2021
PhD Series 26.2021

© Dimitra Makri Andersen

ISSN 0906-6934

Print ISBN: 978-87-7568-028-3
Online ISBN: 978-87-7568-029-0

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Acknowledgements

I would like to start by thanking my husband, Peter, for his unconditional support and encouragement during the turbulent period of conducting my research. Thank you, Peter, for your thoughtfulness and kindness, for giving me time, space, confidence and comfort to continue, and for reminding me that my dissertation *"does not need to be perfect, it just needs to be done!"* I am particularly grateful to my supervisors Lars Bo Kaspersen and Majken Schultz for their insightful critique, advice, guidance and mentorship. Thank you Lars Bo, for your witty scholarly and moral support, your keen interest in my work, your constructive comments and for trusting that I could complete this dissertation despite the obstacles. Thank you Majken for your pragmatic attitude, insightful critique and sincerity, for encouraging me to dig deeper, and for reminding me that there is also a delete-button on my keyboard! I am also indebted to the Danish Red Cross for opening their doors for me, offering their precious time and a window to their world through different types of data. In particular, many thanks to Kaspar Bro Larsen for pulling all the strings he could to provide me access to data and people in the organization. Thanks to Copenhagen Business School: the (now nonexistent) Department of Business and Politics, the department of Management Politics and Philosophy, the OMS (and the new) PhD School and not least the PhD Support for providing an inspiring, collegial and supportive environment, even during the long periods of corona-lockdown. Many thanks to all the colleagues that have supported me in different ways throughout the whole process. In particular, thanks to my colleague Sara Dahlman for our discussions in and outside our common office, and not least for our adventures in Beijing! Sara, I have been lucky to have you around and share frustrations and hopes! I would also like to thank all my colleagues from the CISTAS project for creating a friendly and intellectually curious community. In particular, thanks to Liv Egholm for the explorations of our common scholarly interest-areas, and for the great fun and intellectual stimulation during our many common conference-travels. Liv, thanks for your positive spirit! I am grateful to Carlsberg Foundation for funding the CISTAS project and thus my PhD. I am very grateful to Annika Skoglund, Christian Garmann Johnsen, Majken Schultz and Esben Rahbek Gjerdrum Pedersen for engaging with my work as discussants and providing me with valuable feedback during my two work-in-progress seminars at CBS. I would also like to thank Antje Vetterlein for engaged and helpful supervision in the early stages of this journey, before she accepted a professorship in Germany. I am also grateful for the opportunities to present and discuss earlier versions of my work: at the Annual Meeting of the Social Science History

Association in Montreal in 2017, at the Process Organization Studies Symposia in Greece in 2017, 2018 and 2019, at the EGOS Colloquia in Tallinn in 2018 and in Edinburgh in 2019, and at the Academy of Management Annual Meeting in Boston in 2019. I would also like to thank Signe Ravn for her constructive comments on my application for this PhD position before I submitted it, and Kirstine Baloti, Cecilie Kampmann and Vibeke Kristine Scheller for critical engagement with my Danish translation of the dissertation abstract (no, it is not at all straightforward how all these temporal concepts should be translated into Danish!). Moreover, thanks to the members of the "Reading Group on Time" for inspiring readings and engaging discussions. I look forward to continuing doing that! Finally, special thanks goes to my family and friends in Greece, in Denmark and other parts of the world who have supported me and accompanied me in so many different ways during the ups and downs of this endeavor. In particular, many thanks to my wonderful sons, Oskar and Hektor, for giving me indescribable joy, a powerful sense of purpose and for unknowingly putting things always in perspective.

Abstract

What are the challenges and possibilities related to NGO organizing for sustainability through partnerships with business analyzed through an explicit temporal lens? Guided by this overarching research question, this dissertation employs an abductive qualitative research approach, drawing a case study of the Danish Red Cross. This case study inspired the engagement of an explicit temporal lens, which is grounded in the inherent temporal character of sustainability and the intrinsic temporal ambiguity of organizing through NGO-business partnerships for sustainability. This means that the dissertation studies time as an empirical phenomenon in its own right, and that it explores how NGOs experience, use, organize, interpret, and enact time in partnerships with businesses for sustainability. In so doing, the dissertation draws primarily on organization theory, cross-fertilizing and building upon theoretical insights on time and temporality to propose new theoretical avenues. The dissertation's theoretical contributions are grounded in an understanding of sustainability as an inherently and preeminently temporal concept, and include new conceptual tools that can enhance understanding of temporal tensions in NGO-business partnerships for sustainability and how actors attend to them. Furthermore, the dissertation's findings have implications for practice, elucidating how particular approaches to time and temporality can support or diminish substantive sustainability goals, opening up for a more nuanced and temporally sensitive managerial approach in NGO-business partnerships for sustainability.

The dissertation consists of three articles. The first article revisits the sociological notion of civic action and combines it with an events-based temporal approach to organizing drawn from organizational theory. In doing so, the article conceptualizes NGO-business partnerships as civic action, as well as civic action as a dynamic temporal-relational process. This dual approach reveals diverse "locations" and "styles" of civic action in complex organizations that span institutional sectors, and elucidates how civic action may emerge, persist, or change over time as actors enact and configure a plurality of past and future events in the present through their everyday activities.

The second article explores how NGOs experience and address temporal tensions in NGO-business partnerships for sustainability. The findings reveal four interrelated sets of tensions

around time horizons, temporal perspectives, speed levels, and temporal foci. The article conceptualizes temporal tensions as entangled, situated, relational, and contextual expressions of temporal ambiguity, which is defined as the simultaneous presence of multiple conflicting temporal elements. Furthermore, the article proposes a paradox view on the "paradox – trade-offs dichotomy" around the management of temporal tensions. This view highlights the NGO's efforts to strategically manage the inherent and emergent temporal ambiguity *in situ*, attributing to it both limitations and opportunities.

The third article introduces the notion of a *collaborative model for sustainability* for NGOs in the context of NGO-business partnerships for sustainability. It combines the collaborative model with a temporal approach grounded in the inherent temporal character of sustainability. The overall aim is to conceptually examine how a temporal approach, which emphasizes the creation of *value for sustainability* and the operationalization of the neglected qualitative elements of the *distant future* of sustainability, can enhance understanding of collaborative efforts to achieve sustainable solutions. The article moreover introduces *a theoretical perspective of temporal diversity* to the study of NGO-business partnerships. It does this by integrating an approach of *organizing time*, which focuses primarily on planning approaches that are expressed in temporal structuring of actionable time horizons, with an approach of *engaging temporality*, which focuses primarily on eliciting temporal explorations around the future possibilities for sustainability. This integration thus captures the contextual and qualitatively different temporal elements of sustainability. The article suggests that this integration may also have important implications for practice, leading to more successful and aligned efforts to address sustainability collaboratively through temporally sensitive, longer-term, and more future-focused cross-sector partnerships.

Resumé

Hvilke udfordringer og muligheder for NGO'er ligger i deres bæredygtighedsorienterede partnerskaber med virksomheder, analyseret gennem en eksplicit temporal linse? Denne afhandling adresserer dette overordnede forskningsspørgsmål gennem en abduktiv kvalitativ forskningsstrategi, der trækker på et casestudie af Danske Røde Kors, som inspirerede til anvendelsen af en eksplicit temporal linse. Dette betyder, at afhandlingen studerer tid som et empirisk fænomen i sig selv og undersøger, hvordan NGO'er oplever, bruger, organiserer og fortolker tid i bæredygtigheds-orienterede partnerskaber med virksomheder. Dermed trækker afhandlingen primært på organisationsteori, og kombinerer og udbygger teoretiske perspektiver på tid og temporalitet hvormed den tilbyder nye indsigter. Afhandlingens teoretiske bidrag er baseret på en forståelse af bæredygtighed som et iboende og fortrinsvis temporalt og processuelt fænomen og giver bud på nye konceptuelle og analytiske værktøjer, der kan forbedre vores forståelse af temporale spændinger i bæredygtighedsorienterede partnerskaber mellem NGO'er og virksomheder og hvordan NGO'er håndterer dem. Afhandlingens teoretiske bidrag har også implikationer for praksis og belyser, hvordan bestemte organiseringstilgange til og forståelser af tid og temporalitet kan understøtte eller hæmme væsentlige bæredygtighedsmål. Dermed åbner analysen også op for en mere nuanceret ledelsesmæssig tilgang til bæredygtighedsorienterede partnerskaber mellem NGO'er og virksomheder. Afhandlingen består af tre artikler.

Den første artikel genbesøger det sociologiske begreb "civic action" og kombinerer det med en begivenhedsbaseret temporal og processuel tilgang til organisering, som findes i nyere organisationsteori. Dermed rammesætter artiklen bæredygtighedsorienterede partnerskaber mellem NGO'er og virksomheder som en form for civic action, ligesom civic action genfortolkes som en dynamisk temporal-relationel proces. Denne teoretiske indfaldsvinkel afdækker forskellige lokale tilgange til civic action i komplekse organisationer, der spænder over institutionelle sektorer, og belyser, hvordan civic action kan opstå, forblive eller ændre sig over tid, når aktører gennem deres daglige aktiviteter opstiller fortolkninger af fortidige og fremtidige begivenheder.

Den anden artikel udforsker, hvordan NGO'er oplever og håndterer temporale spændinger i bæredygtighedsorienterede partnerskaber med virksomheder. Resultaterne afdækker fire sammenhændende sæt af spændinger i forhold til tidshorisonter, temporale perspektiver, hastighedsniveauer og temporalt fokus. Artiklen konceptualiserer temporale spændinger som

sammenfiltrede, situerede, relationelle and kontekstuelle udtryk for temporal tvetydighed defineret som tilstedeværelsen af flere modstridende temporale elementer. Desuden foreslår artiklen et paradox perspektiv på "paradox – trade-offs dikotomien" omkring ledelse af temporale spændinger og viser, hvordan NGO'er strategisk og ledelsesmæssigt søger at håndtere temporal tvetydighed *in situ*, ved at tilskrive den både begrænsninger og muligheder.

Den tredje artikel introducerer begrebet *samarbejdsmodel for bæredygtighed* for NGO'er i forbindelse med bæredygtighedsorienterede partnerskaber med virksomheder og kombinerer denne med en analytisk tilgang baseret på en temporal og tidslig forståelse af bæredygtighed. Det overordnede mål er at undersøge konceptuelt, hvordan en temporal tilgang - som både understreger skabelsen af *værdi for bæredygtighed* og operationaliseringen af de ofte oversete kvalitative elementer i forståelsen af en fjern fremtid i forbindelse med bæredygtighed - kan øge forståelsen af samarbejdsindsatser for at opnå bæredygtige løsninger. Artiklen introducerer desuden et *teoretisk perspektiv på temporal diversitet* i studiet af bæredygtighedsorienterede partnerskaber mellem NGO'er og virksomheder ved at integrere en såkaldt *organizing time* tilgang, som fokuserer på planlægning inden for definerende og handlingsrettede tidshorisonter, med en såkaldt *engaging temporality* tilgang, som fokuserer på temporale udforskninger og fortolkninger i forbindelse med fremtidige og eventuelt helt nye muligheder for at "opnå" bæredygtighed. Artiklen argumenterer for, at denne integration af teoretiske perspektiver også kan have vigtige konsekvenser for praksis. Ved at indfange de kontekstuelle og kvalitativt forskellige temporale elementer af bæredygtighed kan det føre til en mere vellykket indsats for at tackle bæredygtighed igennem samarbejde, og igennem længerevarende og mere fremtids-fokuserede bæredygtighedsorienterede partnerskaber mellem NGO'er og virksomheder.

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Abbreviations

NGO: Non-governmental Organization

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

NBSPs: NGO-Business Sustainability Partnerships

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

DRC: The Danish Red Cross

KRC: The Kenyan Red Cross

UN: United Nations

PRC: The Philippines Red Cross

DANIDA: Danida is the term used for Denmark's development cooperation, which is an area of activity under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

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PART I

"When I was alive, I believed—as you do—that time was at least as real and solid as myself, and probably more so. I said 'one o'clock' as though I could see it, and 'Monday' as though I could find it on the map; and I let myself be hurried along from minute to minute, day to day, year to year, as though I were actually moving from one place to another. Like everyone else, I lived in a house bricked up with seconds and minutes, weekends and New Year's Days, and I never went outside until I died, because there was no other door. Now I know that I could have walked through the walls."

(The Last Unicorn," Beagle, 1968: 199)

INTRODUCTION

Aim and research question

The world is facing an unpreceded number of grand challenges such as climate change, poverty alleviation, water scarcity, migrant crises, the protection of human rights, and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic. Grand challenges are large and stubbornly persistent problems whose impact extends beyond the boundaries of continents, countries, communities, or single organizations, affecting large populations' well-being and future prospects. Grand challenges are characterized by numerous complexities and a radical form of uncertainty, so they are usually resistant to universal solutions and easy fixes (Ferraro, Etzion & Gehman, 2015) and instead demand coordinated and sustained efforts from multiple and diverse stakeholders (George, Howard-Grenville, Joshi & Tihanyi, 2016). Despite -or perhaps due to- the daunting character of these grand challenges, a multitude of individuals and organizations from around the world have developed responses to tackling them over the last decades. One remarkable instance of a response is the creation of the notion of *sustainable development*, which was introduced in the World Commission on Environment and Development's report *Our Common Future* (also known as the Brundland report) in 1987 (WCED, 1989). The report reflects a conscious effort to address grand challenges by conceptually linking and morally binding environmental, economic, and social development under the umbrella term "sustainable development" (Lafferty, 1999). The report defined sustainable development as "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"* (WCED, 1989). Thus, the report established an explicit link between the present and the future.

Over the years, the concept of sustainability became shorthand for sustainable development, contributing to its further popularization (Jay, Soderstrom & Grant, 2017). Today, however, the two concepts are usually used interchangeably (including in this dissertation). Key

to the popularity of sustainability has been its multivocal quality, i.e. its openness to very different interpretations (Ferraro et al., 2015), which has enabled individuals and organizations to embrace it in diverse ways. On the one hand, this openness has made sustainability a buzzword (Jay et al., 2017); the concept has been reconstructed by literally everyone with a stake in the issue, including governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses, universities, and foundations. In particular, businesses have arguably taken a strong and active approach to sustainability, viewing it as an issue of corporate strategy. Nevertheless, business sustainability strategies have also been criticized for being dominated by the instrumental logic of "efficiency," leading to impoverished conditions for openness, engagement, and relationality, which many have defined as essential for sustainability (Painter-Morland & ten Bos, 2016).

On the other hand, however, the multivocal quality of the concept of sustainability has provided important common ground for discussion and collaboration among a great range of actors, even among actors who are frequently at odds (Ferraro et al., 2015). Consequently, in the last 25 years there has been an exponential increase in different types of bilateral and multi-stakeholder cross-sector partnerships between government, business, and/or NGOs across the globe, all aiming to address sustainability (Gray & Stites, 2013). This tendency was increased even more after 2015 with the United Nations' (UN) adoption of the most universal and widely embraced grand challenges framework to date, the Sustainable Development Goals[1] (SDGs), and in particular SDG 17: "Partnerships for the Goals" (George, Howard-Grenville, Joshi & Tihanyi, 2016). Cross-sector partnerships for sustainability are seen as "machines of possibility" (Andersen, 2008), entailing an important promise for the future of society and for its sustainable development. Within the broader constellation of cross-sector partnerships for sustainability we

[1] The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030 (www.undp.org).

find those involving NGOs and businesses, and this is the empirical setting on which this dissertation focuses, i.e. NGO-business sustainability partnerships (hereafter NBSPs).

Taking point of departure in a study of the Danish Red Cross (DRC) and its practice of partnering with businesses, this dissertation aims to enhance understanding of the possibilities and challenges connected to NGO organizing for sustainability through NBSPs, as few studies take an NGO perspective (Shumate, Hsieh, & O'Connor, 2018; Seitanidi & Ryan, 2007). In conducting this research, I employ an explicit temporal lens grounded in the inherent temporal character of sustainability and the intrinsic temporal ambiguity of organizing through NBSPs. The overall research question that I pose is: "*What are the challenges and possibilities related to NGO organizing for sustainability through partnerships with business analyzed through an explicit temporal lens?"* Employing a temporal lens in this endeavor has two interrelated implications. First, it means that I study time as an empirical phenomenon in its own right (Reinecke & Ansari, 2017). More specifically, I examine how NGOs relate to, perceive, use, consider, experience, organize, are influenced by, interpret, and enact time in their NBSP practices. Second, it means that in studying time, I am inspired and informed by an ontological understanding of time as temporality (Reinecke & Ansari, 2017; Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas & Van de Ven, 2013; Hernes, 2014), and I draw on organization theory, cross-fertilizing and building upon diverse theoretical insights on organizational time, to propose new theoretical avenues that also have implications for practice.

I used this temporal lens through an abductive qualitative research approach (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012), which resulted in one empirical and two theoretical articles that comprise the second part of this dissertation. To be sure, I did not embark on this research with the purpose of studying NGOs and their NBSP practices from a temporal lens. My interest in NBSPs was sparked by the intense praise that these relatively new cross-sectoral practices received in public discourse. Besides emphasizing that traditional mono-sectoral solutions

cannot address wicked sustainability problems, this discourse described partnerships along the lines of the following expressions: *"the collaboration paradigm of the 21st century," "the new organizational zeitgeist in dealing with social issues,"* and *"a stunning evolutionary change in institutional forms of governance"* (Gray & Stites, 2013). After reviewing the most cited work in cross-sector partnerships literature to find inspiration and get an idea of the research angles that scholars have employed, I thought that three aspects were particularly interesting. First, much of the literature I reviewed seemed to have a rather—often implicit—asymmetrical focus on the business side of partnerships. Second, extant literature suggested that cross-sector partnerships are no panacea; they can lead to journeys to the unexpected and create fields of tension with varying consequences, often resulting in failure. Third, the research often questioned the degree to which sustainability issues that cross-sector partnerships aimed to address were actually being adequately addressed (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a&b; Austin, 2000; Seitanidi, 2010; Van Tulder, Seitanidi, Crane & Brammer, 2016). For example, research has stressed that NGOs face reputational risks due to business partners' failure to deliver the level of commitment needed for sustainability (Gray & Purdy, 2018; Ählström & Sjöström, 2005).

This last point became the first focal point of entry into my empirical setting, expressed as an intention to conduct a process study with the aim of examining how sustainability issues were being addressed in everyday partnership practices. This approach may well have been due to the fact that at that point in time, I had just returned from my first PROS[2] conference. PROS reawakened my interest in the processual sociological and organizational perspectives that I had encountered during my earlier studies—and so it sparked my curiosity to learn more. I then set out to find a case organization, which I decided had to be an NGO, as I had seen no study focused explicitly on NGOs and partnerships with businesses. The explicit empirical and

[2] The annual international symposium on process organization studies, to which I kept on returning.

theoretical focus on time and temporality emerged from my data and grew during the process of my engagement with what I now see as the first round of empirical inquiry. In the Research Process and Methods section, I reflect in more detail upon this iterative process, which started with a search for an interesting research puzzle and unfolded into an exciting and challenging engagement with "the ultimate puzzle," as Norbert Elias (1993) has famously characterized the concept of time.

The relevance of a temporal lens for studying NGO-business partnerships for sustainability

Before I introduce the dissertation articles, I would like to reflect upon why time is a relevant, interesting, and fruitful conceptual lens for the study of NBSPs. The relevance of this lens can be discussed on two distinct but importantly also interrelated levels: on the level of the purpose such partnerships aspire to fulfill, and on the level of the mode of organizing NBSPs. First, concerning the purpose level, NBSPs aspire to attain to sustainability. Based on my interpretation of the findings and review of the literature, I approach sustainability as a predominantly temporal concept. In this sense, sustainability is an ongoing process towards desirable sustainable futures, and it has accordingly been conceived as *flourishing*, a strong metaphor and a dynamic word that represents ongoing change, striving, and thriving (Ehrenfeld, 2013). Sustainability as a dynamic concept is rooted in the emergent, ongoing, complex, and indeterminate processes that comprise it (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015). It is not an end-state, but rather something that needs to be continually generated. Furthermore, while sustainability is most often framed by present-day problems that need to be solved, these problems are grounded in deeply held beliefs and ways of living that have their roots in the past; in fact, they sometimes arise as unintended consequences of past decisions. Importantly, sustainability involves creating a positive vision of a distant and ambiguous future. It is thus entangled with the future-oriented notion of intergenerational equity. Sustainability is directed towards possibility and an open

future, and *"it makes little sense except as a lasting condition"* (Ehrenfeld, 2013:18). This indefiniteness in approaching sustainability should not be seen as unrealistic or naïve, but rather as connotative and metaphoric. "*It means simply that our actions need to take account of the future in a meaningful way, beyond the mere discounting of standard economic calculus"* (Ibid). This dissertation elaborates on this vision of sustainability in subsequent sections.

Second, concerning the organizing mode level, NBSPs come to life as projects, which are temporary organizations created for accomplishing *ex-ante* determined tasks related to sustainability. This means that they are both short-lived and bounded by a deadline (Karmowska, Child & James, 2017). Such projects force us to consider how actors deal with the short duration and the impending termination inscribed in this mode of organizing, particularly in relation to the sustainability-related aims and objectives of NBSPs. Moreover, this mode of organizing brings together partners from remarkably different organizations whose conceptions and practices of time may differ significantly (Adam, 1994; Bluedorn & Waller, 2006). Arguably, the operationalization of NBSPs as projects also means that the past, the present, and the future of related activities are much less established than in ongoing organizations, so they need to be constructed and reconstructed on an ongoing basis by the actors involved (Hussenot, Hernes & Bouty, 2020). Moreover, while the tasks may be determined beforehand, the ordering, character, and duration of the related activities need to be defined by actors on an ongoing basis, as they face unpredicted events that may force them to re-adjust their tasks, roles, and goals (Ibid). Thus, examining how actors approach time and define their temporalities in such contexts yields interesting insights (which I unpack in the dissertation), especially when considering the aspirations of partnerships to provide sustainable solutions.

Overview of the three dissertation articles

This dissertation consists of three articles, which I briefly present in what follows. I also provide an overview of the articles in Table 1. The first article[3] is a conceptual article titled "Civic action as temporal process-in-relations: Towards an events-based approach." This article explores the potential of conceptualizing NGO-business partnerships as civic action, drawing on an alternative approach to civic action that analyzes it as a particular kind of action and coordination instead of a sector-specific one (Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014). This approach advocates for the need to focus on the ways in which actors interact and coordinate civic action. It also has the potential to reveal both diverse "locations" of civic action in complex organizations that span institutional sectors and different "civic styles," which are diverse patterns and varieties of civic action. However, this approach does not account for how civic styles emerge, persist, or change over time—neither in terms of their locations, nor in terms of their variations. Thus, this article asks: "*How can we equip the civic action approach with conceptual tools to better capture the dynamic processes that enact, maintain, and transform civic action?"* To address this question, this article cross-fertilizes the civic action approach with an events-based temporal approach to organizing (Hussenot & Missonier, 2016). In so doing, drawing on examples from NGO-business partnerships, the article proposes that civic action emerges, persists, or changes over time as actors enact and configure a plurality of past and future events in the present through their everyday activities.

The second article is an empirical article titled "Time will tell: Temporal ambiguity in NGO organizing for sustainability through NGO-business partnerships." This article examines

[3] This article has been published as follows: Andersen, D. M. (2021). Civic Action as Temporal Process-in-relations: Towards an Events-based Approach. In *Civil Society: Between Concepts and Empirical Grounds* (pp. 172-186). Routledge. It is included in the dissertation publication with permission from the publisher.

how NGOs attend to temporal tensions in NBSPs. It does so by drawing on a case study of the Danish Red Cross, zooming in on three partnerships with businesses through an abductive qualitative research approach. The article asks: *"How do NGOs attend to temporal tensions in NGO-business partnerships for sustainability?"* The overall aim is to gain a better understanding of the challenges and possibilities for NGOs in pursuing sustainability goals through partnerships with business. This aim is pursued by exploring NGO actors' related experiences, perceptions, considerations, and practices, focusing on the interplay between time and organizing for sustainability. The findings reveal four interrelated sets of tensions around time horizons, temporal perspectives, speed levels, and temporal foci. The article conceptualizes temporal tensions as entangled, situated, relational, and contextual expressions of *temporal ambiguity*, which is defined as the simultaneous presence of multiple conflicting temporal elements. Moreover, the article shows the NGO's efforts to strategically manage the inherent and emergent temporal ambiguity *in situ*, attributing to it both limitations and opportunities, and proposes a paradox view on the "paradox – trade-offs dichotomy" around the management of temporal tensions.

The third article is a conceptual article titled "Towards a concept of collaborative model for sustainability for NGOs: An approach of temporal diversity." The article introduces the notion of a *collaborative model for sustainability* for NGOs in the context of NBSPs and combines this model with a temporal approach grounded in the inherent temporal nature of sustainability. The overall aim is to conceptually examine how a temporal approach, which emphasizes the creation of *value for sustainability* and the operationalization of the neglected qualitative elements of the distant future of sustainability, can enhance understanding of collaborative efforts to achieve sustainable solutions.

	Article 1	Article 2	Article 3
Title	Civic action as temporal process-in-relations: Towards an events-based approach	Time will tell: Temporal ambiguity in NGO organizing for sustainability through NGO- business partnerships	Towards a concept of collaborative model for sustainability for NGOs: An approach of temporal diversity
Type of study	Conceptual	Empirical	Conceptual
Research Question	How can we equip the civic action approach with conceptual tools to better capture the dynamic processes that enact, maintain, and transform civic action?	How do NGOs attend to temporal tensions in sustainability-oriented partnerships with business?	How can we conceive of a collaborative model for sustainability for NGOs in temporal terms through which we can better understand, enact and utilize the relationship between time and sustainability, and in particular the significance of the inherent future orientation of sustainability for organizing through NGO-business partnerships?
Theoretical motivations	Cross-fertilizing theory on civic action (sociology) with an events- based approach (organization theory)	Paradox lens on temporal tensions at the intersection of markets and sustainability (organization theory)	Cross-fertilizing organizational theory on temporal structuring, temporal work, temporal distancing and distant futures.
Methodological approach		Abductive qualitative research approach Embedded case-study design	
Theoretical contribution /Findings	A dynamic view of civic action as an ongoing process that emerges, persists or changes over time, as actors recurrently enact and configure a plurality of past and future events in the present through their situated activities Conceives of NGO-business partnerships as sector-spanning civic action	The findings reveal four interrelated sets of tensions around time horizons, temporal perspectives, speed levels, and temporal foci. Temporal tensions as entangled, situated, relational and contextual expressions of *temporal ambiguity* defined as the simultaneous presence of multiple conflicting temporal elements The article proposes a *paradox view on the "paradox – trade-offs dichotomy"* around addressing inherent and emergent temporal tensions and shows the NGO's efforts to manage	The article introduces the notion of *collaborative model for sustainability* grounded on creating *value for sustainability* (as opposed to sustainable value) The article proposes *a theoretical perspective of temporal diversity* to the study of NGO-business partnerships by integrating an approach of *organizing time* that focuses primarily on planning approaches as expressed in temporal structuring of actionable time horizons, with an approach of *engaging temporality* that focuses primarily on eliciting temporal explorations around the future possibilities for sustainability

Table 1: Overview of the three articles that comprise the dissertation

The article asks: *"How can we conceive of a collaborative model for sustainability for NGOs in temporal terms through which we can better understand, enact, and utilize the relationship between time and sustainability, and in particular the significance of the inherent future orientation of sustainability for organizing through NGO-business partnerships?"* The article introduces a *theoretical perspective of temporal diversity* to the study of NBSPs by integrating an approach of *"organizing time,"* which focuses primarily on planning approaches as expressed in temporal structuring of actionable time horizons, with an approach of *"engaging temporality,"* which focuses primarily on eliciting temporal explorations around the future possibilities for sustainability.

The three articles relate in the following manner: The first conceptual article advocates for the need to focus on action, paying particular attention to the role of time and temporality in how actors experience and enact their practices on the ground, in their collective efforts to improve aspects of common life. The second article then reports on an empirical study that examines the actors' situated action and subjective experiences through a temporal lens. The findings indicate that NBSPs seem to be challenged by *temporal ambiguity*, i.e. the simultaneous presence of entangled temporal tensions that may be difficult to manage. Such tensions may concern the rhythms of nature, speed, synchronization, timing, and acceleration of human activity and the temporal depth of time horizons in both strategies and modes of thinking. Temporal tensions may also concern aspects that relate to various influences from the entanglement of experiences, current concerns and future expectations, and, importantly, the nature of sustainability as a process that demands the consideration of distant futures—aspects that are currently largely neglected in the study of cross-sector partnerships. The findings in the second article—in combination with the insights on the role of engaging temporality discussed in the first article—triggered the analysis in the third conceptual article. The third article then sets out to conceptualize a holistic theoretical framework for the temporal analysis of NBSPs

and similar interventions. In so doing, the article takes the first steps towards constructing a *theoretical framework of temporal diversity* that can capture and enhance understanding of the multitude of different temporal relations and interdependencies that the data revealed. Such a framework can arguably strengthen both our analytical gaze and the potential for managing temporal tensions constructively.

Structure of the dissertation

The remainder of the dissertation is structured as follows: First, I present a section that I name *Conceptual Lens*. Here, I first present my ontological understanding of time as temporality, and then I continue with some reflections on how one might organizations according to this ontology. I proceed by reviewing what I see as the most central and long-lasting dichotomy in the understanding and study of time, namely objective and subjective views. Then, I focus on the notion of temporal structuring (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002), a practice-based view that tries to reconcile this dichotomy. After that, because I am particularly interested in understanding how change in temporal structures may occur through temporal structuring, I dedicate a section to that issue, drawing on insights from organization theory. Finally, yet importantly, I close the Conceptual Lens section by laying out an account of sustainability as a temporal concept.

Second, I present a section that I name *NGO-Business Partnerships for Sustainability: An Overview of the Literature*. In the last twenty years, a field of study that explores cross-sector collaboration has emerged, so I present an overview of the literature on selected topics that relate to the empirical focus of the dissertation. In line with my focus on the NGO, I start with a presentation of an NGO perspective on NBSPs, providing an overview of how the cross-sector partnerships literature has viewed and studied NGOs. I then proceed with a brief, general account of cross-sector partnerships in relation to sustainability, followed by a review of this literature based on "tensions in NBSPs," as the notion of tension is central to my findings in the

second article. Here, I construct and present different categories of tensions, and right after, I dedicate a new section on the particular category "temporal tensions," which is the main concept surfaced by the second article's findings.

Third, I present a section called *Empirical Setting*. I first provide some information about NGOs and NBSPs in Denmark. Then, I describe the Danish Red Cross in relation to its partnerships with business, focusing more closely on three particular partnerships. Fourth, I present a *Research Process and Methods* section. I begin this section by explicating the embedded single case study design that I apply, and then I continue with a presentation of my abductive qualitative research approach. Right after, I present information on my data collection and analysis, and I close this section with some reflections on epistemological and methodological implications and limitations of studying time empirically. In the second part of the dissertation, I present the three articles. Finally, in the third part, I offer my conclusions, including a discussion of the dissertation's theoretical contributions, as well as its implications for further research and practice.

CONCEPTUAL LENS

This section describes the character of my temporal conceptual lens as a researcher. The assumptions that inform a researcher's conceptual lens have important implications, as they determine the nature of organizational problems that may attract attention, and lead to particular interpretations and explanations of the organizational phenomena under scrutiny (Reinecke & Ansari, 2017; Abbott, 2001). I ground the dissertation in an ontological understanding of time as temporality, a perspective that I present in the first part of this section, followed by a discussion of how organizations may be seen from this ontological stance. Then, I engage in a discussion of objective *versus* subjective understandings of time, before I move beyond this dichotomy to unpack the key notion of temporal structuring (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002), which accounts for

the recurrent constitution of temporality in situated activity. Because I am particularly interested in understanding processes that cause changes in objectified temporal structures, a central concern revealed in my data, I continue with a related discussion of situated views on change in temporal structures. Some of these views emphasize the important role of past, present, and future events in changing temporal structures, including events that lie beyond the scope of the actors' temporal structures (Hernes & Schultz, 2020), which is one of the ideas at the core of this dissertation. Finally, yet importantly, I close this section with a discussion of the concept of sustainability, which I construct as a preeminently temporal concept.

An ontological understanding of time as temporality

This dissertation is informed by an ontological understanding of time as temporality and of reality as fundamentally temporal and in constant flux. This understanding has been advanced by such process metaphysicians as Whitehead, Bergson, James, Heidegger, Mead, and Deleuze (Rescher, 1996; Helin, Hernes, Hjorth, & Holt, 2014). Scholars have used different terms to refer to this understanding, most commonly as an *ontology of temporality,* a *process ontology*, and the *becoming perspective*. In this view, temporality is the dynamic aspect of being in its becoming, changing, and perishing; it is the flow in lived time, the process of change or else the process "of being temporal." Concrete beings[4] are not merely "in time"; they *are* temporal, they *are* a process of change, they *are* "becoming beings." This means that time cannot be understood without considering beings, and beings cannot be understood independently from time. *"Strictly speaking, temporality and dynamic being are just two aspects of one and the same process. We cannot separate the one from the other in our investigation of reality without gross oversimplification"* (Röck, 2019:34).

[4] Here I use beings as a synonym to substances or entities; they can be living or not.

From the perspective of ontological time—that is, the ontological perspective of temporality—change or being temporal is the primary, fundamental property of what *there is*. Change is the way in which reality is enacted in every instant, the flow in "local presents" (Mead, 1932), not something that happens occasionally to beings (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas & Van de Ven, 2013). In this view, the world is fundamentally made up of processes rather than beings. Thus, the ontological project is transformed into a question about the temporal processes and events that bring "becoming beings" forth, not with the "becoming beings" as such (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). It should be noted that here the word "events" connotes a Whiteheadian understanding of events as ontologically fundamental processes, and not as well-defined temporally extended event-entities with fairly clear beginnings and ends. Understanding events as ontologically fundamental processes presupposes acknowledging that events have temporality only thanks to the becoming beings involved in them. It is thus the temporal "becoming beings" themselves that are ontologically fundamental (Röck, 2019).

Furthermore, from the ontological perspective of temporality, events do not have the property of first being in the future, then in the present and finally in the past, as if changing their positions along a timeline. What changes constantly, what flows, is the becoming beings, not tensed or "spatialized" events. This ongoing change of the becoming beings—the flow of concrete, enduring temporality, or *durée*, as Bergson calls it—does not happen in the future or in the past, but is experienced in the present. Human beings "extrapolate" into the past and the future in the unfolding present, but these past and future dimensions are, strictly speaking, neither future nor past. They are dimensions of the present—*they are present*—and this is all that is given in direct and immediate experience. *"To access the past we need the aid of memory, for the future we need speculation or projection, processes which mix immediate experience with conceptual or theoretical engagement"* (Röck, 2019:36). Thus, past, present,

and future do not exist as separate from each other; they are interconnected and integral in every process, as a unity of different aspects of them.

More specifically, the past is present in every moment of now, as every moment of now is conditioned by past processes**.** This means that the influence of the past is integrated into the present; the past in this sense is *virtually present,* in Bergson and Deleuze's terms. The present, in its unfolding towards the future, re-instantiates the past by expanding it, reinterpreting it, and selecting parts of it. With every new present, the past as a whole changes as well. As far as the future is concerned, the ontology of temporality opens up the constant possibility of engaging actively, creatively, and freely with the momentary processes to influence the future and bring forth different versions of it. Thus, the *becoming* temporality as the unfolding existence of beings is rooted in the past and directed towards the future. However, this is not only a linear progression from the past towards the future, since with every passing moment the past changes as well (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). This unfolding can arguably be seen as a becoming from the past to the present, and from the present to the past and to the future. Thus, temporality as the dynamic understanding of time is fully temporally extended. Becoming human beings are conditioned and shaped by their pasts, for they are remembering, selecting, and interpreting them in light of future aims and aspirations.

Moreover, from the perspective of ontological time, temporality is deeply relational and plural—not only at the level of relations between a multiplicity of pasts, presents, and futures, but also at the level of the continuous, interrelated flow of beings that are engaged in the process of becoming while standing in relation to each other. This implies a multiplicity of co-existing, intersecting, and multi-faceted temporalities that create an ever-changing "temporal tapestry," which we can reflect upon but cannot measure (Röck, 2019:42). *"…We pick one of these temporalities, be it the becoming being of a certain star in its relation to the earth or the time it takes caesium atoms to undergo a specific quantum transition, and use it as a standard-*

temporality that all other temporalities are measured against" (Ibid). Thus, objectified clock-time uses one temporality as the unchanging standard for all, to reduce complexity and to enable coordination and measurement.

In conclusion, this ontological position holds that this notion of temporality, which merges past, present, and future, must be taken seriously when trying to understand reality. Importantly, this ontological understanding of time opens up room for creativity and novelty in re-enacting and representing the past and the future in the present, inviting new ways of engaging with the past or anticipating the future. Moreover, taking temporality seriously requires developing an *adequate mindset,* i.e. a mindset that can help to provide us with adequate answers to the complex, actual, qualitatively-felt temporality, as opposed to ideal and absolute answers we often devise (Röck, 2019: 47). Taking temporality seriously further invites a re-evaluation of a number of approaches to organizing (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002), as well as a rethinking of the kinds of research questions that scholars pose. This ontological position favors questions that focus on how processes unfold rather than on how things change, or questions that problematize the boundaries between organization and context and that embrace the complexity of organizational life and the social world (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, Van de Ven, 2013).

Organizations from the ontology of temporality

Following the ontology of temporality, organizations are seen as ongoing accomplishments, as being in a state of constant emergence and creation (Langley et al., 2013; Reinecke & Ansari, 2017). Although change is ongoing and indivisible, organizations become temporarily stabilized, regularized and coherent through organizing (Chia, 2002). Working against the immanent forces of change, organizing institutionalizes patterns of behavior that enable communication and the creation of practical norms (Ibid), such as temporal structures.

Organizations, as so many entities in the world, are what Pickering (2017) calls *performative islands of stability* in the flux of becoming: they are configurations, socio-material set-ups where some sort of reliable regularity in our relation with nature is to be found (Pickering, 2017). Their seeming robustness should not be taken for granted; they are in reality fragile and uncertain performative accomplishments, requiring continual repair and maintenance (Ibid). Temporarily stabilized organizational structures and ongoing organizational action perform what Pickering (2017) conceptualizes as *the dance of agency*: they act on each other in a dynamic process in which both sides are emergently transformed (Ibid). Thus, the research focus should be on organizing as an ongoing process of repair and maintenance, not on the organization as a coherent entity (Weick, 1979). A good example of this shift in focus can be found in the notion of organizational identity. Early conceptualizations of organizational identity treated it as the aspects of the organization that members perceive as central, enduring, and distinctive (Albert & Whetten, 1985). However, recent research has studied identity construction as a relational and dynamic set of processes of enacting "how we are becoming" rather than "who we are" as an organization (Schultz, Maguire, Langley & Tsoukas, 2012). This type of shift reflects a performative epistemological position that focuses on practice, performance, and agency (Pickering, 2017), as well as experience, heterogeneity and temporality (Langley & Tsoukas, 2016). Furthermore, it does not assign a privileged or heroic status to agency. Instead, it recognizes that the capacity to make deliberate choices interacts with chance and environmental circumstances to produce both intended and (positive and negative) unintended consequences that influence organizational outcomes in unexpected ways (MacKay & Chia, 2013).

The study of organizations from this perspective is typically conducted through process studies that subscribe to a "strong process" view as opposed to a "weak process" view. A weak process view focuses on the temporal evolution of things/substances but views them as remaining unchanged at their core, attributing primacy to substances over processes (Langley et

al., 2013). From a weak process perspective, time is viewed primarily chronologically and mostly as a resource to be managed (Hernes & Schultz, 2020). As such, it has been studied in diverse ways from the outset of organization studies (Ancona, Goodman, Lawrence, & Tushman, 2001). In contrast, strong process views attribute primacy to processes and conceptualize organization as something emergent and always in the making (Langley et al., 2013). From a strong process perspective, time is continuous, and it is increasingly seen as the very medium[5] through which organizational actors translate and address their realities in situated action (Hernes & Schultz, 2020).

Objective, subjective and practice-based conceptions of time

The objective-subjective dichotomy

Scholars have interpreted time using a variety of distinctions, including event-time/clock-time, process-time/clock-time, kairos/chronos, concrete/abstract, relative/absolute, cyclical/linear, eastern/western, qualitative/quantitative, endogenous/exogenous, and temporality/time. Arguably, the most central and long-standing dichotomy in the literature on time is the distinction between a subjective or objective understanding of time. The difference between subjective and objective understandings is reflected in the fact that researchers tend to tacitly or explicitly assume the one or the other view (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002; Reinecke & Ansari, 2017). St Augustine's famous quote may well reflect this dichotomy: "*What then is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know"* (Confessions XI: xii, 14, quoted in Chia, 2002). We may interpret this quote as an acknowledgement that although there is something fundamental and obvious about our

[5] Related studies include such topics and areas as corporate environmentalism, hybrid organizations, temporary and permanent organizations, strategy, sensemaking, narratives, identity, institutions, organizational change, and history (for references see: Schultz & Hernes, 2020).

experience of temporality as flow, as soon as we try to explain it in terms of abstract concepts, we get caught in contradictions—and we may resort to less complex objectivist accounts, or even deny the existence of the flow of time (Röck, 2019).

Conceptions of time as objective

On the objectivist view, time is conceptualized as an external entity existing *a priori* and independently from action, and it is experienced as a powerful constraint on human action. It is seen as linear, external, abstract, invariant, homogeneous, quantitative, mechanical, absolute, calculable, chronological, and generalized. Time is seen as a quantifiable measure of action, motion and events, and it is usually treated as a taken-for-granted dimension of organizational life (Reinecke & Ansari, 2017). Furthermore, objective time represents the dominant temporal orientation in capitalistic societies (Adam, 2013), and it is universally acknowledged as a highly useful tool that provides a common frame of reference, enabling synchronization and coordination of social interaction, measurement of timing and duration, and understanding of repetitive and standardized procedural activities in organizations (Chia, 2002; March, 2007). From this perspective, time is seen as external and self-subsistent. Time itself cannot be changed; it can only be "managed." However, people's responses to it and assessments of it may change. Thus, an objective understanding of time motivates researchers to examine how time shapes action and how time may be managed.

Critics point out the limitations of the objectivist view, arguing that such a view is derived from an understanding of time as an analogy to space, as a pure extension or timeline between an infinite past and future. This understanding, they argue, represents an over-generalized and simplified view that reduces time to a "spatialized time of succession," an "ordered before and after," or a "time-container" that is independent from the events and constant change that happen during the time investigated (Röck, 2019). This leads to a

conceptualization of time without temporality, without flow—and even more, to an understanding that is insensitive both to certain qualities ascribed to lived time and to how temporal structures can be changed through action. Such qualities and changes cannot be fully understood simply by examining variance along standardized temporal measures, without taking into consideration people's interpretations and practices. The relation of cultural meanings and human activities to time is captured by the subjective and enacted understandings of time, which I describe in in the following section.

Conceptions of time as subjective

Subjective time has been defined as the experience of the past, present, and future, which occurs as individuals and collectives mentally travel through, perceive, and interpret time (Shipp & Jansen, 2021). On the subjectivist view, time is socially constructed, and people experience it through socially and culturally shaped interpretations that create meaningful temporal notions (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002). From this perspective, time is seen as contextual, organic, fluid, variant, relative, non-linear, qualitative, and heterogeneous (Adam, 2013; Reinecke & Ansari, 2017). Qualitative elements of time—such as the sense of acceleration or slowing down of the flow of time—are relative, and they are associated with particular cultural meanings and norms. Temporal change is achieved as people change the meanings and norms associated with aspects of the organization, as in Roy's (1959) classic study where workers constructed parts of their routine monotony as "banana time" or "coke time"(Orlikowski &Yates, 2002). Thus, on the subjectivist view, it is the qualitative elements of human activity that shape time (Jaques, 1982). Subjective time depends on the motions of natural beings; it is endogenous to events, processes, activities, and experiences (Chia, 2002; Röck, 2019). Nevertheless, scholars who advance a situated view of organizing argue that although a subjective understanding of time focuses on how action shapes time, it still falls short in explaining the process of reifying and

institutionalizing temporal constructions (Orlikowski &Yates, 2002). This critique sees both objective and subjective understandings as offering analytical advantages if they are treated as conceptual tools, but as having limitations when they are treated as unique inherent properties of time (Ibid). In what follows, I present Orlikowski and Yates' (2002) practice-based perspective, which views objective and subjective conceptions of time as a duality instead of a dichotomy.[6] This perspective recognizes that time may appear to be both solid, external, and objective because actors treat it as such *and* fluid, internal, and subjective because actors produce and occasionally change it (Reinecke & Ansari, 2017; Orlikowski & Yates, 2002).

A practice-based view of time: The notion of temporal structuring

In an effort to bridge the objective-subjective dichotomy, Orlikowski and Yates (2002) proposed the notion of *temporal structuring* as a way of understanding and studying time as an enacted phenomenon within organizations (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002). According to this perspective, through their everyday activities, actors produce, reproduce, and occasionally change temporal structures (that they and others have previously enacted). These processes in turn shape the temporal aspects of the actors' ongoing practices. In this view, organizational members experience time through the shared multiple temporal structures, which they enact recurrently (e.g. project schedules), to implicitly or explicitly make sense of, regulate, coordinate, and account for their activities (Ibid).

These temporal structures both enable and constrain action. That is, temporal structures here are not understood as absolutely independent of human action as in the objective view, given that human action shapes them. At the same time, however, in shaping them, human

[6] Duality refers to an instance of opposition or contrast between two concepts or two aspects of something juxtaposed. It concerns opposites that exist within a unified whole. Dichotomy concerns a separation or division into two opposed or entirely different elements and the distinction that results thereof (Smith & Lewis, 2011)

action loses the full control over them envisioned by the subjective understanding. Temporal structuring is an ongoing process that resembles Pickering's notion of the *dance of agency* (Pickering, 2017). It shows the active role that people have in shaping the temporal contours of their lives in situated practices (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002: 684). It also acknowledges that people are subject to structural constraints imposed by clocks or certain events, which have become taken-for-granted, institutionalized norms through their repeated use and reproduction, even if they are potentially changeable. The constantly reproduced and reinforced legitimacy and influence of (in reality, self-imposed) temporal structures in organizations create the impression that time is solid, external, objective, and inviolable (Reinecke & Ansari, 2017). Interestingly, the influence of objectified temporal structures becomes particularly strong when certain temporal structures become closely associated with certain social practices (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002).

The main contribution of Orlikowski and Yates' (2002) perspective is an emphasis on temporal reflexivity, which is the enhancement of awareness of the human ability to reinforce or alter temporal structures and, therefore, the experience of time in organizations. This perspective shows that objective/subjective distinctions between *clock-time* and *event-time*[7] break down in practice. Because both of them are human accomplishments, people routinely blur the distinctions between them and organize their activities in terms of both clock-time and event-time (Ibid: 690). Moreover, this perspective bridges oppositions between natural (i.e. biological and ecological) and social time by drawing attention to the fact that in practice, social time may not ignore natural time in cases where natural and social disasters can be avoided through appropriate action (Ibid: 691). Finally, this perspective bridges oppositions between open-ended and closed temporal orientations by showing that in practice, such orientations are emergent

[7] Event-time is understood as qualitative time. In this view, time is in the events, and events are defined by organizational members (Clark, 1985).

properties of the temporal structures being enacted by organizational members at a given moment. Thus, organizations are not restricted to either one of these orientations, exemplified by the closed or more open ways in which actors may view deadlines.

Change in temporal structures in organizations

In processes of temporal structuring, temporal structures are constituted in recurrent practices and can thus also be changed through situated practices (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002). Actors are knowledgeable agents who reflexively monitor their action. In doing so, under certain conditions, they may explicitly or implicitly enact new or modified temporal structures (Ibid: 689). However, deliberate attempts at change initiated by a single person or a small group can only be successful through explicit and considerable preparation and groundwork, especially when temporal structures are highly institutionalized. Nevertheless, Orlikowski and Yates (2002) present several examples that highlight the inherent malleability of well-established temporal structures. Such malleability is rooted in the structuring capacity of practices. Changes also occur in less institutionalized temporal structures, and these are typically accomplished as a regular part of engaging in everyday practices of time manipulation in organizations. Changes in temporal structures (usually partial) may also occur implicitly, through adaptations that characterize day-to-day activity (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002). In any case, broader acceptance and adoption is a pre-condition for any sustained change and adaptation in temporal structures.

Hernes and Schultz (2020) also adopted a situated view to explain how actors can lay the foundation for altering their temporal structures in their ongoing activity through a process of *temporal distancing* (Hernes & Schultz, 2020). This process entails constructing and reconstructing distant and—particularly significant for organizational members—past and/or future distant events in the present. These events relate to the temporal structures within which actors operate, but lie beyond the scope of current temporal structures. It is in that sense that

they are distant, not in the chronological sense (although they may also be chronologically distant to the extent that current structures do not account for them). When addressing distant events in the present, change may happen due to the actors' ability to collectively reflect upon the temporal structures in which they are embedded and to see the broader implications of these structures "with new eyes." The process of addressing distant events is twofold. On the one hand, actors may translate distant events into their ongoing temporal structures. This may, for example, entail asking how a set of actions would unfold if actors were to face certain distant events in the present. On the other hand, actors may project their ongoing activity onto distant events. This may, for instance, entail asking how a set of actions should unfold, if actors faced certain distant events in the future (Hernes & Schultz, 2020). Distant events may be singular or exemplary, and they may be interrelated. Singular events are unique, distinctive, and highly consequential events that provide motive for action and from which other events may evolve. They help actors reflect on how things were in the past or how they may become in the future. Exemplary events are more frequent, general, and representative of a larger group of events and illustrate trajectories over time by showing interconnectedness between broader sets of events. It should be noted that singular and exemplary events may not always be analytically distinct (Ibid). I now turn to the notion of sustainability, which I approach from a temporal perspective, arguing that this is an important lens that can be traced back to the roots of the notion's original conception.

Sustainability as a temporal concept

The concept of sustainability was coined by the Brundtland Commission[8] in 1987, which defined it as "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"* (WCED, 1989). The commission viewed the

[8] World Commission on Environment and Development's 1987 Brundtland report ´Our Common Future.`

concept as integrating in a mutually supportive way three core elements: economic development, social cohesion, and environmental protection (Ibid). Although the Brundtland Commission's original definition seems to be the one most often cited, a plethora of different definitions have been advanced since (Johnsen, 2020). These definitions reflect different perspectives and agendas, ascribing a broad and aspirational nature to the concept of sustainability. Despite the lack of a universally accepted definition, or maybe due to it, the concept of sustainability has been adopted by a wide range of organizations, from local civil society organizations to multinational corporations. For those NGOs whose purpose is the achievement of social or/and environmental goals in the development domain, the notion of sustainability became immediately relevant. For the business sector, the notion of sustainability sparked a gradual strategic turn from corporate social responsibility[9] to corporate sustainability,[10] as well as to partnerships with NGOs as part of business sustainability strategies. Relatedly, after the concept of sustainability was realized in the SDGs in 2015, it provided a more solid basis for the development of a common vocabulary that is thought to have strengthened cross-sectoral efforts to further address sustainability challenges (Stott & Murphy, 2020). The 17 SDGs provide "a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future" and represent an urgent call for action to achieve the goals by 2030. In particular, SDG 17, which recommends "partnerships for the goals," aims explicitly to revitalize the global partnerships for sustainability.[11]

While the concept of sustainability has long been accused of suffering from vagueness that hinders the development of adequate solutions, it has also been seen as involving a

[9] Already coined in 1953 by American economist Howard Bowen.
[10] While the concepts of CSR and corporate sustainability are still often used interchangeably, scholars have noted a strategic turn towards the latter, i.e. the integrated management of social and environmental issues across management functions and into core business (Lüdeke-Freund, Massa, Bocken, Brent & Musango, 2016).
[11] https://sdgs.un.org/goals

constructive ambiguity that can effectually accommodate alternative perspectives (Johnsen, 2020). This dissertation proposes that sustainability can be fruitfully viewed as a temporal concept, and that this view can be traced back to the roots of its original conception by the Brundtland Commission. This early definition stressed the importance of intergenerational equity, understanding sustainability as the capacity to endure and flourish—thereby linking sustainability with an understanding of time as process and with a particular entanglement with the future. The concept of intergenerational equity concerns the process of "distribution" of well-being across present and future generations through time. As such, it demands a far-reaching mode of thinking that includes the consideration of long-term direct and indirect consequences of current and past decisions, as well as new manners of decision-making that incorporate intergenerational issues (Summers & Smith, 2013). Intergenerational equity accounts for both the rights of future generations to inherit the same diversity in natural, economic, and social conditions and the moral responsibility of present generations to create and maintain conditions that extend the scope of social equity into the future (Ibid). The emphasis on intergenerational equity implies that sustainability indicators must be more than economic, social, and environmental indicators; they must also be about time and the threshold of intergenerational equity (Ibid).

Furthermore, the Brundtland Commission's definition stressed that sustainability requires addressing interdependent economic, environmental, and social concerns at different levels in ways that bring about an enduring balance (Hahn, Pinkse, Preuss & Figge, 2015; Fowler, 2013). However, at the level of organizational efforts, corporate sustainability scholars have noted an important difference in time orientation between these three dimensions that threatens sustainability: the economic dimension emphasizes short-term financial objectives, while environmental protection and social equity demand more attention to long-term concerns (Hahn et al., 2015). Relatedly, it has been explicitly suggested that business sustainability "is

about time": it demands addressing social, economic, and environmental concerns in ways that integrate both the short-term and the long-term (Slawinski & Bansal, 2012, 2015; Bansal & DesJardine, 2014; Hahn et al., 2015).

Other research fields have also highlighted various temporal elements that are central to the notion of sustainability. In the domain of environmental sustainability, the concept of time is increasingly relevant in discussions about the limits of ecosystems. These discussions stress the need to take urgent action in the present and accelerate our efforts to address grand challenges before more irreversible damage is done, as has been the case with the degradation of soil, groundwater, and ozone layers (Held, 2001). Ecological economists have also emphasized the temporal nature of sustainability, defining it as always concerned with temporality, particularly as a matter of longevity, survival, or persistence (Constanza & Patten, 1995). However, scholars argue that persistence can never be eternal due to the finite life span of all systems, and they propose viewing systems and subsystems as hierarchically interconnected over a range of time scales (Ibid). Moreover, scholars have stressed that sustainability raises complicated questions regarding what is to be sustained, for how long, and in what ways we can assess persistence—questions that make sustainability the subject of much elaboration, discussion, and disagreement (Ibid). Importantly, these disputes imply that actors aspiring to make sustainability interventions need to allocate considerable time and effort (George et al., 2016).

Although the approaches described above underscore crucial temporal aspects of sustainability, there remains a tendency to see these aspects mostly as parts of a temporal context (e.g. see Hahn et al., 2015), rather than as inherent, central elements of sustainability. In ecological economics, conceptions of time in relation to sustainability tend to treat time as linear, homogeneous, and exogenous to sustainability. This conceptualization obscures a deeper understanding of the qualitative temporal elements of sustainability—and, in effect, sustainability itself. To achieve this deeper understanding, we must view the idiosyncratic

temporality of sustainability as rooted in the emergent, ongoing, complex, and indeterminate processes that comprise it (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015). In particular, Reinecke and Ansari (2015) have noted that sustainability follows an indeterminate trajectory that involves empowerment, which is a process of ongoing societal transformation towards a long time horizon (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015).

In line with Reinecke and Ansari (2015) and other accounts of ontological time detailed above, sustainability can be seen as a process of achieving *adaptive viability*. This means that in a world characterized by constant flux, sustainability requires both cultivating a continuous ability to adapt and maintaining durable qualitative elements that are important for the well-being of current and future societies. In other words, sustainability from this view is about constructing and reconstructing the conditions under which societal benefits endure, even as society continuously changes. This requires a constant engagement with what sustainability demands in the flow of time. Relatedly and importantly, from the perspective of the ontology of temporality, the future of sustainability is not chronologically distant—that is, the future is "now." It is crucial to theorize future-making practices of sustainability and the ways in which particular future anticipations and aspirations inform action in the present. This requires focusing on the different ways that current sustainability concerns are entangled with conceptions of the past as well as the future. Focusing on past and future dimensions of sustainability and their interrelations in the present may draw attention to an amalgam of qualitative elements that are crucial for sustainability (Reinecke & Ansari, 2017). Such elements can reveal how our views of temporal interrelations condition our decisions for action and their temporal locus, as well as how the problems we are confronted with today are rooted in the past. These problems may also be seen as unintended consequences of the past (Beck, 2006).

NGO-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABILITY: AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

An NGO perspective on NGO-business partnerships for sustainability

International development is a system that is tasked with promoting and accelerating changes that improve the living conditions of disadvantaged populations in society. The importance of the criterion of sustainable change has been increasingly brought to the forefront of these efforts (Messerli et al., 2019). NGOs that are active in the domain of sustainability engage in a variety of practices that aim to bring about sustainable change. At the macro/global level, they engage in advocacy and lobbying, aiming to influence political or economic structures, business behavior, and public policy. At the micro/local level, they engage in a multitude of disparate and geographically-widespread tasks that involve localized, small-scale, and direct project interventions with disadvantaged communities and groups. In doing so, NGOs engage with a wide range of stakeholders—among which, increasingly business.

NGOs engage with business in both collaborative and confrontational ways. On the collaborative front, business donors often support NGO interventions financially. After the release of the UN's SDG agenda, NGO interventions increasingly materialize through NBSPs (Pedersen et al., 2020). The increase in collaborative relations has also sparked an increase in academic engagement with the phenomenon. Extant literature on cross-sector collaboration has highlighted the benefits of the rise in NBSPs, noting their potential to achieve sustainability goals through developing technologies and mobilizing diverse resources, logics, and practices (Gray & Purdy, 2018). However, although the literature on cross-sector collaboration and NBSPs is flourishing, it has directed less attention to the NGO side of collaboration (Shumate, Hsieh, & O'Connor, 2018; Seitanidi & Ryan, 2007). In this section, I present an account of the ways the literature has focused on NGOs.

Research has shown that NBSPs raise several concerns for NGOs (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012b; Dahan, Doh, Oetzel, & Yaziji, 2010). Such concerns are rooted in an inherent "commercial-social paradox" (Sharma & Bansal, 2017), a historically strained relationship between the sectors (Kourula & Laasonen, 2010), and uncertainty about future sectoral roles, which make NGOs skeptical about and even completely opposed to the idea of collaboration with business. Oftentimes, NGOs view business as the source of many of the problems that partnerships aim to solve. They are concerned that the private sector pursues only self-interested goals and gradually appropriates the NGOs' "natural role" in sustainable development (Hendry, 2006).

NGOs generally seek to orient corporate behavior toward improving society, but only some have a strategy for collaborating with business. Many NGOs still adopt a strategy of independence and challenge the legitimacy of cooperating with the private sector, fearing that their cause will become subordinate to the logic of profit. Such a strategy may include dialogue or confrontation enacted through activism and name-and-shame activities (Ählström & Sjöström, 2005). Despite these forms of resistance, collaboration with business is becoming an increasingly institutionalized practice for a growing number of NGOs—especially for the long-established ones—a development fueled by several factors. These factors include the changing role of the state and reductions in government support, as well as changes in philanthropic giving (Egholm & Kaspersen, 2020). They also include evolving public expectations for efficiency and accountability for NGOs, as well as opportunities to gain access to managerial resources or skilled volunteer work force (Seitanidi, 2010; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Wadham, 2009; Berger, Cunningham, & Drumwright, 2004).

Shumate and colleagues (2018) showed that top NGOs initiate more NBSPs, rarely promote industry exclusivity, and present distinctive patterns of relationships within the social issues domain; at the same time, they seek economic capital associated with greater perceived

competency (Shumate et al., 2018). But, not all companies are selected as partners. NGOs pay attention to particular aspects of a company's mission and social performance, including its reputation, goals, expertise, size, environmental impact, position in the field, density of networks, and openness to new ideas (Hendry, 2006). Moreover, NGO selection criteria are based on the types of capital they seek to mobilize, as well as on other organizations' selections (Shumate et al., 2018). The following section will provide a general overview of the literature on NBSPs before focusing on the aspect of tensions that is central to this dissertation.

An overview of the literature on NGO-business partnerships for sustainability

Global challenges around sustainability—including climate change, water scarcity and poverty—are becoming more complex, compelling, and "grand," which is adversely affecting human welfare (Ferrero, Etzion & Gehman, 2015; Reinecke & Ansari, 2016). In response, a new paradigm has emerged regarding how society might address them. This paradigm reflects both increased activity within all sectors to address societal challenges, exemplified by the rise of corporate sustainability in the private sector, and increased integration of the three sectors. Increased intersections across the sectors blur traditional sectoral roles (Egholm & Kaspersen, 2020) and emerge through a variety of new frameworks, models, forms, and practices for collaboration, partnership, and social innovation. Examples are social enterprises and cross-sector partnerships like NBSPs. The global discourse around these tendencies stresses the potential benefits of cross-sectoral synergies and the inability of traditional sectoral solutions to address complex challenges. Similarly, scholars have emphasized the potential of NBSPs to address pressing societal problems through mobilizing and sharing expertise, technologies, and financial resources, as well as through the dissonance of diverse principles, logics, and practices that can spark innovation (Jay, 2013; Stark, 2011).

Cross-sector collaboration emerges in four arenas: civil society-business, government-business (often called private-public partnerships, or PPPs), government-civil society, as well as among all three sectors (Selsky & Parker, 2005). This dissertation focuses on partnerships within the civil society-business arena, and in particular on NBSPs. NBSPs engage the partners on a relatively ongoing, nonetheless temporary basis, explicitly with the aim of jointly tackling societal sustainability challenges. These societal challenges refer to issues that are typically found in public policy agendas at a local, national, and global level, often concerning economic development, education, health care, poverty alleviation, community capacity-building, and environmental protection (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Waddock, 1991).

Businesses have consistently shown signs of a "partnership craze," especially since the advent of CSR in the 1990s (Selsky & Parker, 2005)—an interest grounded in the notion of "win-win" capitalism (Jay et al., 2017). In contrast, many NGOs still react to the prospect of business partnerships with skepticism or outright opposition, worrying that their "natural role" in aid and sustainability could be taken up by the private sector (Neergaard, Jensen & Pedersen, 2009; Kourula, 2010). Nevertheless, a growing number of NGOs resort to partnerships with business hoping for enduring projects that would be immune to the turmoil of political and funding cycles (Jay et al., 2017). In fact, there has been an exponential increase in NBSPs (and their study), both globally and in Denmark, especially after the adoption of the SDGs in 2015 and their emphasis on the important role of partnerships in sustainable development, as described in SDG 17, "partnerships for the goals" (Messerli et al., 2019; Globalt Focus, 2018; van Hille, de Bakker, Ferguson & Groenewegen, 2020).

NBSPs have been studied through a variety of theoretical frameworks, with three being most commonly used: institutional theory, resource dependence theory, and stakeholder theory (Gray and Purdy, 2018). Additional frameworks include transaction cost economics, network theory, actor network theory, critical theory, and the resource-based view (Ibid). In a systematic

review of NBSPs, Gray and Stites (2013) offer the following reflection on the status of the use of theory in NBSP research: *"We were struck by the overall variety of theories used to describe partnerships for sustainability, but also the limited use of theory in making the arguments that appeared in most of the articles. Additionally, despite the inductive approaches used in many of the articles, these case studies offered, overall, a limited contribution to theory development."* The partnerships literature has defined and categorized the various types of partnerships for sustainability, external drivers, partner motivations, partner characteristics, and partnership outcomes. To a more limited extent, the literature has highlighted issues related to partnership processes, including the importance of exploring differences, creating a shared vision, agreeing on norms, building trust, handling conflict, reaching consensus, devising accountability criteria, and cultivating effective leadership (Gray & Stites, 2013; Seitanidi & Crane, 2009; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a&b, 2014). Particular emphasis has been placed on the role of relational factors, especially the role of shared values, opportunistic behavior, and trust and commitment for the success of NBSPs (Berger et al., 2004; Le Ber & Branzei, 2010; Barroso-Méndez, Galera-Casquet, Seitanidi & Valero-Amaro, 2016). For example, scholars have suggested that shared values—i.e. the degree to which the partners have beliefs in common about what behaviors, goals, and processes are important, appropriate, and proper—can facilitate communication between partners, improve conflict resolution, and cultivate mutual trust and partnership success (Barroso-Méndez et al., 2016; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a&b). Overall, while the literature has emphasized the promise and potential of NBSPs by focusing on possibilities for success, it has also pointed to the manifold challenges associated with them and the tensions that may arise due to several factors. These factors may arise because of difficulties in aligning different interests, inequalities between partners, and cultural differences (van Hille, de Bakker, Ferguson & Groenewegen, 2020). The following sections will elaborate on how the literature has approached tensions in NBSPs.

Tensions in NGO-business partnerships for sustainability

Although growing and promising, NBSPs give rise to tensions that make them challenging, complex, and susceptible to collaborative inertia (Huxham & Vangen, 2013; Gray, 1989; Gray & Purdy, 2018). Tensions are rooted in a fundamental struggle of reconciling market and society in a capitalist economy (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Margolis & Walsh, 2003; Jay et al., 2017). Historically, there has been an antagonistic relationship between NGOs and businesses fueled in many cases by profit-maximizing and resource-exploiting business activities that have threatened livelihoods, human rights, or the environment (Herlin, 2015). Nevertheless, tensions have also been shown to pave the way for partners to understand each other, work out their differences, and enable value creation, which occurs through relational processes of discussion and disagreement that generate renewed and adaptive frames (Le Ber & Branzei, 2010). Other researchers have shown that long-term engagement and deepening collaborative relationships can help to overcome tensions and lead to different forms of shared value creation (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a/b).

In general, extant literature has focused on detecting the roots of these tensions, the concepts around which they grow, and their relational manifestations. These concepts and ideas are summarized in Table 2 and explicated in what follows. “Sectoral tensions” have to do with the distinctive characteristics of the partners that the literature perceives as rather stable. In this view, discrepancies in values, institutional logics, culture, identities, norms, and practices are inherent incompatibilities that predispose NBSPs to tensions (Babiak & Thibault, 2009; Fiol, Pratt, & O’Connor, 2009; Vurro, Dacin, & Perrini, 2010). Such differences boil down to variations in motivations, approaches, and framings (Le Ber & Branzei, 2010), including differences in risk perceptions (Gray & Purdy, 2018) and in understandings of what is at stake, how to address challenges, what social value is, and how best to pursue it (Hardy et al., 2006).

As a result, one partner may see certain norms and practices as legitimate while another views them as illegitimate (Pache & Santos, 2013).

Tensions have also been seen as "structural." They can arise due to inadequate or inflexible governance structures, procedures and processes, divergent control and reporting mechanisms, lack of clear planning, unclear policy guidelines, resource constraints, unclear or conflicting roles, and lack of partnership retention and termination strategies (Babiak & Thibault, 2009; Le Ber & Branzei, 2010; Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016). Moreover, these tensions are intrinsically related to a continuous struggle among partnership representatives to promote the general interests of their constituents ("business as usual"), while engaging in ongoing partnership processes that requires regular attention (Hardy, Lawrence, & Phillips, 2006).

Another domain of tensions is "communication tensions.". The combination of the geographic dispersion of multiple partners and inadequate or unclear communication structures, processes, and forms can challenge communication (Babiak & Thibault, 2009). Poor communication that fails to provide understanding on concerns, intentions, and motivations (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Rondinelli & London, 2003) leads to ambiguity, uncertainty, or indeterminacy (Waddock, 1991). Conflicting interpretations and expectations between the partners (Austin, 2000; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012) can lead to further communication and negotiation breakdowns or the adoption of unfit structures and processes (Austin, 2000; Babiak & Thibault, 2009).

Moreover, "power tensions" arise around issues that relate to power and control. These may be caused, for instance, by resource disparities (Selsky & Parker, 2005), differing views about strategies and tactics (Gray & Purdy, 2018), or the inability to cope with the loss of autonomy in decision making (Babiak & Thibault, 2009). Scholars have stressed that the distribution of power among partners may be highly unequal, and tensions may be exacerbated

CATEGORIES OF TENSIONS	ROOTS & RELATIONAL MANIFESTATIONS OF TENSIONS	AUTHORS
SECTORAL TENSIONS They relate to distinctive characteristics of the partners that the literature perceives as rather stable	Values, institutional logics, culture, identities, "language", backgrounds, norms & practices Variances in motivations, framings, approaches and behaviors Different understandings of challenges & social value	Babiak & Thibault, 2009; Fiol, Pratt, & O'Connor, 2009;Vurro, Dacin, & Perrini, 2010; Gray & Purdy, 2018; Hardy et al., 2006;,Pache & Santos, 2013; Le Ber & Branzei, 2010
STRUCTURAL TENSIONS They relate to organizational and governance structures	Inadequate governance structures and processes (e.g. inflexible procedures, insufficient planning & supervision, lack of retention & termination strategies) Unclear policy guidelines, Unclear or conflicting roles, Divergent control & reporting mechanisms, Limited resources Continuous struggle of project teams as insiders - outsiders	Babiak & Thibault, 2009; Le Ber & Branzei, 2010; Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016; Hardy, Lawrence, & Phillips, 2006
COMMUNICATION TENSIONS Tensions pertaining to lack of communication or misunderstandings and misinterpretations	Poor communication hampers understanding on concerns, intentions and motivations Conflicting interpretations & expectations Risks: Negotiation & communication breakdowns, adoption of inappropriate structures & processes	Selsky & Parker, 2005; Rondinelli & London, 2003;Waddock, 1991; Austin, 2000; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Babiak & Thibault, 2009
POWER TENSIONS Power assymetries reflecting ongoing changes in power configurations	Resource disparities Differing views about strategies & tactics Inability to cope with the loss of autonomy in decision making Differing status (size, funding, constituency, or reputation) and degree of authority	Selsky & Parker, 2005; Gray & Purdy, 2018; Babiak & Thibault, 2009; Gray & Hay, 1986; Bryson et al., 2006; Doh & Teegen, 2002; Parker & Selsky, 2004; Austin, 2000; Babiak & Thibault, 2009; Kanter, 1994; Hahn et.al, 2018; Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016
OUTCOME-ORIENTED TENSIONS They concern differing orientations towards desirable achievements	Conflicting visions & missions Conflicting goals & objectives Conflicting interests	Rondinelli & London, 2003; Waddock, 1989; Westley & Vredenburg, 1991;Hahn, Preuss, Pinkse, & Figge, 2014; Babiak & Thibault, 2009; Powel et al., 2018
HISTORICAL TENSIONS They concern problematic historical patterns of interaction between the partners	Long-lasting conflicts between the partners Ngo campaigns against unsustainable business practices Distrust	Gray & Purdy, 2018; Seitanidi, 2010, de Bakker et al., 2013
TEMPORAL TENSIONS Tacit or explicit clashes of ideas, objectives, values, principles, logics, and/or actions, expressed as competing or contradictory temporal demands, and which are underpinned, triggered, and shaped by different time-related perceptions, practices, and norms (own definition)	Short duration Temporariness Short vs- long term projects Fast vs. slow pace Long standing social issues vs short term results Timeliness tensions	Selsky & Parker, 2005; Roberts & Bradley, 1991; Rondinelli & London, 2003; Babiak & Thibault, 2009; Googins & Rochlin, 2000; Berger et al., 2004; Sharma and Bansal, 2017; Austin & Seitanidi, 2014; Gray & Purdy, 2018; Austin, 2000 Seitanidi & Crane, 2009; Westley & Vredenburg, 1991; Waddell & Brown, 1997; Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2015

Table 2: Categories of tensions in the NGO-Business Partnerships (own contribution)

when partners differ in status in terms of size, funding, constituency, or reputation (Gray & Hay, 1986). Similarly, differences in the degree of authority may intensify tensions, due to, for instance, connections to particular constituencies or knowledge of a needed technology (Bryson et al., 2006). Power imbalances may lead partners into political or opportunistic behavior at the expense of partnership performance (Doh & Teegen, 2002) and can pose threats to the identities and cultures of less powerful partners (Parker & Selsky, 2004). Furthermore, a desire to secure a prime position within the partnership domain can result in competition among partners (Austin, 2000; Babiak & Thibault, 2009; Kanter, 1994), as well as reluctance to openly share information and knowledge (Hahn, Figge, Pinkse, & Preuss, 2018; Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016).

Another category of tensions is rather "outcomes-oriented" in terms of orientation towards desirable achievements. Here, tensions can surface when there are conflicting missions, goals, objectives, interests, and ideas about the scope of projects (Rondinelli & London, 2003; Waddock, 1989; Westley & Vredenburg, 1991; Powell, Hamann, Bitzer. & Baker, 2018). This occurs, for instance, when businesses pursue economic benefits that are misaligned with "common good" objectives (Hahn, Preuss, Pinkse, & Figge, 2014), or when missions and goals change during the partnership (Babiak & Thibault, 2009). Finally, a "historical tensions" category refers to tensions grounded in problematic historical interaction patterns or events between NGOs and business (Seitanidi, 2010), including long-lasting conflicts expressed in the courts, on the ground, and in the public media (Gray & Purdy, 2018). For example, NGO campaigns have aimed to expose unsustainable business practices (De Bakker, den Hond, King, & Weber, 2013). Many such instances have caused a severe loss of trust, the restoration of which is a long process that requires a lot of work and patience (Gray & Purdy, 2018). To be sure, the category of historical tensions could be merged with the following on temporal tensions. The next section discusses in more detail the final category of temporal tensions, as they relate explicitly to the findings of the second article.

Temporal tensions in NGO-business partnerships for sustainability

The cross-sector partnerships literature has generated useful insights about different aspects of partnerships that pertain to time and temporality. However, these insights are rather sporadic, perhaps because, no studies explicitly focus on time, temporality, and temporal tensions (for an overview, see Table 3). While this literature is rife with insights on the importance of long-term involvement in NBSPs, it does not generate rich insights on what organizations and, in particular, what NGOs do to ensure it. Moreover, this literature has tended to treat time as an objective construct, lacking a deeper examination of subjective experiences and practices related to time seen as an enacted phenomenon in NBSPs.

To be more specific, descriptions of partnerships typically focus on the duration and frequency of interactions, while partnerships are often defined as arrangements that engage the partners on an ongoing basis; they may be "transactional," i.e. short-term, constrained, and self-interest oriented, or "integrative," i.e. longer-term, open-ended, and common-interest oriented (Selsky & Parker, 2005). Other studies define partnerships as temporary arrangements without focusing on temporariness per se (Roberts & Bradley, 1991; Rondinelli & London, 2003), illuminating inadequate managerial processes, such as insufficient time devoted to partnerships (Babiak & Thibault, 2009). Some argue that the partnerships' short-term orientation requires focused projects, a fast pace, and early stakeholder engagement (Rondinelli & London, 2003), while others hold that longer-term orientation can be mutually beneficial (Googins & Rochlin, 2000; Berger et al., 2004) but may be burdensome because partners need to make long-term commitments (Berger et al., 2004). Drawing from organization theory on paradox, Sharma and Bansal (2017) showed that successful partnerships presuppose a commitment to finding emergent solutions, willingness to ask for extra time when needed, and coordination with the partner to build timeliness capacity (Sharma and Bansal, 2017).

TEMPORAL TENSIONS & *SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS*	WHAT IS MISSING	AUTHORS
Superficial short- term collaboration Short-term projects not leading to innovation & impact *"Prototypes" can form the basis for deeper longer term collaboration*	Explicit temporal lens Explicit focus on subjective experiences and practices of actors	Dahan, Doh, Oetzel & Yaziji, 2010
Duration Transactional vs developmental projects (short vs. long term)	Explicit temporal lens & focus on NGO Explicit focus on subjective experiences and practices of actors	Selsky & Parker, 2005
Collaboration as temporary social arrangement	Explicit temporal lens & focus on NGO Explicit focus on subjective experiences and practices of actors	Roberts & Bradley, 1991
Insufficient time devoted to partnerships	Explicit temporal lens & Focus on NGO Explicit focus on subjective experiences and practices of actors	Babiak & Thibault, 2009
Temporary projects Fast vs-slow pace *Integrate solutions fast & engage stakeholders early* *Focused projects*	Explicit temporal lens & focus on NGO Explicit focus on subjective experiences and practices of actors	Rondinelli & London, 2003
Short vs. long duration *Reach a new level of priority for partnerships* *Long duration establishes systems for mutual gain and commitment*	Explicit temporal lens & focus on NGO Explicit focus on subjective experiences and practices of actors	Googins & Rochlin, 2000
Short vs. long duration *Partners need to commit to continuous efforts* *Potential of long-term partnerships- they must last for at least 4 years*	Explicit temporal lens & focus on NGO Explicit focus on subjective experiences and practices of actors	Berger, Cunningham & Drumwright 2004
Fixation on the short term crowds out collaborative creativity and forgoes the success of sustainability *Collaborative value mindset* *Time frame*	Explicit temporal lens & focus on NGO Explicit focus on subjective experiences and practices of actors	Austin & Seitanidi, 2014
Addressing vs. not addressing time horizons *Address time horizons during the exploratory phase* *May need to renegotiate changes in time horizons during the process*	Explicit temporal lens & focus on NGO Explicit focus on subjective experiences and practices of actors	Gray & Purdy, 2018.
Temporal mismatches Long-standing social issues, vs. short-term results Slow vs. fast decision styles	Explicit temporal lens & focus on NGO Explicit focus on subjective experiences and practices of actors	Berger et al., 2004, Rondinelli & London, 2003
Delivering timely vs not delivering timely *Iterative and contextual problem solving & accommodation of partner's needs* *Timeliness*	Explicit temporal lens & focus on NGO	Sharma & Bansal, 2017
Temporal tensions *Temporal separation* *Temporal ambidexterity*	Explicit temporal lens & focus on NGO Explicit focus on subjective experiences and practices of actors	Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2015

Table 3: Overview of temporal tensions in the NGO-Business partnerships literature (Own contribution)

Austin and Seitanidi (2014) include timeframe as a dimension of the collaborative value mindset (Austin & Seitanidi, 2014). They assert that although collaboration can generate benefits in the short term, sustainability requires a longer-term vision (Ibid). According to Austin (2000), engagement in continuous learning and a balanced exchange of values between partners contribute to partnership longevity (Austin, 2000). Gray and Purdy (2018) have stressed the importance of addressing temporal horizons during the exploratory phase, as well as renegotiating changes in temporal horizons during the process (Gray & Purdy, 2018). Moreover, other scholars have pointed to differences between how NGOs and businesses perceive time, as NGOs' work is often defined by long-standing social issues, while businesses are driven by short-term results (Berger et al., 2004). Furthermore, NGOs are often consensus-driven and more time-consuming, and businesses are typically more hierarchical, relying on faster command-and-control strategies (Berger et al., 2004). Finally, some researchers have examined partnerships according to chronological stages (Googins & Rochlin, 2000; Seitanidi & Crane, 2009; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Westley & Vredenburg, 1991; Waddell & Brown, 1997), while other scholars have claimed that managing tensions involves temporal separation (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2015). The next section provides an overview of the empirical setting in which this dissertation emerged and evolved.

EMPIRICAL SETTING

NGOs and NGO-Business partnerships in Denmark

In the past, Danish NGOs' relations with market actors were mostly based on corporate philanthropy (Egholm, 2020). Today, however, the variety in synthesis, size, scope, and purpose of collaborative relations between civil society and market is unprecedented. This variety of cooperative constellations is particularly evident within the realm of development cooperation, following the adoption of the SDGs. In line with SDG 17, the related Danish strategy "world

2030," expressed a commitment to establish "*innovative and courageous partnerships that are willing to take risks, where Danish assistance can increasingly catalyze the development of markets and attract knowledge and financing – partnerships oriented towards synergy, innovation and breaking new ground."* The strategy identified Danish private actors as increasingly relevant partners that can contribute to solving sustainability challenges. It also saw NGOs as high-priority strategic partners that can promote sustainable private investments through NGO-business partnerships. Indeed, the Danish civil society is made up of strong global players who are present with country offices, who draw from local knowledge, and who produce strong results in more than 80 of the world's 195 countries (Globalt Focus, 2018).

Under its recent "TechVelopment" initiative, the Danish Ministry of Foreign affairs has allocated 10% of the total funding framework to support NGO strategic partnerships on innovation. This development is motivated by the idea that for those with access to mobile cellular and broadband networks, digital technologies are enablers, drivers, and accelerators of growth and sustainable development. Accordingly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs conducted 17 strategic partnerships with Danish NGOs in 2018, one of them being with the Danish Red Cross. An NGO's performance in delivering results is assessed inter alia, based on the NGO's ability to develop equal and innovative partnerships, work towards fulfilling the SDGs, engage the private sector, and promote and scale up innovative practices.[12] At the same time, at a global level, traditional funding streams have diminished, and several modifications have been made to donor criteria, including diversification of funding sources, expectations for private sector partners, and more stringent requirements to demonstrate impact (Forus, 2018). This landscape has created uncertainty for NGOs in relation to funding size, sources, and models, and it has sparked the pursuit of alternative sources of funding and mechanisms to access it (Ibid). As this new

[12] https://um.dk/en/danida-en/strategies%20and%20priorities/strategic-framework/

institutional context has unfolded, Danish NGOs have reported increased activity in the domain of partnerships with businesses, and they have expressed the motivation and desire to improve their partnering capabilities to contribute to the SDGs.[13] More specifically, in 2018, 33% of the NGOs affiliated with Globalt Fokus had engaged in one or more new SDG-related partnerships with business, typically fulfilling roles such as facilitators, advisors and/or watchdogs. An additional 21% were about to get involved in one or several new such partnerships. The report reflects the declaration of NBSPs as a high-priority area for Danish NGOs and a clear trend towards a change in the character of NBSPs from "donation" to "impact," or "transformative" partnerships.[14]

The Danish Red Cross and partnerships with business

The Danish Red Cross (DRC) is one of the biggest NGOs in Denmark and, as a member of the Red Cross Movement, is part of the world's largest humanitarian and development network of volunteers and staff. The DRC is active within two broad mission-categories: humanitarian aid and development aid both in Denmark and abroad. These different types of engagement reflect distinctively different temporalities. The former category often has an ad hoc and reactive character, focusing on rapid engagement in disaster management/emergency relief, whereas the latter follows rather typical organizational patterns, based on planning and execution of sustainability interventions. DRC's current international strategy (extending to 2021) focuses on life-saving interventions and resilience-building in fragile situations, as well as capacity-building of communities. The latest revision to this strategy saw a greater emphasis on migration and inclusion of the SDGs, focusing on both rapid and long-term engagement through

[13] http://www.globaltfokus.dk/images/Politik/Post2015/Globalt_Fokus_-_f%C3%A6rdig_rapport-4.pdf
[14] http://www.globaltfokus.dk/images/Politik/Post2015/Globalt_Fokus_-_f%C3%A6rdig_rapport-4.pdf

collaboration and partnerships with a great variety of actors, including business actors at the local and international level.

The DRC manages its collaboration with the business sector through five "business engagement & partnership" models. The first one is a *fundraising-based model*, which is philanthropic and transactional in nature. The DRC manages it through a loyalty program, which has hundreds of small and middle-sized companies as members. The second model is the *branding model*, which consists of contract-based cause-related marketing collaborations. Its management presupposes the delineation of specific objectives and key performance indicators. The third, *in-kind model*, concerns collaborations based on non-monetary initiatives, such as employee volunteer time or donations of goods. The fourth model is *strategic collaborations*, which includes more long-term collaborations than the previous categories that aim to create value on different bottom-lines. Strategic collaborations may include a mix of the previously mentioned models, e.g. fundraising, employer branding, and operational support. The fifth model is the *strategic operational model*, which consists of project-based strategic partnerships whose objectives are aligned with the companies' core business and the DRC's strategic priorities in the domain of sustainability. It is the international department that manages such projects, whereas the four first models are managed by the fundraising and marketing departments. I present these models in Table 8 in the second article.

The DRC exhibits the tendency to increase activity in the NBSP domain. The DRC has not only partnered with many Danish companies since 2010, but also developed a partnership model for the benefit of businesses and NGOs.[15] It has been navigating at least seven overlapping or successive NBSPs pertaining to the strategic operational model described above over a period of ten years. Across these endeavors, the DRC has teamed up with businesses of

[15] Through the project "Future Partnerships Models for Strategic CSR," 2015.

various size and scope, including a global water pump company, a communication systems start-up, a facility management giant, a small hospital management IT system provider, a global transport and logistics company, and a global pharmaceutical company.

The partnerships in focus

In this dissertation, I focus on three NBSPs between the DRC and Danish companies, which I present here under the pseudonyms Waterworld, Medigi, and Mesh.

The DRC-Waterwold partnership

The objective of the partnership between DRC and Waterworld, a developer, manufacturer, and seller of innovative pump solutions, was to secure access to clean water for communities in Kenya. The three-year partnership was launched in 2010, aiming to install and maintain 10 water systems as well as to promote hygiene and sanitation. These water systems were solar-powered water facilities that communities could access by charging a smart card with credit over cell phones. Waterworld was responsible for the installation, reparation and maintenance of the water systems for a ten-year period. The DRC, given its extensive experience with implementing water projects in Africa, was responsible for the project implementation together with Kenya Red Cross (KRC), as well as for the engagement and mobilization of the local communities. The systems were designed to be sustainable for at least ten years by incorporating an annual maintenance and service fee in agreement with the communities. The project was co-funded by a third donor.

The DRC-Medigi partnership

The DRC, KRC, and MEDIGI, a Danish medical technology start-up, partnered in 2017-2018 to employ technology in the fight against non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Kenya. NCDs have recently emerged as the leading cause of death and disability in developing countries. The

DRC contributed to the partnership with funding, expertise in program execution and administration, and general know-how on NCD prevention and treatment. The KRC was a strategic partner in executing the program in the field, providing volunteers, and mobilizing community workers and medical equipment. The project was co-funded by a third donor, and it was executed through two subprojects. The first concerned digital NCD screening in rural and urban low-resource communities. This subproject supported free medical outreach in various health centers, aiming to make healthcare, information, and medication accessible. The outreach resulted in screening about 1,800 beneficiaries, identifying more than 500 people as at risk of NCDs and referring them to health centers for further consultation. The second subproject aimed to digitize healthcare delivery in a refugee settlement by creating electronic health records for refugees and host populations using biometric iris registration. More specifically, the project aimed to register a large sample group of 10,000 refugees and then use this group to design an innovative real-time disease surveillance software module, which could improve health management in refugee camps.

The DRC-Mesh partnership

The partnership between the DRC and Mesh aimed to co-develop an innovative device based on mesh technology that would enable information flow and the creation of valid reports on acute needs and damage assessments in disaster settings. The system was developed in the aftermath of the typhoon disaster in the Philippines in 2013. Oftentimes in disaster settings, all infrastructures are flattened; however, with this technology bits of information could "jump" from device to device and eventually find a way out. The project ran in cooperation with the Philippines Red Cross (PRC) and was built on the idea that these devices would be pre-deployed among local Red Cross volunteers as part of their standard equipment. These devices would enable volunteers to start giving rough reports of what the acute needs were, within only a few

hours after a disaster struck. This would allow the humanitarian disaster coordination system to respond much more efficiently. The partnership was launched in 2015 and was still active at the time of data collection.

RESEARCH PROCESS & METHODS

Research design & approach

An embedded single case study

I designed a qualitative research study in line with Yin's notion of an embedded single case study (Yin, 1993) with a post-longitudinal case rationale (Hernes, 2014; Hussenot, 2017). An embedded single case study involves a single case and units of analysis at more than one level. Thus, the single case is the DRC as an organization, with the additional units of analysis as the three partnerships (which I present in more detail in the previous section and in the second article). The embedded case study design strikes a balance between conducting an organizational study of the DRC and the need to focus the case study inquiry and seize opportunities for more extensive analysis of the underpinnings of the DRC's partnership practices. In other words, this is not a multiple case study of different projects, but a study of the practice of partnering in which the DRC engages, which is exemplified and concretized in the three partnerships embedded within the single organization. Thus, the DRC is not the context of the three partnerships, but the main phenomenon of interest. This approach implies that data sources are not limited to the three partnerships in focus. I saw this approach as appropriate for gaining insight into the processual character of NBSPs, aware of the limitations of qualitative, single case study design and the influence of my own predispositions. I thus made the trade-off with concerns for external validity in favor of empirical richness, explanatory power, and internal consistency (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Van de Ven, 1992; Yin, 1994).

The post-longitudinal case rationale (Hernes, 2014; Hussenot, 2017) I applied along the way entailed the collection—in particular, during the second phase of data collection—of rich and varied data that could uncover varied temporal qualities within events (including their chronologies), temporal structures, meanings, practices, and narratives over time. In line with a strong process view, my objective was not merely to examine time intervals and temporal structures that follow a strictly chronological, before-and-after logic, but to detect qualitative temporal elements that are integral to the ways informants share their experiences and to the organizational practices over time. In the "data collection and analysis" section, I will describe in more detail the practical ways in which I employed this post-longitudinal case rationale to data collection and analysis.

An abductive qualitative research approach

I conducted an abductive qualitative analysis (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012), which involved continuously iterating between data interpretation and theoretical development. The hallmark of this approach is that theoretical development is conditioned by both an *a priori* theoretical understanding and an *in situ* exploration of existing theoretical frameworks. This enables an ongoing, pragmatic process of "puzzling out" what the phenomenon under scrutiny is a case of (Peirce, 1955; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012; Gehman et al., 2018). Timmernans and Tavory (2012) construct their abductive analytical approach from a grounded theory foundation, maintaining an emphasis on the need for systematic and rigorous engagement with the data. However, the strength of this engagement does not lie in generating new theories *per se*, but in allowing and opening up for the exploration of fruitful theoretical avenues through an interactive and iterative process. To ensure a systematic and rigorous engagement with the data, I used the Gioia methodology's guidelines (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013) as a heuristic tool for

systematic coding and other related aspects of the empirical work. I refer to this strategy further in the next section and in my second article, where I present the iterative rounds in greater detail.

As I wrote in the introduction of this dissertation, I entered research site with a vague intention to study the ways in which NGOs address sustainability issues in their partnership practices. I did not have a strong preconception of how sustainability has been or should be defined theoretically. Rather, I was interested in finding out how the organization sees this concept. I collected the initial data from several general partnership-related documents and two initial rather unstructured interviews. At that time, I was presented with information about both past and present partnerships the organization had engaged in. I chose to focus on three partnerships (more information on the selection criteria will follow), and I was given access to a big chunk of archival data shortly after that selection. I got access to more archival material along the way as current (during the period of data collection) partnerships evolved. I read through these first two interviews and some of the archival data with my attention directed *inter alia* towards manifestations of the notion of sustainability. I saw the concept of sustainability in very broad terms, including concepts with sustainability connotations expressed in social and environmental issues. I used these sustainability-related concepts as interpretive devices that could draw my attention to important aspects of the literature and data, while bearing in mind that they might also direct my attention away from other important aspects (Bowen, 2006). In other words, I used the concept of sustainability as a *sensitizing concept* (Blumer, 1954) that lacked a clear definition in terms of attributes or fixed benchmarks. Thus, it merely suggested directions along which to look, rather than prescriptions of what to see, providing a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical and theoretical material (Ibid: 7).

In the process of familiarizing myself with the initial data, I noticed a particularly critical event in the first interviews, which prompted me to get further insights in the archival data. Trying to make sense of this event, I realized that it described a predominantly temporal

tension: it was a conflict between partners around the timing of implementation of a project and the relevance of this timing for the sustainability of the intervention. With my attention directed to the concept of time, I started noticing that there were several references to temporal aspects on different levels, such as the project durations, time horizons, timing, speed, time devoted to collaboration, and so on.

The next step in this iterative process was to review the cross-sector partnerships literature with my attention on how it related to temporal aspects of NBSPs. I found articles both by searching in relevant databases (Scopus, Mendeley, and Google Scholar) and by examining the references of the most well-cited articles. To examine the extent to which the partnerships literature engaged with issues of time and temporality, I used Nvivo, a data analysis software. I uploaded the articles in Nvivo and used both the abstracts and the "search text" function to find occurrences of words and phrases related to a list of temporal concepts I developed, such as process, time, temporality, temporary, past, present, future, over time, frequency, longitudinal, current, history, ongoing, urgency, duration, time horizon, speed, stage, chronological, etc. The results of this process revealed that no research had studied NBSPs from a temporal perspective *per se*, but several studies referred—rather briefly—to different temporal aspects of partnerships.[16]

I then updated my interview guide (which I later updated several times to capture emerging aspects) to reflect the temporal aspects and topics that were surfaced in the partnerships literature. My aim was to understand how these temporal aspects played out in practices and how they were perceived by informants, so I formulated questions that could evoke narratives of events and allow extensive reflection. I kept on conducting interviews,

[16] I presented these aspects in more detail in the section "Temporal Tensions in NGO-business partnerships for sustainability" as part of an overview of the literature on cross-sector partnerships.

conducting observations, and analyzing the archival documents. At the same time, I started reviewing the quite extensive literature on time within organization and management studies. In the process of doing that, I started taking notes on how what I observed in the data seemed to relate to theoretical insights in the time literature, as well as on these insights' heuristic potential, while trying to retain an *informed theoretical agnosticism* (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). When the data analysis revealed tensions between different temporal aspects related to the mode of organizing and the notion of sustainability, my attention was drawn to organizational literature on temporal tensions. This period was followed by a phase where I returned to the data, trying to see it in new ways and explore possibilities for alternative analytical paths, some of which I pursued at a later stage. I followed the same iterative process when I was writing the third article, during which my theoretical focus on organization theory was directed to different qualitative ways of engaging with the future. Before I present some further details on the data collection and analysis process, I close this subsection with a quote from Timmermans and Tavory (2012) on the process of revisiting, defamiliarizing, and alternative casing, which aligns interestingly with the insights of this dissertation on the experience of time as temporality:

> "*In terms of furthering abductive analysis, revisiting the phenomena is a way to harness temporality in the service of theory construction… with time elapsed, a phenomenon's relevance changes. Thus, recurrent revisits, when done carefully almost necessarily provide…a theoretically salient image that illuminates different aspects of the data and foregrounds previously undistinguishable facets.*"

Data types and data collection process

I collected data through semi-structured interviews, archival documents, non-participant observations, and shadowing. I also collected secondary data from desktop research to enable a deeper understanding. I conducted twenty in-depth interviews with senior leadership, managers, and other personnel who were actively involved in partnerships. These interviewees carried out

various tasks related to supervision, coordination, and implementation of NBSP-related activities from different departments, such as the international, communications, and fundraising departments. Over the time of the study, I conducted several interviews with the two informants who were tasked exclusively with NBSP responsibilities. I prepared interview guides, which I modified progressively to include emergent topics. I recorded, relistened, and transcribed all interviews, and I took notes during and immediately after the interview. Each interview lasted between ninety minutes and three hours and took place between January 2018 and October 2019. I present an overview of the role of the interviewees in Table 4 below (which shows an overview of the data that informed the empirical study in the second article); however, due to a confidentiality agreement, I refer to all interviewees as "just" informants in the second article, not differentiating between them.

In addition, I collected 365 documents, which included meeting minutes, partnership agreements, memoranda of understanding, evaluations, mission, learning and survey reports, presentations, policy documents, program contracts, product brochures, e-mail communications, applications, grant agreements, and terms of reference. I also conducted 42 hours of non-participant observations of internal meetings, as well as meetings with partners and parts of two two-day conferences. One of the two conferences (DTU high tech summit[17]) included some panels that discussed NBSPs, from the perspective of the technologies that constituted the backbone of these partnerships. During this conference, I observed two panel discussions in which the DRC and partner organizations participated. The other conference (People-Profit-Planet[18]) was exclusively dedicated on the topic of NBSPs, featuring participants from

[17] The DTU High Tech Summit took place in Copenhagen in October 2019.

[18] The "People, Profit, Planet" conference in Aalborg, Denmark, in September 2018 that was organized by Access2innovation, a network aiming to create sustainable solutions and business models across sectors to improve development cooperation.

companies, universities, public institutions, and civil society organizations—including the DRC and two of the companies involved in the NBSPs on which I focus. A number of representatives from developing countries also participated in panel discussions. I shadowed one participant from the DRC, and I took notes throughout the two days and recorded all the panel discussions that I attended. I also got access to recordings of a 2-day "lessons learned" seminar concerning the Medigi case, which took place in Nairobi. Finally, I collected secondary data from desktop research, which included 123 documents and a one-hour, partially-transcribed radio podcast.

TYPE OF DATA	NUMBER -DURATION - PERIOD	ADDITIONAL INFO
Interviews	20 interviews 90 – 180 min Jan 2018 – Oct 2019	Expert interviews / Transcribed Role of Interviewees: Head of partnership and compliance unit Business engagement advisor Organizational development advisor Danida advisor & coordinator Head of communications Head of section, corporate & ambassador relations International health advisor General secretary M&E and strategy advisor Head of regional office for southern Africa Head of CSR Innovation coordinator & advisor
Archival documents	365 documents	Meeting minutes E-mail communications Partnership agreements Memoranda of understanding Evaluations Mission, learning and survey reports Presentations Policy documents Program contracts Product brochures Applications Grant agreements Terms of reference
Participant Observations	42 hours	Internal meetings, Copenhagen Meetings with partners, Copenhagen People-profit-planet 2-day conference, Sept 2018 DTU High tech summit 2-day conference, Oct 2019 Recordings from a 2-day lessons learned seminar in Kenya
Shadowing	6 hours	Business engagement advisor During the above mentioned conferences
Secondary Data	123 documents	Desktop research One-hour partially transcribed radio podcast

Table 4: Overview of the data – Article 2

Data analysis

For the data analysis, I followed recommendations from Gioia and colleagues' (2013) systematic approach. I started with open coding of the interview data because my primary aim was to assess experiences and information around partnership practices. I identified initial concepts and grouped them into categories, thereby creating a first-order level of analysis. I coded each interview by creating first-order codes that were as informant-centered as possible, and then I reread the interviews several times in a comparative manner until no more distinct concepts appeared.

I juxtaposed the initial concepts with data from archival documents and participant observations to develop first-order categories. I did this by condensing the initial interview concept codes into a set of summary analytical codes, using informant labels when possible. Then, I categorized the data from archival documents and participant observations based on the summary analytical codes, subsequently breaking them down into initial concepts/first-order codes that related to the interview-generated summary analytical codes. I contrasted these codes with the initial coding of interview concepts to refine and finalize the first-order code set. This process provided deeper understanding of context and informant perceptions, while enabling the identification of general themes and theoretical dimensions in the data. This is the point at which I confirmed that there were many reflections about the theme of time. My next step was to turn to the partnerships literature to find out how they theorize time and temporality in these endeavors, and I discovered that insights were rather scarce.

Subsequently, I started exploring the literature on time within organization studies. In a parallel way, I started taking the next steps toward a second-order analysis, since the detection of relationships between the first-order categories finally led to my creation of themes. I used informant labels to the extent that they represented the emerging concepts. During the process of the second-order analysis, and drawing from theoretical insights, I paid particular attention to

whether and how the past and the future were brought into existence in the data material. Besides being attentive to manifestations of pasts, presents, and futures in past presents and present presents, I also tried to detect all other temporal concepts in the data, both in chronological and qualitative terms. In doing so, I created a list of "local present" events with data references to before and after events, and I tried to fit the rest of the temporal concepts into these relationships to the extent possible. I also created a chronological order of events to use as a heuristic for understanding these moments as partially constituted by the qualitative elements of the respective pasts and futures that they enacted.

Finally, I distilled the second-order themes into aggregate theoretical dimensions in a data structure that formed the basis of the emergent analytical framework that informs the second article. It also allowed for further theoretical development of my conceptual arguments in the first and third articles. After I developed the data structure, I revisited the empirical material and parts of the literature on time, hoping that this would enable me to see more clear connections between emergent concepts, themes, and dimensions. In this process, I differentiated between the four theoretical dimensions of tensions and traced relationships among them and within them, puzzling out their dominant expressions, their seeming roots, their implications for organizing, and the overarching deeper structure of temporal ambiguity—that is, the elements comprising the analytical framework I present in the second article. In Table 5, I present a data structure (referring to article 2) based on the Gioia et al., 2013 model.

1ST ORDER CONCEPTS	2ND ORDER THEMES	AGGREGATE DIMENSIONS
A. Time horizons & funding	Short term / Long term **Time horizons tensions**	**TEMPORAL AMBIGUITY Limitations & opportunities**
B. Short to longer term requires legitimacy and value proposition		
C. Temporal horizons & structures		
D. Short-term "project as usual"		
E. Short-term vs. long-term partners		
F. Temporal horizons & implications of time constraints		
G. Temporary project vs. sustainability	Clock time / process time **Temporal perspectives tensions**	
H. Partnership as process vs as product /project		
I. Deadlines vs. events		
J. Due to organizational complexity	Fast / Slow **Tensions around pace**	
K. Due to organizational politics		
L Fast business vs. slow NGO / development		
M. Speed pressure		
N. Fast and slow as relative		
O. Less impact now vs. more impact in the future	Present / past / future **Temporal foci tensions**	
P. Difficult to organize for the future		
Q. Uncertainty due to unknown future implications		
R. Not taking the time to look into the past		

Table 5: Data structure from findings in article 2 based on the model from Gioia et al., 2013

Studying time empirically: Epistemological and methodological implications and limitations

In this final part of the methodology section, I include some further reflections on epistemological and methodological implications of studying time empirically when trying to adhere to an ontological understanding of time as temporality. I described this ontological understanding in the first part of the "conceptual lens" section. In an effort to live up to this ontology's demand for attention to processes, scholars have employed longitudinal or sequential methods, but they have usually focused on how substances change over longer time-periods. In doing so, scholar have often bracketed time into "spatialized" events and then presented results as models that show various types of outcomes and processes, often with clear-cut starting and end-points. However, the ontology of temporality does not invite the examination of how substances change, nor the presentation of outcomes of clear-cut processes. Rather, it invites the examination of how processes unfold in ongoing presents that carry with them pasts and futures (Langley et al., 2013).

To be sure, it has been widely acknowledged that matching epistemologies and methodologies to the ontology of temporality entails serious challenges. These challenges relate *inter alia* to the pervasive understanding of time as an objective clock-time reality, to the boundary-defying character of the notion of the ongoing present, and to research practices of stabilizing and segmenting the world that we study (Langley et al., 2013; Dawson, 2014; Feuls, Plotnikof & Stjerne, 2019). These challenges further relate to the limits of our vocabulary, which hinder the conversion of complex processes into text and figures. For example, we tend to obscure the richness and clarity of temporal concepts, as well as to think in terms of nouns instead of verbs (Reinecke & Ansari, 2017; Helin et al., 2014; Langley & Tsoukas, 2016).

Thus, it is crucial to acknowledge that adhering to the ontology of temporality in research has inherent limitations and demands compromises. Because reality is a fluid, complex

network of past, present, and future events, any attempt to examine interrelations between particular events represented in data is inescapably partial. In essence, the ontology of temporality suggests that we understand the world inadequately and that we cannot reproduce empirical reality as it is. Data become the means by which processes are subsumed into substances (De Cock and Sharp ,2007:27). Even though as researchers we may enhance understanding by including reflections on the temporal embeddedness of these situations under scrutiny in broader contexts, we can never capture the full relational-processual complexity of temporality. This acknowledgement, as challenging as it may be, may open up for alternative paths in research. For example, it may prompt us to focus on looking for what is difficult to "see," or on including what is inconvenient to include in the analysis. Interestingly, it can also challenge conventional thinking and taken-for-granted assumptions, for example, by drawing attention to the prevalent view of time as chronological.

To examine how processes unfold from the perspective of the ontology of temporality, we need to balance two modes of thinking: on the one hand, we need to see the flow of time as a subjective and performative feature of the universe, not as an objective part of physical description; on the other, we need to be aware of the potentially enormous influence of objectified temporal structures. This requires that we scrutinize organizational experiences and practices with a focus on understanding how multiple pasts and futures condition and accompany the emergent current flow of organizing, inducing change, adaptation, maintenance, and continuity. Focusing on organizational experiences and practices necessarily sheds light on the temporal structuring practices of actors, as well as on time as objectified in temporal structures. Thus, studying the temporal flow of organizing does not exclude the study of objectified temporal structures and the different time elements they entail. Instead, it embeds them in the overarching project of examining the particular pasts, presents, and futures that actors project explicitly or implicitly while producing, reproducing, and altering these structures.

Thus, we must grasp temporality as an overarching notion if we do not want to lose sight of its fundamental nature as the simultaneous flow of past, present, and future. It is through this perspective that we can better understand the constitution of time as an objective point of reference through situated activity. This standpoint is not an attempt to reproduce the long-standing dichotomy between objective and subjective time. Rather, it is an attempt to stress that the ontology of temporality essentially reconciles these seemingly opposing stances.

The ontology of temporality holds that beings (human beings, organizations, etc.) are becoming beings in constant flux. Temporality is precisely this dynamic aspect of being, the flow in "lived time," or what I will call here—following Mead (1932)—the flow in "local presents," i.e. current presents or past presents, or pasts that once were presents. Thus, understanding time in these terms involves scrutinizing the processes and practices that bring actors forth in available for analysis local presents. In other words, this ontology understands time itself as something contemporaneous with the experiencing being. Actors' experiences of flow are arguably inscribed in the ways they reach into the past and the future during the unfolding local presents; they are reconfiguring and interlinking the past, the present, and future in light of each other. Reflections on the past and the future during local presents (current or past) are what Bergson and Deleuze conceptualize as "virtual" pasts and futures. In this sense, future and past are, strictly speaking, present. Virtual pasts and futures are real, but they are not actual; they are only accessible through memory, retrospection, selection, reflection, interpretation, and imagination. Thus the past, present, and future do not exist as separate from each other, they are interconnected and integral in every process, as a unity of different aspects of them. What we usually refer to as the past was once a present, experienced as a living present.

Thus, researchers can arguably best understand temporality by examining local present experiences and their links with pasts and potential futures. This requires a multidimensional understanding of the local present, both in relation to the researcher (observer) and the

informants. In what follows, I will briefly describe the requirements of such a multidimensional understanding. A researcher, while researching (interviewing, observing participants, reading archival material, conducting data analyses, writing papers, and so on), observes always from the perspective of her/his local present (from the point of view of her/his now). During the research process, the researcher gains insight into the informants' experiences of the flow of time in different ways. When the respective research work is completed and fills the pages of a publication, it reflects an amalgam of observations conducted in what is already a past local present for the researcher. As research gets published, it becomes a reified substance that remains actual in the flow of time as a book or pdf file. However, its content and essence are still subject to (potentially) constant reinterpretations of its perpetual living present, in light of (potentially) constant renewed understandings of what we think we have known and know, and what else we could know if we engage in more research in the future.

Methods	**Observation perspective (researcher)**	**Actual time-period the accounts reflect**	**Reveal**
Interviews and observations	Currently /present	Currently /present	Current present Past presents Future presents
Archival documents	Currently /present	Back then /past	Lived pasts (past local presents) Before lived pasts After lived past

Table 6: Gaining insights into experiences of the flow of time of informants

There are two general ways in which the researcher can gain insights into the informants' experiences of the flow of time of informants (always from the perspective of the researcher's own current present). First, we can gain insights into what informants experience and how they think about past, current, and future dimensions of the "now," in their current

present, through interviews and observations. Second, we can gain insights into what informants experienced or were thinking, writing, saying, "back then," in past local presents, through archival data (as presented in Table 6). In both cases, these accounts concern different configurations of pasts, presents, and futures, taking place during the respective local presents, i.e. current living presents or past living presents. In the case of interviews, we can directly ask questions to invoke narratives of current accounts in relation to the past and the future. In the case of observations, these accounts are expressed without the—at least, direct—influence of the researcher, while in the case of archival data, the researcher does not influence their phenomenological expression. In all cases, however, data are subject to the researcher's interpretative skills and inclinations. With these final remarks in mind, I now proceed to the second part of the dissertation, namely the three articles that comprise its main body.

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PART II

ARTICLE 1: CIVIC ACTION AS TEMPORAL PROCESS-IN-RELATIONS: TOWARDS AN EVENTS-BASED APPROACH

Abstract

This article conceptualizes NGO-business partnerships as civic action, and civic action as a dynamic temporal-relational process, inspired by an events-based temporal approach on organizing. The cross-fertilization of the two approaches can arguably promote a broader understanding of the concept of civil society in two distinct and interrelated ways. First, by revealing diverse "locations" and styles of civic action in complex organizations that span institutional sectors, such as NGO-business partnerships, and second, by elucidating how civic action may emerge, persist, or change over time, as actors enact and configure a plurality of past and future events in the present through their everyday activities.

"The future is not later than having been, and having been is not earlier than the present. Temporality temporalizes itself as a future, which makes present in the process of having been" Heidegger, 1964 (1927), p. 401

Introduction

Traditionally, academia has conceived of civic virtues, skills, activities, and outcomes as produced by and located in a distinct, internally organized, and bounded sector, often called the "third sector," "non-profit sector," or just "civil society" (Putnam, 2000; Berman, 1997). More recently, however, several scholars have argued that this *a priori* confinement of "civicness" within a certain sector that is perceived as separate from market and state results in several pitfalls (Clemens 1997, Alexander 2006, Edwards 2009, Eliasoph 2011b, 2012). Notably, such pitfalls can include attributing civic action to certain places, just because these places are voluntary associations falling under the "civil society category" of the "sectoral approach", or neglecting the study of civic action in organizations perceived as being outside the boundaries of civil society (Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014). This taken-for-granted and decontextualized view of the "civic" can thus idealize civic action or leave it in the dark, as it does not take into account the actual conditions under which civic skills, virtues, activities, and outcomes are cultivated or the ways in which they are enacted in practice.

An alternative approach analyzes civic action as a particular kind of action and coordination instead of a sector-specific one, focusing on the ways in which actors interact and coordinate civic action in different settings (Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014). By examining the realities, properties, and possible outcomes of everyday civic action, this approach promotes a broader understanding of the concept of civil society, as it can reveal both diverse "locations" of civic action in complex organizations that span institutional sectors, as well as diverse patterns and varieties of civic action termed "civic styles" (Ibid). However, this approach does not

account for how civic styles emerge, persist, and change over time—neither in terms of their locations, nor in terms of their variations. *How can we equip the civic action approach with conceptual tools to better capture the dynamic processes that enact, maintain, and transform civic action?*

To address this question, this article cross-fertilizes the civic action approach (Lichterman & Eliasoph , 2014) with an events-based temporal approach on organizing (Hussenot & Missonier, 2016), exploring the possibility that civil society may be conceptualized as an ever-changing structure of intertwined past and anticipated events, defined and redefined on an ongoing basis. This view is grounded in an ontology of temporality inspired by process metaphysics, which has been developing within organization studies for more than a decade (Rescher, 1996; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Helin, Hernes, Hjorth & Holt, 2014; Reinecke & Ansari, 2017). While the civic action approach importantly directs attention to "civic" behavior and the fact that actors switch in and out of "civic styles" through "scene-switching practices" (Lichterman & Eliasoph , 2014), the events-based temporal approach aims to focus on how the actual dynamic temporal-relational processes in which the actors are embedded drive the "switching." Thus, while for the civic action approach scene-switching practices are *"important civic skills to master in a complex organization"* (Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014: 824), for the events-based approach on civic action, scene-switching practices are situated practices that lie in their temporality; they are actively defined by actors in actual events that are intertwined with past and future events.

This article argues for an approach that shifts the focus from a view of civic action primarily as a particular kind of interaction and coordination whose properties change occasionally, to a view of civic action primarily as a process of interaction and coordination that in itself changes constantly, while retaining a sense of continuity. Such a recalibration of the civic action approach draws attention to both how civic action styles change, and the processes

that make patterns and strings of civic action become temporarily stabilized as whole, integrated styles of coordinating action. This requires unpacking the role that different events play in how civic action is conducted, negotiated, defined, and redefined by scrutinizing how actors enact and configure events collectively to bring a shared sense of stability and continuity or change.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows: First, the article outlines key insights from Lichterman and Eliasoph's (2014) reconceptualization of the civic as "civic action." Then, it proposes—as an elaboration on the civic action approach—an events-based approach to studying the "civic." Both approaches are illustrated throughout the article through examples from the NGO-business sustainability partnerships (NBSPs) arena (Selsky & Parker, 2005), drawing on examples from a case study of the Danish Red Cross (DRC) and its NBSPs. In so doing, the article engages with questions of whether and to what extent NBSPs can be conceptualized as processes of civic action, and how an events-based approach can enrich our understanding of the civic. Finally, the article discusses methodological implications, which are followed by the conclusions.

From sectors and actors to action and interaction: The civic action approach

The assumption that civic activity resides in a particular sector that cultivates civic virtues or skills has led scholars to direct their empirical focus to the realm of civic associations at the outset (Lichterman & Eliasoph 2014). This focus has generated valuable insights on such issues as political participation, youth civic engagement, and volunteer group organization, yet it has fallen short on depicting the qualitatively different ways in which people coordinate civic action in settings that blur sectoral distinctions (Ibid). Such settings may include civic-commercial enterprises, civic-state hybrids, cooperatives, socially responsible businesses, corporate volunteering, and NBSPs (Ibid).

To address this lacuna, Lichterman and Eliasoph (2014) reconceptualised civic action in relational terms to be able to investigate *"varied methods of constructing civil society in everyday interaction rather than taking civil society as an already existing container"* (Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014: 812). Central here is the notion that civic action is interstitial; it may cut across discrete entities, including NGOs, social movements, or sectors. According to this approach, in civic action, participants coordinate action to improve some aspect of common life in society collectively and continually. They implicitly act as members of a larger imagined society, however they may imagine it and however they may define "improve" and "common" (Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014: 810). Their mission may be political or apolitical, as well as local, national, or transnational. Their action is civic as long as participants see it as *"grounded in and speaking to society"* (Ibid: 810), even though others may find the mission deplorable; in other words, in this view, civic action is not always progressive or "civil."

Furthermore, civic action entails an expectation that participants coordinate their interactions flexibly, rather than according to pre-existing rules and roles. However, here flexibility does not equate to voluntarism; paid employees may also conduct civic action, and whether a company conducts "genuine" civic action or not is an empirical question (Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014; Adler, Kwon & Heckscher, 2008). Moreover, in this view, while civic action may be conducted either face-to-face or virtually, in loose networks or tightly-bound organizations, it is an ongoing endeavour that has a longer temporal scope; it may be short or long-term, but it cannot be a one-time event.

Emphasizing the study of meaning-making processes, the civic action approach invites scholars to study "scenes of action" instead of unitary groups—in particular, "scene styles," i.e. how actors coordinate interaction in a scene. Lichterman and Eliasoph's (2014) literature review

depicts seven scene styles,[19] which can be thought of as implicit organizational forms or as fuzzily perceived patterns of coordinating action, enacted in roughly similar ways across different settings. A scene is constituted by actors' implicit assumptions about "what is going on here," in this "strip of action" (Goffman, 1986), and in any group setting there may be multiple scenes with multiple styles. "Style" describes the making of a scene. It is defined as a pattern of coordinating interaction that arises from members' shared expectations and assumptions about what constitutes good or adequate participation in the group setting.

Lichterman and Eliasoph (2014) suggest that researchers can identify styles of coordinating action with the help of three heuristic devices.[20] The first is a group's "map," defined as members' implicitly shared reference points in the wider world, through which they draw their group's boundaries in a setting. The second is a group's "bonds," defined as shared assumptions about obligations between members in a setting. The third is "speech norms," defined as shared assumptions about the appropriate speech genres and emotional tones for a setting. Collectivities may "share" a style, enacting roughly similar maps, bonds, and speech norms, whereas particular styles contribute to particular outcomes, such as accessing state resources or achieving diverse memberships (Ibid).

NGO-business partnerships for sustainability as civic action

NBSPs are usually project-based, temporary organizations that engage the partners by combining resources and capabilities on an ongoing basis, with the explicit aim to jointly tackle complex social, economic and/ or environmental issues pertaining to the domain of sustainable development (Selsky & Parker, 2005). Such issues typically concern poverty, hunger, deprivation, education, sanitation, healthcare, economic development, community capacity

[19] To be sure, Lichterman and Eliasoph do not claim that there are only seven styles; they underline the value of searching for more recurrent patterns of style (p. 802).
[20] However, this is not an exhaustive toolset, and researchers do not need to invoke each of these devices in every instance of investigating how actors coordinate interaction.

building, climate change or environmental degradation—issues usually found in public policy agendas at local, national, and global levels (Waddock, 1991).

Through the civic action approach lens, an investigation of NBSPs between the DRC, one of the biggest NGOs in Denmark and several Danish companies suggests that actors involved in such partnerships do conduct civic action. At the heart of their collaboration lies a common effort to improve society by addressing sustainability challenges through a combination of political advocacy and market solutions that pertain to sustainable development. These efforts are ongoing and collective, and the vigilant coordination of action between the organizational actors is a precondition for achieving the partnerships' missions. Coordination is achieved through switching between face-to-face and technological means, while the targeted social issues are addressed through temporary project designs of shorter or longer durations. The actors conduct "civic action" in Lichterman and Eliasoph's (2014) terms, even though the duration of the project might be short, and despite the fact that the organizations involved may have additional agendas and motivations that do not relate to the partnerships' main objectives to address sustainability. Moreover, actors engaging in NBSP civic action are both volunteers and paid employees that work together rather flexibly, while partnership contracts determine some rules and roles that may be re-defined during the process. These civic relations, in the form of NBSPs demonstrate manifold connections among all sectors and do not depend on a specific set of civic skills and virtues. The extent to which they cultivate such skills or virtues or achieve sustainability-oriented outcomes through action is an empirical question.

Furthermore, using the theoretical lens of "scene style," researchers of NBSPs may see a dominant style of collaboration, or they may identify qualitatively different civic scene styles and multiple scene-switching practices, which may reveal different skills, virtues, and collaboration practices. However, the potential multiplicity of styles, which may co-exist or succeed each other, and the great operational, interpersonal, inter-organizational, and contextual

complexity of NBSPs indicate that style cannot be viewed as a general mechanism that connects civic action with outcomes. Moreover, in terms of the heuristic of "maps," given that arguably partners adhere to different institutional logics, developing a shared map of reference points in the world can be challenging. Actors may agree on a common mission, but they respond to different audiences while they may have different social backgrounds and beliefs, and these differences may cause tensions. Nevertheless, according to the civic action definition, NBSPs can be conceptualized as relational settings of civic action that differ from traditional notions of cooperation around voluntary collective action and challenge conventional thinking about the the ways in which civic skills, virtues, activities, and outcomes are enacted in practice beyond the "boundaries" of civil society.

Why elaborate on the civic action approach?

Lichterman and Elliasoph's (2014) work is particularly important because it centers our understanding of civil society on an analysis of action and corresponding interactions. It also draws attention to the fact that in any organization that aims to promote civic engagement, there may be both civic and non-civic scenes. In so doing, in line with relational sociological perspectives, it develops a convincing critique of substantialist approaches that view civil society as a discrete, reified, pre-given, or even immutable sector that shapes individual and organizational civic action and constitutes the starting point of analysis.

However, the civic action approach faces some challenges, since it maintains to some extent an overt focus on individual "civic" behavior and on the actors' switching in and out of civic styles, rather than on the actual dynamic relational processes in which the actors are embedded that drive the "switching." Although Lichterman and Elliasoph (2014) recognize that participants *"could grow into a civic style"* (Lichterman & Elliasoph, 2014: 836), which implies that time matters and that the civic and non-civic go together, there is no account of the

development from non-civic to civic styles or from one style to another. Furthermore, the scene-switching practices seen as *"important civic skills to master in a complex organization"* (Ibid: 824) are at times presented as individually purposeful and intentional civic action, while no particular focus is placed on civic interaction that may yield results unintended by any individual actor.

While being critical of the neo-Tocquevillian emphasis on a separate, special sector of civic associations, the civic action approach also leans to some extent towards categorical stability. Lichterman and Elliasoph (2014) provide an example of "a non-civic" according to their definition scene, *"one in which mutual coordination needed to follow governmental routines and it was compartmentalized into separate meetings with municipal agents"* (p. 828). Here, it seems that they themselves echo the sectoral model, which would take for granted the notion that since municipal agents and government routines were at play, the action was by default non-civic—without accounting for what was actually happening in this meeting (which the Housing Justice Coalition leaders also attended).

The civic action approach leans further towards categorical stability in other ways: first, because it emphasizes rather few, distinct, and finite types of civic scenes (p. 839), and second, because it views civic action primarily as a kind of interaction that comes with particular properties and durable patterns that change only occasionally (Lichterman & Elliasoph, 2014, 800, 813). The assumption here is that under "normal" conditions, actors within the category (i.e. a specific civic scene style) will act predictably and can thus achieve specific outcomes, albeit without explaining how scene styles influence outcomes (Lichterman & Elliasoph, 2014, 802). However, it seems challenging to depict finite, "pure," and durable types of civic scenes without at least engaging in a study that puts center stage the plurality of events around which these partnerships unfold. In what follows, I propose an events-based approach as an elaboration upon the civic action approach.

Towards an events-based approach on civic action: A relational perspective from the ontology of temporality

The ontology of temporality

Relational studies under the hegemonic shadow of substantialism often privilege spatiality or topological location over temporality and narrative unfolding.[21] This leads to the study of relations and interactions in a static way, failing to capture the dynamic processes-in-relations over and in time that constitute, maintain, and alter social phenomena. When studies do account for the role of time in such processes, most often they rely on conceptual dichotomization of structure and time[22] or on conceptualizations of temporality in linear terms[23] as a mere succession of static representations (Emirbayer, 1997). Nevertheless, time and temporality are fundamental to the understanding of the emergence, persistence, or disappearance of social phenomena. For Heidegger (1927), temporality threaded through everyday interactions is immanent in the very experience of being; human temporal experience is the experience of being. What do we miss by not accounting for temporality when applying a relational perspective to civic action? How can an ontological perspective of temporality contribute to the study of dynamic processes-in-relations?

To be able to answer these questions, first we need to make some distinctions to clarify what an ontological perspective of temporality actually entails. In social theory, often the notion of temporality is limited to linear and measurable conceptions of clock-time (Zerubavel, 1981), such as speed, duration, and sequence. It has often been used to draw causal inferences between "fixed" events taking place at different times and at different structural levels. This is a classical view of time as external and absolute—albeit enabling coordination and regulation of social life (Reinecke & Ansari, 2017). In this view, time is an endless unidirectional "succession of now-

[21] For example, much network analysis work; for a critique, see Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994.
[22] For example: Lévi-Strauss, 1963.
[23] For example: White, Boorman and Breiger, 1976.

points" (Joas, 1997:171) in which the present is a "knife-edge" (Mead, 1932: 194), separating the past from the future, all tenses being outside of both each other and human experience (Hernes, Simpson & Söderlund, 2013).

In contrast, views of time as temporality go beyond linear conceptions, instead viewing past, present, and future as mutually co-constitutive, as weaved together and integral to one another. Such views—albeit with considerable variation—have been articulated by i.a. Whitehead, Mead, Heidegger, Ricoeur, and Bergson and constitute process views of time inspired by the ontology of temporality (Reinecke & Ansari, 2017; Hernes, 2014). To be sure, all views of time are based on the same assumption: the passing of time from the past to the future. However, process views importantly suggest that time may be experienced and interpreted as an immanent, situated, and intimate process (Hussenot & Missonier, 2016). From a process view of time, any present both reflects the past and projects into the future, while past and future are not stable entities but instead are under constant revision. In other words, temporal continuity is the expression of the ongoing flow of present actions that draw on both pasts and futures as epistemic resources, themselves subject to endless reconstruction (Simpson, 2009). Thus, the past is inherent in the present and the future, as much as the present is inherent in the past and the future, as much as the future is inherent in the past and the present.

An events-based approach to the study of civic action

Drawn from organizational theory, the notion of event is understood as any fact that occurs in the world, as any moment in which an activity and its organization are concrete and tangible (Hussenot and Missonier, 2016: 531). The world, then, is composed of events through which we constantly flow. An event can include any concrete and tangible fact that may last from a few seconds to several years, and each event can be divided into other events (Hussenot & Missonier, 2016). From an objective clock-time view of time, events are positioned along the

arrow of time, defined as belonging to the past, present, or future, but they do not themselves constitute time (Ibid). From a process view of temporality, however, events play a fundamental role in creating temporality, as the actual event in relation to other events gives structure to time and the abstraction of its passage (Ibid). Thus, past, future, and present are not given, but rather they are indexical to events, activities, and experiences (Abbot, 2001). In this view, actors creatively define a situated continuum of reality through events. Events are defined, redefined, retained, or forgotten so that they continuously construct and reconstruct a past and future, while defining a present moment. Such processes have been interestingly conceptualized in different settings as "temporal work" (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013) and as the "enactment of past and future" (Schultz & Hernes, 2013).

This "creative" definition of the situated continuum of reality through events is expressed and gains meaning *inter alia* through actors' narration of their activity. Through such narration, events are enacted and configured in a non-chronological way. That is, there is always a narrative sequence of events, a continuum or "plot" (Ricoeur, 1984), but this sequence is not a linear, spatialized account of events stretching from the past to the future. As different stories are told by actors during interactions, and as any reference to an event includes a reference to time and vice versa (Bakken, Holt & Zundel, 2013), the interaction process creates multiple temporalities—and thus different definitions of both the continuum of reality and the current event (Hussenot & Missonier, 2016). So, events are intertwined; there is no interval between them, and the present is considered to be continuous because it integrates the past and the future into it. Moreover, it should be noted, that while this intertwined view seeks to understand the relations between events, it does not see events as isolated facts resulting from causal relationships.

Building on the civic action approach (Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014), this article proposes an events-based approach (Hussenot and Missonier, 2016) with a temporal

conceptualization of civil society as a structure of past, current and anticipated events—a structure that continuously evolves and is defined and redefined in everyday civic action and interaction. This conceptualization presupposes that the notion of event is a crucial unit of analysis and that events are necessarily interrelated. The interrelating of events refers to the phenomenon of actors engaging continuously with past and anticipated events while they are embedded in actual events in their present. From this perspective, an event is a key unit for understanding the becoming of "things" (people, past, future etc.), that only exist here and now, in the living present (Hernes, 2014), i.e. in the actual event. *"As a consequence, past, present and future events are not discrete entities, neither dead data, nor points on a timeline, but rather both inputs and outputs of the actual event"* (Hussenot & Missonier, 2016: 528).

The events-based approach uses the notion of a "structure of events" to capture the interrelating of various past and anticipated events as a coherent whole—that is, in an actual event in the present. Each actual event, then, has its own structure that involves a specific configuration of past and future events and evolves in a continuous present. The structure of events accounts for a sense of temporality, i.e. the perception of the continuum of reality, or the "ordering" of events (Hussenot & Missonier, 2016). In this structure, each past and anticipated event involved has its own unique position, character, or quality (Ibid). The notion of the structure of events implies that actors interrelate past and future events in certain ways, leading to coordinated action. By this conception, a scene style in the civic action approach is composed of a structure of structures of events, a pattern of coordinating interaction that arises from participants' shared assumptions about what constitutes good or adequate participation in the group setting—assumptions that become shared when participants collectively interrelate events.

Importantly, by defining a structure of past, present, and anticipated events, actors produce and reproduce civic action, rendering the action both enduring and brand new. Thus, a

structure of events can involve different mixes of stability and novelty in civic action, as it sometimes maintains to a great extent the structure and order of activities and sometimes it substantially modifies them. By bringing the past and the anticipated future into the present, then, events can reconfigure established patterns, including civic action scene styles. To be sure, from such a perspective, more "stable" civil society notions (e.g. voluntarism or third sector) are not related only to the past, nor are they an impact of the past. Similarly, novelty in civic action (e.g. the contested notion of corporate voluntarism) is not related only to the present and future. Rather, past and future are constantly defined and redefined in actual events in the present (Hussenot & Missonier, 2016:525).

Discussion

An events-based approach to civic action can accommodate both traditional views of civil society as a stable sector and newer conceptions of civil society as a fluid space marked by ongoing novel practices of civic action. This is because events are both acts of stabilizing and acts of renewing civic action, given that a structure of events involves different constellations of stability and novelty in civic action. Thus, civil society is constructed and reconstructed on the basis of such event structures that combine the past and the anticipated future into the present, reconfiguring while at the same time retaining established patterns to different extents. Novelty and stability in civic action are thus co-defined through events, the study of which can enhance understandings of how participants actually engage in civic action, experiencing some aspects of it as stable, while developing and altering other aspects of this ever-changing phenomenon. Longstanding sectoral structures, such as an NGO, and newer civic action practices, such as NBSPs as parts of the same reality show how civil society can have an enduring existence for actors while, in essence, continually changing.

This approach enables the consideration of temporality, i.e. the perception of the continuum of reality as an ordering of events (albeit not chronological), to be a key dimension of the ongoing construction and reconstruction of civil society. We can see recurrent typical civic styles, but we can also see the rise and fall of civic styles (Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014). And while changes in broader social conditions, such as the rise of project organizing, can provide an interesting ground for discussing changes in civic action styles, it is important to examine them through the lens of an events-based approach. Such analysis allows us to understand how actors interpret and actually adapt these social conditions, namely by enacting past events and anticipated futures of civic action.

Furthermore, given that civic action consists of both civic and non-civic scenes, the process of interrelating events can shed light on how these scenes connect, drive, or hinder the attainment of sustainability- related goals of NBSPs. For instance, in the case of NBSPs, many events may revolve around technical issues, including problems with technologies that are the backbone of NBSPs. According to Lichterman and Elliasoph (2014), such events are not civic scenes. Nevertheless, however technical, this type of scene cannot be completely detached from the relational and temporal matrices of action directed towards improving society. The case of NBSPs suggests that perhaps in all kinds of civic action, civic relations, and civic scenes, both civic and non-civic styles co-exist and can only be separated from one another for analytical reasons. An events-based approach can shed light on how scenes change over time and all the time—and explain how and why agents switch in and out of civic and non-civic scenes so that they can actually engage in civic action and pursue civic results.

Moreover, in NBSP civic action settings, in which partners draw on very different maps beyond the frame of their partnership, an events-based approach can provide useful insights on how partners enact events, negotiate and possibly resolve differences in interpretations of the past, present, and future of civic action and civil society. This approach can reveal the multiple

and changing agentic orientations of partners, as well as the varying degrees of inventiveness and choice that civic actors demonstrate in relation to the constraining and enabling temporal-relational contexts of civic action (Emirbayer & Miche, 1998).

Methodological Implications

Civic action needs to be analytically situated within the flow of time. Specific events in scenes of civic action should become the unit of analysis for understanding how civic action is continuously constructed through the intertwinement of past, present, and future events. Thus, a methodology must be developed to effectively apply the events-based theoretical approach. Different ethnographic methods that focus on scenes of action can be employed for studying the role of past and anticipated events in civic action organizing. One such approach can use interviews and participant observations to discern actors' personal narratives, which can uncover how actors frame past and future events in ongoing activities and how they "sustain" and recombine these events over time to make them meaningful as they encounter new experiences. The following quote from an interview is illustrative:

> "I think civil society has had historically sort of an arm's length approach to the business sector. It has been a civil society sector vs. a private sector. And there have been protests and we wanted to hold them accountable…But that all changed over the past years. I saw that, when I attended a forum called 92-group. It was us and some other NGOs representing a pragmatic partnership-oriented future. And then you have other NGOs that are working more from a set-of-principles approach to companies. Wanting to shame them if they did something wrong. But more and more NGOs see partnering with business as opportunity. Companies promoting our own cause. It would be a strong message if it came from a CEO instead of us. You know, we are the usual suspects. It would be very powerful in the eyes of the public ... So that was part of the start of seeing opportunities of working with companies on other issues than simply fundraising."

Here, a previously "non-civic" style—NGO collaboration with business—has grown into being considered civic. In this example, the informant draws on a past event, which becomes a part of the ongoing present, and this happens in light of an anticipated future. The past event conditions current and future understandings of civic action, and at the same time, the past event is redefined and changed in the actual present. In another example, the same informant gives two different accounts of the same past event at two different points in time. In an interview in January 2018, referring to a specific partnership with a business, the informant from the NGO says:

> "The potential was not identified clearly from the start. We learned along the way about how this [partnership] could potentially influence our whole approach to [such] projects. This could become a much more sustainable approach than we typically do with other [such] projects [that do not involve the private sector]. You know temporarily funded projects where you build something, try to establish a structure around it, and leave it once the project ends. It could be the market providing the sustainability needed… But lots of that entered the discussion later on and now we are short of more on the exit side of the discussion, and on one hand it is a wasted opportunity but on the other side, we learned a lot at different levels about remembering to look at things in a wider perspective."

In another interview, in September 2019, referring to the same partnership, the same informant from the NGO says:

> "This case is interesting. Yes, I saw it as a lost opportunity, but since then we moved away from [such practices] because the donor environment changed and there isn't lots of funding available for organizations like ours for building such systems. So, well, you can easily argue there was not a potential in this in any case because the market changed around again."

These examples illustrate the potential for a deeper understanding of civic action by analyzing all data for references to past and future events. This strategy presupposes the creation of data sets of events, as all raw data need to be sorted according to the event or events to which they pertain. Importantly, a method for coding based on how events relate to each other and how they relate to the actors involved needs to be developed. Follow-up interviews can be important for testing the links between events and supplementing the event data. Furthermore and importantly, the content of the event data needs to be analyzed and coded for predominant themes and topics, and the role of these themes in connecting events should be further explored.

Conclusion

An empirical focus on "the civic" as action reveals that civic relations are also present at the intersection of sectors. Such a focus shows that the concept of the civic, beyond its usual correspondence to such concepts as democracy, solidarity, and participation, can be extended to fruitfully inform research concerned with the grand challenges of our time, including sustainable development, the main mission of most NBSPs. Such a focus also rejects the view of civil society as a sector with discrete boundaries and instead advances a view of civil society as a dynamic phenomenon—as a diverse, evolving, and increasingly innovative relational setting constituted by ongoing interactions among diverse actors and contexts, and thus always potentially subject to various interpretations. In this view, then, civic action is a rather explorative practice constituted and problematized within the relational and temporal contexts in which actors are embedded. It does not presuppose the pre-existence of certain "civic" virtues, including solidarity-promoting skills, and it is not exclusively predetermined by sectoral affiliations, ends and means.

The distinction between civic and non-civic is important for locating civic action in non-traditional places. However, to deeply understand how civil society evolves, the civic action

framework needs to go beyond the detection of civic and non-civic scenes, styles, maps, bonds, and speech norms. The framework must more strongly emphasize the study of the role of events in relational settings of civic action. This article suggests that by acknowledging past and future events in processes of civic action, actors can change or stabilize their understandings of civil society as a relational setting and practice. Thus, civic action is a temporally embedded process of social engagement that is continuously informed by the interplay between the actors' ongoing interpretations of past events and their capacity to imagine futures of civic action.

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ARTICLE 2: TIME WILL TELL: TEMPORAL AMBIGUITY IN NGO ORGANIZING FOR SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH NGO- BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

Abstract

Drawing on a case study of the Danish Red Cross, this article explores how NGOs experience and address temporal tensions in sustainability-oriented partnerships with business. The findings reveal four interrelated sets of tensions around time horizons, temporal perspectives, speed levels, and temporal foci. The article conceptualizes temporal tensions as entangled, situated, relational, and contextual expressions of temporal ambiguity, which is defined as the simultaneous presence of multiple conflicting temporal elements. Furthermore, the article shows the NGO's efforts to manage strategically the inherent and emergent temporal ambiguity *in situ*, attributing to it both limitations and opportunities and proposes a paradox view on the "paradox – trade-offs dichotomy" around the management of temporal tensions.

"The word implementation …you think you are talking about the same thing, but later we found out we were not. For us, implementation starts when we start talking with the communities to raise awareness. For them, implementation starts when you start installing your system. And that's where a lot of things went wrong. Because when we looked at sustainability afterwards, we could see the effects of not having spent enough time to ensure ownership." Informant, DRC

Introduction

This article examines how NGOs attend to temporal tensions in sustainability-oriented partnerships with business. The overall aim is to gain a better understanding of both the potential for NGOs to achieve sustainability goals through partnerships with business and the corresponding challenges. This aim is pursued by exploring NGO actors' related experiences, perceptions, considerations, and practices, focusing on the interplay between time and organizing for sustainability. Scholars have argued that it is important to study organizing for sustainability through a temporal lens, as the concept of time is fundamental to the notion of sustainability. Sustainability has been defined as development with the capacity to endure and flourish (Slawinski, Pinkse, Busch, & Banerjee, 2017; Jay, Sorerstorm & Grant, 2017)), and as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Slawinski & Bansal, 2012; Bansal & DesJardine, 2014). Scholars have stressed that failing to understand the role of time and address temporal tensions in organizing for sustainability can diminish the potential for sustainable solutions (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015; Slawinski & Bansal, 2017). For example, researchers have found a correlation between a short-term focus and a lack of attention to sustainability issues, implying that sustainability requires a long-term horizon (Laverty, 1996; Slawinski & Bansal, 2015; Slawinski et al., 2017; Smith, Gonin, & Besharov, 2013).

Scholars have furthermore stressed that in settings that accommodate both market and sustainability logics, such as the setting of this study, temporal tensions may be particularly salient. For example, Reinecke and Ansari (2015) described such tensions as being firmly grounded in the duality between clock-time, which dominates market logic, and process-time, which is embedded within development logic (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015). Research has also shown that actors can more constructively address temporal tensions of sustainability by accepting, embracing, engaging, and confronting them, instead of ignoring them or depicting them as problems to be solved with "either/or strategies" (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015; Slawinski & Bansal, 2015). However, deep insights on temporal tensions and on how actors address them in settings of NGO-business sustainability partnerships (NBSPs) are scarce, both in cross-sector partnerships literature and the literature on organizational time (for an exception see Sharma and Bansal, 2017). Even more, no study engages deeply with NGO accounts of such tensions. Yet, it is important to study temporal tensions in complex settings of inter-organizational collaboration, such as NBSPs, because in such settings tensions may be challenging to address due to the diversity of interests and perspectives of stakeholders (Dille & Söderlund, 2011; Jay et al., 2017). Indeed, cross-sector partnerships scholars have pointed at temporal mismatches between NGOs and businesses, as NGOs' work is often defined by long-standing social issues, while businesses are driven by short-term results (Berger, Cunningham, & Drumwright, 2004). To be sure, organizational scholars have paid attention to temporal tensions between different departments, units, or functions; between different managerial processes; between different professional groups; between internal and external referents; and between organizations in different geographical and cultural contexts (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015). However, the focus in most studies *"has rarely been squarely on the temporal tensions […] a promising area of study in their own right"* (Slawinski & Bansal, 2017, p. 387).

Given the lack of explicit focus on temporal tensions in NBSPs, and responding to calls to further explore the mechanisms that enable the transcendence of these tensions (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015; Slawinski & Bansal, 2017), this article asks: *"How do NGOs attend to temporal tensions in NGO-Business partnerships for sustainability?"* Drawing on a case study of the Danish Red Cross, the article offers the following three contributions. First, it reveals how NGO actors perceive and address temporal tensions in NBSP practices and the particular NGO mindset on NBSPs. In doing so, it exposes the NGO's perceptions of the root causes of temporal tensions, as well as how they experience the dominant expressions of these tensions and their implications for organizing for sustainability through NBSPs. Specifically, the findings elucidate the temporal dimensions of NBSP practices, identifying four sets of temporal tensions around time horizons, temporal perspectives, pace, and temporal foci. Overall, the findings demonstrate that NGOs do not have a polarized view of temporal tensions; they tend to accept them and engage them constructively. Nevertheless, some tensions may be resolved as trade-offs at the expense of sustainability: when clock-time perspectives prevail over process-time, when short-term temporal structures prevail over long-term, when slow pace in NGO partnership performance prevails over fast, and when NGOs do not focus on the future and the past as much as they focus on the present.

Second, the article theorizes temporal tensions as entangled expressions of *temporal ambiguity*, which is defined as the simultaneous presence of multiple conflicting temporal elements. In doing so, the article draws attention to what informants see as *opportunities* in partnerships, in relation to both temporal tensions themselves and constructive paradoxical approaches to addressing them. Moreover, the article draws attention to what informants see as *time limits* in partnerships, which seem to negatively affect the ability of NGOs to both manage temporal tensions constructively and develop sustainable solutions to targeted problems. Time limits may involve short project durations, low expectations for the partnerships' continuity,

inadequate pace in partnership performance, and inadequate engagement with the future. Thus, such perceived *time limits* impact both the enactment of particular temporal structures and the particular time-related orientations and experiences of actors.

Third and relatedly, these insights indicate that there are two approaches at play in addressing temporal tensions in NGO-business partnerships for sustainability: a paradox approach that sees tensions as interdependent, and a trade-offs approach according to which organizations apply polarized strategies. These approaches may be applied strategically and *in situ*. Thus, this article proposes a paradox view on "the paradox – trade-offs dichotomy" around the management of temporal tensions. In this view, trade-offs are seen as an integral part of ambitemporality (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015), which is a continuous process of becoming ambitemporal. This process includes learning, experimentation, "both/and" paradoxical approaches, and, at times, "either/or" strategies. Overall, the paper contributes an NGO perspective to the literature, which promotes greater consideration of NGOs' positions in partnerships and addresses a lacuna in the research created by an asymmetrical focus on the business side of NGO-business partnerships (Shumate, Hsieh, & O'Connor, 2018; Seitanidi & Ryan, 2007). Finally, the analysis offers new language and ways of thinking about how temporal tensions can support or diminish substantive sustainability goals, opening up a more nuanced and temporally sensitive managerial approach to NGO-business partnerships.

In the next section, the article proceeds with a literature review that first provides some general insights on temporal tensions in organizing and then engages literature from organization studies on temporal tensions at the intersection of markets and sustainability. Specifically, it provides insights on temporal paradoxes between short-term goals and long-term needs (Slawinski & Bansal, 2015), clock-time and process-time perspectives (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015) and tensions around timeliness (Sharma & Bansal, 2017).

Literature Review

Temporal tensions in organizing

On a regular basis, organizational actors strive to entrain behavior to multiple and often divergent temporal demands, imposed by internal and external audiences (Ancona & Chong, 1996). This process involves enacting temporal structures—most commonly clock-time calibrated structures, such as projects and deadlines (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002). Underpinned by different cultural values and interests that shape the framing of problems and solutions, such processes are often replete with temporal tensions (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002; Reinecke & Ansari, 2015; Yakura, 2002). Organizations have their own relatively stable (in the short-term) approaches to time, which are socially constructed and reinforced by their cultural milieus (Adam, 1998). Thus, partnering organizations are bound to experience temporal misalignment, tensions, and even conflict (Dille & Söderlund, 2011). Temporal tensions are often interrelated and may pertain to different assumptions about the ontology of time, concerning time as objective and externally given, or as subjective and socially constructed (Slawinski & Bansal, 2017; Sharma & Bansal, 2017). They may also pertain to different perspectives on the mechanisms that regulate people's attention. For example, they may relate to event-based/process-based or clock-time perspectives (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015), as well as different understandings of how past, present, and future are related (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Schultz & Hernes, 2013; Hernes & Schultz, 2020;)—including how far into the past or future actors think when they organize (Bluedorn, 2002; Schultz & Hernes, 2019).

Researchers have stressed that while studies have highlighted the temporal tensions that organizations face when they are confronted with temporal complexity, it is still not clear how they resolve or address conflicting temporal tensions in practice (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015). Temporal complexity is particularly central to pluralistic or hybrid organizations that exist at the intersection of different domains or "social worlds." Such organizations operate in multiple

temporal environments and frames, embody multiple institutional logics, and enact different temporal structures in pursuit of various social and financial goals (Ibid). In such complex settings that demand entrainment to the temporalities of multiple stakeholders, temporal tensions may not always appear as immediately or obviously temporal; they may be implicit in other tensions or disguised in the form of discrepancies in meanings (Ibid). Thus, it is often the case that temporal conflict underpins the conflict over competing goals, tasks, or values (Ibid: 639).

Moreover, scholars have noted that organizational researchers have often viewed temporal tensions as opposing elements—for example, time as objective or time as subjective—often choosing to focus on one element or the other and missing the generative properties of the opposing elements' interrelatedness (Slawinski & Bansal, 2017). Similarly, researchers have mostly treated temporal tensions as trade-offs, implying that organizations must choose among them—for example, between a short-term or a long-term time horizon (Ibid). Research on whether and how organizations address temporal tensions simultaneously, viewing them as opposing yet interrelated and persistent, is limited. However, it has gained some momentum, especially in the last decade.

Notably, scholars have shed light on the interrelatedness of past, present, and future through a temporality lens (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013; Schultz & Hernes, 2013; 2019; Hernes & Schultz, 2020), through a paradox lens (Smith & Lewis, 2011), and through an ambidexterity lens (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004). Other scholars have illustrated the interrelatedness of objective and subjective approaches to time through a temporal structuring lens (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002), while others have shown the interrelatedness of process/event-time and clock-time as well as cyclical time and linear time through an improvisation lens (Crossan, Cunha, Vera, Cunha, 2005). Interestingly, among the few studies at the sustainability-market interface, Reinecke and Ansari (2015), Slawinski and Bansal (2015), and Sharma and Bansal (2017)

describe organizations' (not always successful) efforts to address temporal tensions—particularly stressing the ability of some organizations to manage temporal tensions constructively—by treating them as interrelated rather than as trade-offs. The following section examines these three studies more closely. Following Sharma and Bansal (2017), it summarizes the cognitive and action-oriented elements of constructive responses to temporal tensions (Table 7).

Temporal tensions in organizing at the juncture of markets and sustainability

In their study of Fairtrade International, a hybrid organization connecting markets in the north with sustainable community development in the south, Reinecke and Ansari (2015) found that actors were confronted with temporal tensions that were anchored in the duality between clock-time and process-time (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015). The former aligned with market logic, favoring a view of sustainability as product, and the latter aligned with development logic, viewing sustainability as process. However, despite these contrasting stances, Reinecke and Ansari (2015) showed that temporal tensions can be generative, enabling the reconstitution of an organization's *temporal commons*[24] (Ibid; Bluedorn & Waller, 2006).

To manage temporal tensions, actors engaged in a process of dialogue and contestation through which they developed temporal reflexivity (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015; Orlikowski & Yates, 2002). Temporal reflexivity enables parties to question, articulate, and potentially rethink the temporal assumptions underlying temporal tensions. This process sparked an interpretative shift, i.e. an alternative view from a new temporal lens that involved the appreciation of each

[24] The term ''temporal commons'' (Bluedorn, 2002, pp. 255– 256), a metaphor that emphasizes human agency in the conceptualization of time, is defined as the shared conceptualization of time and the set of resultant values, beliefs, and behaviors regarding time, as created and applied by members of a culture-carrying collectivity (Bluedorn & Waller, 2006).

other's perspectives, and led to mutual recognition of interdependencies between conflicting goals—thus sparking a "both/and" thinking as opposed to an "either/or" one. These mechanisms enabled actors to employ temporal brokerage, a particular type of boundary work that entailed a process of renegotiating competing temporalities. Such a process may create progress toward ambitemporality, conceptualized as a process of managing temporal tensions by accommodating them (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015). Importantly, ambitemporality does not conclusively resolve temporal tensions. Rather, it is a continuous act of becoming (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002), a process through which paradoxical tensions are addressed in an ongoing manner, with emphasis on ongoing adaptation and learning (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015).

Studying organizational responses to climate change, Slawinski and Bansal (2015) examined how companies attend to the inherent tension between the short term and the long term (Slawinski & Bansal, 2015). They found two main differences in how companies addressed this tension: they either polarized or embraced the tension between the short- and long-term implications of climate change. The companies that polarized the short- and long-term aspects cognitively separated the opposing time-frames, attributing a distinct meaning to each end of the pole. Thus, these companies treated long-term climate change consequences separately from short-term decisions, focusing on reducing short-term economic costs, even if this meant more greenhouse gas emissions in the future. The companies that embraced the tension examined simultaneously both the short-term and long-term implications of climate change, discussing possible future directions and linking them with their present goals, thereby confronting the tension.

ENGAGING TEMPORAL TENSIONS GENERATIVELY AT THE JUNCTURE OF MARKETS AND SUSTAINABILITY	
COGNITION	**ACTION**
Maleable categorical boundaries	Contextualized and iterative problem solving
Interdependent interests	Accommodating each other's needs
Appreciation of differences	Reaching out to partners for help to solve problems
Appreciation of each other's perspectives	Finding emergent solutions
Temporal reflexivity	Asking for extra time
Interpretative shifts	Seeking partner's inputs to build timeliness capacity
Recognition of interdependencies	Engaging in dialogue and contestation
Both/and attitude	Articulating and questioning temporal assumptions
Emphasis on ongoing adaptation and learning	Negotiating competing temporalities
Cognitive unification of tensions	Examining simultaneously implications of temporal tensions
Rich understanding of challenges	Engaging in time-consuming practices
Openness to diverse perspectives	Exploring qualitative scenarios in addition to quantitative tools
Broad solution space mentality	Engaging in conversations with stakeholders
Consideration of the full range of attributes of the issue	Collaborating extensively with external stakeholders

Table 7: Summary of cognitive and action-oriented elements of engaging temporal tensions generatively – Based on Reinecke and Ansari (2015), Slawinski and Bansal (2015), and Sharma and Bansal (2017), with the latter providing inspiration for the presentation of insights under the cognition and action categories

Moreover, these differences in attending to the short-term/long-term tension were linked to distinct practices and mechanisms. In the first case (polarizing), this led to *temporal myopia*, i.e. favoring the short-term over the long-term, whereas in the second case (juxtaposing) led to *temporal ambidexterity*, i.e. balancing the short-term and long-term needs (Slawinski & Bansal, 2015). The companies that polarized the tension engaged in efficiency-favoring practices, such as the adoption of quantitative tools in strategic planning, one-way engagement with stakeholders, and minimal cross-sector or industry collaborations. The mechanisms contributing to temporal myopia were the commensuration of time through the use of particular economic tools, the reduction of the attributes of climate change, and the narrowing of the solution space. In contrast, the companies that embraced the short-term/long-term tension engaged in more time-consuming practices that drew out diverse perspectives and a richer understanding of the challenges, such as exploring qualitative scenarios in addition to quantitative planning tools, engaging in conversations with stakeholders, and collaborating extensively with other companies and across sectors to address climate change. The mechanisms contributing to

temporal ambidexterity were the use of multidimensional data that involved different time perspectives, the preservation of the attributes of climate change, and the broadening of the solution space (Slawinski & Bansal, 2015).

To study partnerships between business and NGOs, Sharma and Bansal (2017) employed a commercial-social paradox lens, which aimed to address poverty and gender inequality challenges. They explained how they see the commercial-social paradox in the following manner: *"Businesses want social impact but need to meet their commercial demands and NGOs need financial support but have social ambitions. Yet, commercial and social demands reflect contradictory organizational goals, structures, processes and skills – what we call a commercial-social paradox"* (Sharma & Bansal, 2017:342). Sharma and Bansal (2017) showed that businesses had a short-term and clock-time orientation, expecting that goods and services would be provided by the NGO on time, whereas NGOs had a long-term, event-time orientation, which meant that the provision of goods and services might be delayed. The partnerships that were best able to overcome these temporal tensions were those where the participating organizations did not identify each other as sharply defined categories of business and NGO, thus engaging the commercial-social paradox. Those organizations that saw each other's category as more fluid, perceiving differences between business and NGO as contextual rather than natural, were able to find creative solutions to emergent problems that transcended the temporal tensions. The successful partnerships met the expectations of both partners, including expectations of timeliness, through iterative and contextual problem solving and accommodating partner's needs. Sharma and Bansal (2017) stressed the importance of such actions as reaching out to the partner to help solve delivery challenges in a timely manner, finding emergent solutions to enable a timely delivery (e.g. securing extra funds, asking for extra time), and seeking partners' inputs to build timeliness capacities and deliver in a timely manner (Sharma and Bansal, 2017).

The above literatures on temporal tensions at the junction of markets and sustainability go into depth in the analysis of temporal tensions. However, while these studies surface important insights, the diversity in aims and organizational models of the initiatives, which combine market and development logics, implies that the character of and responses to temporal tensions may also vary in distinct ways in different settings. In the work of Slawinski and Bansal (2015) and Reinecke and Ansari (2015), temporal tensions emerge in ongoing organizations, in which sustainability work is enduring in nature; it is conducted through recurrent teamwork of organizational members as part of the "business as usual." In addition, in Slawinski and Bansal's (2015) work, temporal tensions emerge in business sustainability contexts dominated by a market logic (companies in Alberta's oil sands). Fairtrade International, the focal organization in Reinecke and Ansari's (2015) work, has a market-based model for sustainable development (Reinecke & Ansari's, 2015:618), consistent with what the literature conceives as a hybrid organization, i.e. a single organization "embodying" two previously separate institutional logics (Battilana & Dorado, 2010). In contrast, in the case of the DRC and NBSPs, the organization is permeated by a development logic, where its NBSPs may be seen as hybrid temporary (project-based) organizations that combine a market and a development logic, to which the disparate organizations—business and NGO respectively—adhere. These differences may decisively condition how actors handle temporal tensions, as such tensions may be exacerbated in temporary organizations (Stjerne, Söderlund & Minbaeva, 2019). In addition to following different organizational patterns and temporal structures than ongoing organizations, NBSPs are not "culture-carrying collectivities" (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015). Thus, constituting some kind of "temporal commons" around them through temporal brokerage might be more challenging.

To be sure, the work of Sharma and Bansal (2017) has examined five partnerships between NGOs and business in India, detecting tensions of timeliness. However, the character

of these partnerships is notably different from the character of the partnerships between the DRC and businesses. In each partnership that Sharma and Bansal examined (2017), the NGOs employed local disadvantaged people to provide products and services to the business for money. The partnerships the DRC forms are arguably more collaborative and complex, aiming to implement advanced technological solutions related to the companies' core businesses. The partnerships literature has distinguished between collaborative partnerships from contractual exchange relationships in which one party provides services for another (Gray & Purdy, 2018:1). These differences may also entail different types of temporal tensions and different responses. Thus, more research into how temporal tensions manifest themselves and how actors address them may reveal diverse expressions of and responses to temporal tensions. This is why this article asks: *"How do NGOs attend to temporal tensions in NGO-business partnerships for sustainability?"*

Methodology

The article conducts an abductive qualitative analysis in line with Timmermans & Tavory's (2012) approach, which emphasizes abduction as the primary guiding principle of empirically based theory construction through a dialectic of cultivated theoretical sensitivity and methodological heuristics based on grounded theory (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012; Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013; Lincoln & Cuba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The research design is an exploratory embedded case study (Yin, 2003), i.e. a single case study of the Danish Red Cross (DRC) that focuses on three partnerships as embedded sub-units. This approach is suitable for examining a case where the boundaries between the phenomenon of interest and the sub-units are not clearly evident. The level of analysis is the organization but the multiplicity of evidence is partly investigated in sub-units that focus on different aspects of the case, allowing for both in-depth and cross-sub-unit analyses (Ibid).

The case organization

The DRC is one of the biggest humanitarian and development aid NGOs in Denmark. After a review of all seventeen NGO strategic partners in Danish development cooperation within the ministry of foreign affairs, I selected the DRC as an "extreme case" based on expectations of rich content (Flyvbjerg, 2006), given that the organization had conducted different kinds of partnerships with various companies in the past.

CORPORATE ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS MODELS IN DRC		
MODEL	**CHARACTER**	**MANAGEMENT**
Fundraising	Philanthropic and transactional Small and middle-sized companies as collaborators	Loyalty program, the "corporate club" Fundraising department
Branding	Contract-based cause-related marketing collaborations	Specific objectives & key performance indicators Fundraising department
In-kind	Non-monetary initiatives Employee volunteer time or company donations of goods	Fundraising department
Strategic Collaborations	Aim at value-creation on different bottom-lines More long-term than the first three models May include a mix of the first three models e.g. fundraising, employer branding and operational support	Fundraising department in cooperation with National and International departments
Strategic operations	Project-based strategic partnerships Alignment with the companies' core business and the DRCs' strategic priorities	The International department in cooperation with the Fundraising department

Table 8: Corporate engagement & partnerships models in the Danish Red Cross

The DRC works within both humanitarian emergency relief and sustainable development, domains that exhibit distinctive temporalities. The former has an ad hoc and reactive character, whereas the latter follows rather typical organizational patterns based on planning. In the domain of sustainable development, the DRC works with five "corporate engagement & partnership" models (presented in Table 8). This article focuses on three partnerships managed by the DRC's international department, all of which are consistent with the strategic operational model, which consists of project-based strategic partnerships whose

objectives are aligned with the DRC's core values and strategic priorities in relation to sustainability.

BUSINESS PARTNER	TYPE OF COMPANY	AIM	TIME PERIOD	PLACE
WATERWORLD	Water pump manufacturer Global player	Installing & maintain 10 water systems. Secure access to clean water Promote hygiene & sanitation	2010 - 2012	Kenya
MEDIGI	Med tech start-up company	Securing a more effective medical service for refugees and other local communities	2017- 2018	Kenya
MESH	Information and communications technology start-up	Developing a resilient information management system for disaster management.	From 2015 & continuous to end of data collection	Philippines

Table 9: A summary overview of the three partnerships in focus

The three partnerships in focus (presented in this paper under the pseudonyms *Waterworld, Medigi,* and *Mesh)* targeted locally embedded challenges in Africa and Asia. They matched the DRC's strategic direction of working with poor and vulnerable communities and with priority program areas, including health, water, sanitation, and disaster risk reduction. Disaster risk reduction is increasingly seen as an intrinsic part of sustainable development (UNDP, 2017), so the Mesh case also fits the category "partnerships for sustainability." I selected the three partnerships as "maximum variation cases" to examine the significance of various circumstances for processes and outcomes, such as company size, project duration, implementation location, and funding (Flyvbjerg, 2006). I provide a summary overview of the partnerships in Table 9, as well as a short description in Table 10.

The DRC-Waterworld Project The objective of the partnership between DRC and Waterworld, the developer, manufacturer and seller of innovative pump solutions, was to secure access to clean water for communities in Kenya. The three-year partnership was launched in 2010 and aimed at installing and maintaining 10 water systems and promote hygiene and sanitation. The water system is a solar-powered water facility to which communities would get access by charging a smart card with credit over cell phones. Waterworld was responsible for the installation as well as for reparation and maintenance of the water systems for a ten-year period, while the DRC, having extensive experience with implementing water projects in Africa, was responsible for the project implementation together with Kenya Red Cross (KRC), as well as for the engagement and mobilization of the local communities. The system was designed to be sustainable for at least ten years by incorporating an annual maintenance and service fee in agreement with the communities. The project was co-funded by a third donor.
The DRC – Medigi Project The DRC, KRC and MEDIGI, a Danish medical technology start-up came together during 2017 -2018 in a partnership aiming at applying technology in the fight against non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Kenya, which have recently emerged as the leading cause of death and disability in developing countries. DRC contributed to the partnership with funding, expertise in programme execution and administration, as well as know-how on NCD prevention and treatment, while KRC was a strategic partner in executing the programme in the field, providing volunteers and mobilizing community workers and medical equipment. The project co-funded by a third donor and it was realized through two subprojects. The first concerned *digital NCD screening in rural and urban low-resource communities*. This sub-project supported free medical outreaches in various health centers, aiming at making healthcare, information, and medication accessible. The outreaches have resulted in screening of about 1,800 beneficiaries, with over 500 people being identified as at risk of NCDs and referred to health centers for further consultation. The second subproject aimed at digitalizing healthcare delivery in a refugee settlement through the generation of electronic health records for refugees and host population using biometric iris registration. More specifically the project aimed at registering a large sample group of 10,000 refugees and then use this group to design an innovative real-time disease surveillance software module, which could improve health management in camps.
The DRC – Mesh Project The partnership between DRC and Mesh aimed at co-developing an innovative device based on mesh technology that would enable information flow and the creation of valid reports on acute needs and damage assessments in disaster settings. The development of the system was launched in the aftermath of the Philippines typhoon disaster in 2013. In disaster settings, often all infrastructures are flattened, however, with this technology bits of information can 'jump' from device to device and eventually find a way out. The project run in co-operation with the Philippines Red Cross (PRC) and was built on the idea that these devices would be pre-deployed among local Red Cross volunteers as part of their standard equipment. These devices would enable volunteers to start giving rough reports of what the acute needs are, within only a few hours after a disaster stroke. This would allow the humanitarian disaster coordination system to respond much more efficiently. The partnership was launched in 2015 and was still active at the time of data collection.

Table 10: Short description of the three partnerships in focus

Data sources

For the analysis I relied mostly on semi-structured expert interviews, archival documents, non-participant observations, and shadowing. I also studied secondary data, which enabled deeper understandings of the meanings of events and key issues. I conducted twenty in-depth expert interviews with senior leadership, managers, and other personnel from different departments—including the international, communications, and fundraising departments of the DRC—to understand whether, to what extent, and how the informants practice, perceive, and experience partnerships with businesses. As "experts," interviewees are considered to be "crystallization points" for practical insider knowledge around partnerships, and I interviewed them as surrogates for a wider circle of actors within the DRC (Bogner, Littig & Menz, 2009). The informants were involved actively in partnerships with different tasks related to supervision, coordination, and implementation of partnership project activities. I conducted several interviews with the two informants who were exclusively tasked with partnership responsibilities in their everyday work, having the most central roles within the DRC in relation to NBSPs. I prepared interview guides, which I modified continually to include essential topics pertaining to time and other aspects, as themes emerged during the abductive analytical process. I read several initial general archival documents before preparing the guides to ensure a sufficient level of prior knowledge of the subject matter. I recorded, re-listened to, and transcribed all interviews, and took notes during and immediately after the interview. Each interview lasted between 90 minutes and three hours and took place between January 2018 and October 2019. I present an overview of the role of the interviewees in the data overview table (Table 11); however, due to a confidentiality agreement, I do not differentiate between them in the data analysis section.

Moreover, I collected 365 documents, which included meeting minutes, partnership agreements, memoranda of understanding, evaluations, mission learning and survey reports,

presentations, policy documents, program contracts, product brochures, e-mail communications, applications, grant agreements, and terms of reference. In addition, I conducted 42 hours of non-participant observations. These included internal DRC meetings, meetings with partners related to the Medigi project at the DRC's headquarters in Copenhagen, and participant observations of parts of two two-day conferences.

TYPE OF DATA	NUMBER -DURATION - PERIOD	ADDITIONAL INFO
Interviews	20 interviews 90 – 180 min Jan 2018 – Oct 2019	Expert interviews / Transcribed Role of Interviewees: Head of partnership and compliance unit Business engagement advisor Organizational development advisor Danida advisor & coordinator Head of communications Head of section, corporate & ambassador relations International health advisor General secretary M&E and strategy advisor Head of regional office for southern Africa Head of CSR Innovation coordinator & advisor
Archival documents	365 documents	Meeting minutes E-mail communications Partnership agreements Memoranda of understanding Evaluations Mission, learning and survey reports Presentations Policy documents Program contracts Product brochures Applications Grant agreements Terms of reference
Participant Observations	42 hours	Internal meetings, Copenhagen Meetings with partners, Copenhagen People-profit-planet 2-day conference, Sept 2018 DTU High tech summit 2-day conference, Oct 2019 Recordings from a 2-day lessons learned seminar in Kenya
Shadowing	6 hours	Business engagement advisor During the above mentioned conferences
Secondary Data	123 documents	Desktop research One-hour partially transcribed radio podcast

Table 11: Data Overview

One of the two conferences (DTU High Tech Summit) included panels that discussed NGO-business partnerships, though focusing on different technologies that constituted the backbone of these partnerships. I observed two panel discussions in which the DRC and partner organizations participated. The other conference (People-Profit-Planet) was exclusively dedicated on the topic of NGO-business partnerships and featured participants from companies, universities, public institutions, and civil society organizations, including the DRC and two of the companies involved in the projects on which I focus. The conference had also hosted a number of representatives from developing countries who participated in panel discussions. I took notes throughout the two days and recorded all the panel discussions that I attended. Moreover, I shadowed one participant from the DRC. I also got access to recordings of a 2-day lessons learned seminar concerning the Medigi case, which took place in Nairobi. Finally, I collected secondary data from desktop research, which was comprised of 123 documents and a one-hour, partially-transcribed radio podcast.

Data analysis

Because my primary aim was to assess NGO experiences and information around partnership practices, I started the analysis with open coding of the interview data. This entailed identifying initial concepts in the interview data and grouping them into categories to create a first-order level of analysis (Gioia et al., 2013). I coded each interview by creating first-order codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and re-read them several times in a comparative manner to discern similarities and differences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I juxtaposed the initial concepts with new data from archival documents and participant observations to develop first-order categories, condensing the initial concept codes into a set of summary analytical codes. Then I categorized the new data, breaking them down into initial concepts/first-order codes related to the summary analytical codes, which I then contrasted with the initial coding of interview concepts, to refine

and finalize the first-order code set. I started getting a deeper understanding of context and informant perceptions and practices, and I was able to identify some general themes and theoretical dimensions in the data—notably, the theme of time. I turned to the partnerships literature to find out how they theorize time and temporality, but insights were rather scarce. I then started reviewing organizational literature on time. In a parallel way, I proceeded with a second-order analysis, detecting relationships between the first-order categories and created themes, which I later distilled into aggregate theoretical dimensions that formed the basis of the emergent analytical framework that I present in the subsequent session. I present this progression in a data structure in Figure 1, while I present representative first-order data that led to the development of the second-order themes and aggregate dimensions in Table 12. After I developed the data structure, I sought to clarify the connections between emergent concepts, themes, and dimensions by rereading the empirical material and consulting the literature (Gioia et al., 2013), eventually settling on the emergent analytical framework I present in Table 13. This process, which involved delineating the four theoretical dimensions of tensions and tracing relationships among them and within them, surfaced their dominants expressions, their roots, their implications for organizing, and the overarching structure of temporal ambiguity, which involves both time-limits and opportunities.

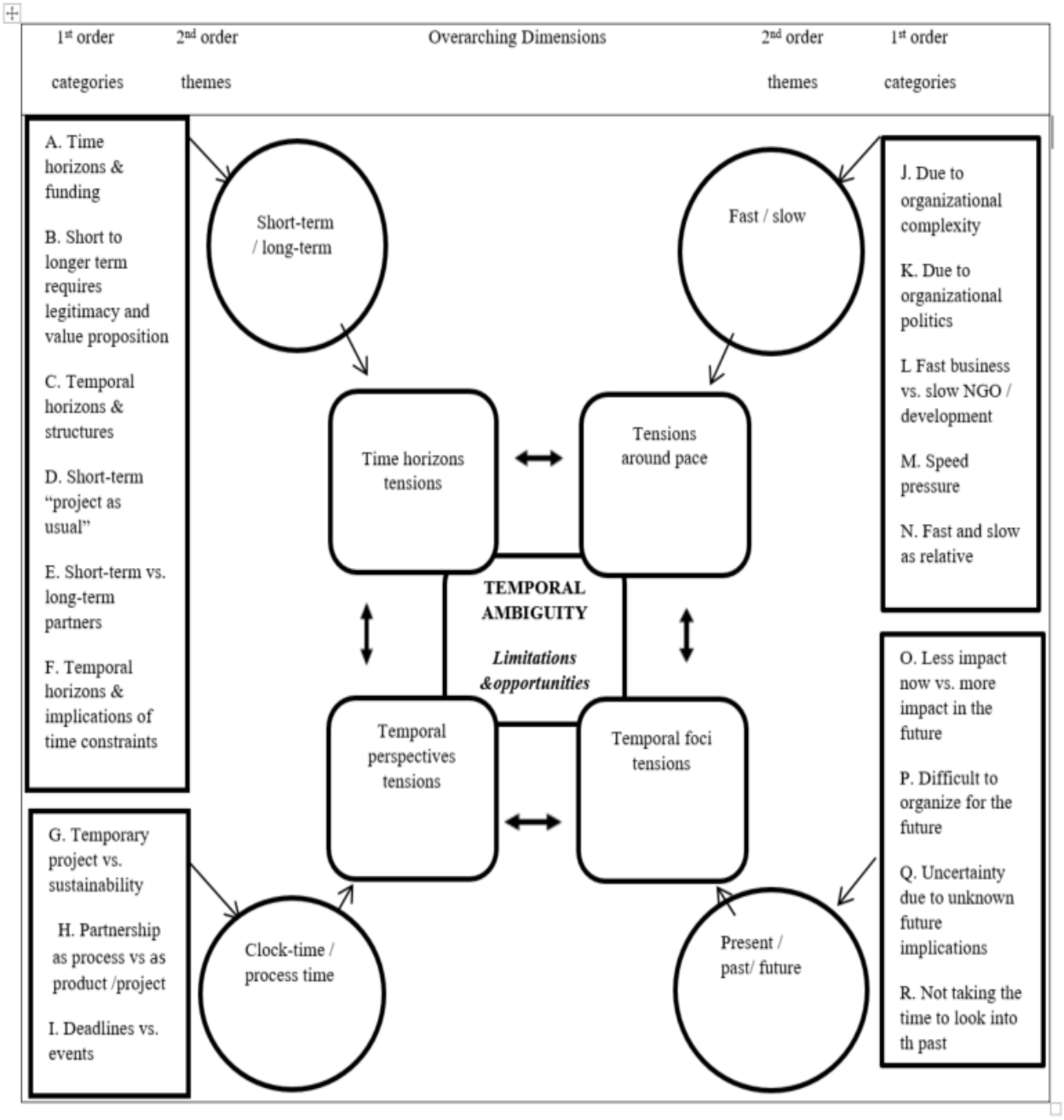

Figure 1: Data Structure

2ND ORDER THEMES & 1ST ORDER CATEGORIES	REPRESENTATIVE DATA
Time horizons tensions	
1. Short-term vs./and long-term	
A. Time horizons & funding	A1. It is easy to get a pilot funding, and it is easy to get the big scale-up, but it is difficult to get the one in the middle. And it is a consideration for us. A2. For us, investing in that company is a way to ensure long-term sustainability and we dare to do that for the first time.
B. Short term to longer term requires legitimacy and clear value proposition	B1. I need to be convinced that the efforts are worthwhile. If we were to subscribe to their service the value we derive should outweigh the costs otherwise we cannot justify funding it. B2. They need to show us the clear value of what they can do for us and how they connect to our strategy or else we cannot fund the project – period.
C. Time horizons & structures	C1. The company entered a 10-year service and maintenance agreement with all the communities where the system was installed. The partnership established will ensure that project initiatives will continue beyond the project lifespan. The system was designed to ensure sustainability by incorporating an annual maintenance and service fee to ensure proper maintenance of the system. C2. The operational set-up for system maintenance will not be continued in future agreements. They will provide the system, and provide training to personnel and stakeholders in the future, but will not take responsibility for the continuous follow up and maintenance.
D. Short-term "project as usual	D1. I think they learned from our project and now they are promoting their approach as a game changer saying that we need to end the one-project approach that the NGOs are doing. D2. We work with projects, this is what we do. The problem with these new projects is that they don't fall into that category, so they are more difficult but people in the field cannot differentiate between them.
E. Short-term vs. long-term "partners"	E1. We welcome big companies because we need the funding and the long-term horizon, but most big companies would not commit to the long-term. E2. The models we develop with the mature companies are different; you can already do scale up, and if we go to the world bank for money we stand a much better chance if we have a big company with us. They might even be able to push for something we can't do. The small companies can't give us anything we don't have already.
F. Short-term and implications of time constraints	F1. Here it is so busy that we do not really have the time to engage more people with this agenda. F2.. Some partnerships are more straightforward but others demand more time without real output so you need to have different structures for different projects, but it also means that we have very limited amount of the time demanding, because we have limited resources.
Temporal perspectives tensions	
2. Clock-time vs. process time	
G. Temporary project vs. sustainability	G1. It is maybe a crude way of seeing development, but also businesses say that development aid projects, is a temporary solution. What you want is actually to develop the country so that they can take care of themselves […] you know people owning the development […] So the whole development aid is just, you know, a fast tracking. And also addressing gaps in that society development process where people are left behind.

	G2. I think they are often more short-term focused on seeing a partnership with us as part of a business strategy of one kind or another.
H. Partnership as process vs. as product/project	H1. For us it is the process of raising awareness and educating that is the most important, or else any technology can fail. H2. With this project our development modalities were set in motion because it falls into the category of our long-term development projects and not the more short term humanitarian response projects, So you start by talking with the communities to ensure understanding and ownership, to explain their role in the intervention, so there is a lot of process that cannot be put in boxes.
I. Deadlines vs. events	I1. For them partnerships are contracts and they don't have the flexibility that is necessary – they just focus on delivering in time. I2. There was this tension with them (the company) being much focused on deliverables that were supposed to be finished by this and that deadline. Whereas our approach comes from a more long-term perspective, saying that we will be partners with our affiliate NGO in Kenya for decades, so we will not put pressure on our relations to a breaking point, insisting on them delivering something under one contract out of a number of contracts.
Tensions around pace	
3. Fast vs./and slow	
J. Due to organizational complexity	J1. There were many delays because organizationally speaking it is just so complex—again, it was an example of inter-departmental collaboration, J2. The lack of clarity in lines of communication between us led to a protracted process in decision making.
K. Due to organizational politics	K1. The delays are also a result of organizational politics. Whenever we organize an intervention in another country, we need to do that with the local RC society and this is a huge advantage, but in some cases also a disadvantage. If they don't find their way into the projects, it's too bad. K2. The problem is that we sometimes have to compete with 28 national Red Cross affiliates for the attention of the national NGO partner in the country where we implement the project and there is lots of politics involved.
L. Fast business vs slow development/NGO	L1. There are different expectations. The private sector is used to fast results and implementation of solutions in a smooth and fast way. But this is not usually what happens in rural Africa… L2. I think that we see companies typically under more pressure for delivering results fast, whereas our "business case" never goes away. There's plenty of vulnerability and poverty in the world and plenty for us to do but we are guided by criteria which are more soft. We could organize ourselves being a better partner for business partnerships. Having more time. Being faster in our decision processes.
M. Speed pressure	M1. The companies are impatient, and they ask me all the time have you done this and that… But I have all these deadlines, a deadline over another deadline. M2. There have been different interests, different needs for progress and the local community is a dynamic mass that does not always work towards the direction you want them to work. In addition, there were some interests from the company's side to make the installations in a hurry. Therefore, in the first part of the project, we have (done that) without having completed the whole course of education, which we can see does not produce such good results.
N. Fast & slow as relative	N1. It happens all the time that we experience time pressure from our business partners. The smaller companies are much more restless. They are innovative people and everything needs to be speedy and decision-oriented; they put more pressure to go faster. The big ones are a bit slower. They have legal systems it can also take a long time. If you are a smaller NGO it can be much faster also. In comparison to them we are very slow, like big companies. But a big company and us can be equally slow.

	N2. It is the structure, how you are as an organization. We can be agile, we don't need to put many people, (the company) compensated by putting resources so it can also go fast, but the international organization has neither the resources, nor the short decision making structures so it can be really slow. Everything ends up at their plate and this is a big concern for us, and the company is also concerned. We are pushing, but they have a very decentralized structure so the country directors need to decide if they want the project or not. It is a small project compared to what the international organization does. They work with huge budgets. But our relationship with (the big Danish company) got stronger through that.
Temporal foci tensions	
4.Present vs./& future	
O. Less impact now vs. more impact in the future	O1. This partnership project presented an opportunity, in my view, which is of course centered on developing the capacity of the society that we've worked through. That they could actually develop some of that capacity through that partnership. But it's always a balancing act, and it is somewhat, you know, internally a dilemma, if it is about the impact for poor people in the here and now, in the humanitarian imperative of saving lives, or if it is about developing the capacity of the national partner so that they eventually will be able to help more lives. And that's somehow a struggle that we are always working with. O2. The interesting thing is not that we can work with the private sector to achieve some of our core business in the present but if we can make a change in the future.
P. Difficult to organize for the future	P1. And I think we have a strong case now for trying out, saying okay, this small partnership we should be doing it again in the future. It's actually supporting our long term strategic interests. But we don't have the business tools to do due diligence processes, articulate the value proposition in a partnership. We need to become more explicit about this. And have tools that help us guide a concept like this. From the onset. Again it's a question of being able to develop yourself being in the middle of it. P2. But we are poor in taking more strategic decisions in terms of partnerships. It is a challenge to move our organization towards more strategic types of decisions that concern the future because we are very much in the now with crises and everything.
Q. Uncertainty due to unknown future implications	Q1. There are many people in the NGO world that are skeptical about this agenda because the future is very uncertain and you can see the funding landscape changing. Q2. So we need to be open but also critical to it (private sector partnerships). We need to have both sides to it, and we need to balance it and justify spending time on it. And still apparently in some civil society organizations there's a lot of critical distance to the big corporates. For good reasons. But it is being challenged.
R. Not taking the time to look into the past	R1. When we go into partnerships, we are not clear on what the criteria should be for us stopping, continuing, or moving to the next level. In the beginning it is about exploring what we can do and how it looks. Maybe the biggest problem is that we don't take stock. R2. We do a lot of lessons learned workshops but these lessons are not really learned.

Table 12: Representative data - Dimensions, Themes, Categories, and Quotations

Findings

The findings illustrate how the DRC perceived temporal tensions in projects and how these tensions related to their practices of organizing for sustainability. The emergent analytical framework, which I present in the next section (Table 13) takes point of departure in the four

intertwined theoretical constructs that the data surfaced: time horizons, temporal perspectives, pace, and temporal foci presented below.

Time horizons tensions

In the DRC, partnerships were subject to a dominant temporal tension between the short term and the long term. Informants reported a struggle to turn the relatively short-time horizons of projects into longer-term collaborations because as an informant said: "We recognize that partnerships grow over time. So, when you get to know each other and develop trust new options appear." One of the biggest challenges was extending the time horizons beyond the typical one-year pilot project. One main reason was reportedly the time-demanding process of securing funding. As informants mentioned: "Funding dries up, our interest moves somewhere else." And:

> To sustain the projects somebody needs to identify funding […]. But now we have run out of money so it has dropped down in importance. […], we would like to continue and not lose momentum. But right now, it has become one of those sort of hanging issues. We need to look for opportunities for new funding, but that takes time.

Projects were co-funded by companies, the DRC, and/or a third-party donor. Informants saw the process of securing funding from a third-party donor, such as a foundation, as particularly time-consuming, whereas the funding possibilities from the business partners' side varied depending on the size of company and the strategic importance of the project. According to informants, the DRC welcomes longer-term partnerships with funding-bearing, bigger companies, as it sees more opportunities for sustainability in longer, well-funded structures. However, informants thought that often big companies were not willing to make a longer-term commitment because this required a complex and time-consuming process. To exemplify this point, an informant mentioned that in the case of a unique new partnership (not any of the three

in focus here), the DRC and its partner were negotiating the partnership agreement for over two years to be able to create the strong foundation necessary for a longer-term commitment. Another informant posited that a long-term commitment from the company side presupposes stability in leadership and strategy, mentioning that in one case, a partnership was terminated right after a new CEO came onboard:

> I could easily see us teaming up with a really big company for a very long term. We prefer long-term partnerships with predictable funding […]. But I think on the business side they wouldn't commit to the same… I think it's more vulnerable to CEOs and business strategies changing.

The DRC's main funding source is the Danish state and, as a "strategic partner" of DANIDA,[25] it operates on a 4-year funding cycle. Parts of this funding were used by the DRC for funding partnerships, especially with smaller companies that do not have funding leeway. However, informants mentioned that concerns about the future of state funding motivate a short-term orientation in projects with smaller companies. The amount of state funding depends *inter alia* on how well the DRC positions itself when reporting on its engagement in innovative partnerships with the private sector, as compared to other NGOs with which it competes for portions of funding from the same funding pool. Informants thought that this competitive environment may lead to a tendency to adopt a "more is more" logic of demonstrating diverse activities through short-term pilot projects, which can offer "good opportunities for learning and experimentation"—but lack potential for scaling that could better address sustainability challenges.

In addition, informants said that funding for scaling up after a pilot project was difficult

[25] DANIDA is Denmark's development cooperation, which is an area of activity under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

to secure, and trying to do that "would require a lot of our time and the question is, is it worth it?" Informants shared that sometimes the complexity of digital technologies, which constitute the backbone of most of these projects, hindered a sufficient understanding of the possibilities for value creation in terms of sustainability. Relatedly, informants stressed the importance of a clear partnership value proposition articulated by the company, speaking to the values, identity, and strategy of the DRC. According to informants, such value propositions could provide the legitimacy and incentives for trying to secure the funding that would extend the project. As an informant mentioned in relation to the one project that lasted for a much longer period than is usually the case: "None of us expected to work with MESH five years after […]. But they have come up with a product squarely situated in our domain. […]"

The MESH project sought to develop a device for disaster relief that could accelerate information flow for damage assessment. It has been the only partnership with a start-up that was still active five years after it started. Informants thought that this was because it offered a sustainable solution to a difficult disaster relief-related challenge in the humanitarian aid domain, which is the domain closest to the organization's identity: "The culture is that disasters have priority and everything else can wait." The system would allow responses twenty times faster and much more accurately after a natural disaster struck. Usually, it takes one to two weeks to get an overview, whereas with the new system it would take eight hours. Thus, the development of the system would affect the core of organizing for disaster response, as the early and accurate information delivered by the system could remarkably improve the planning and prioritization of operations at a more general level. According to another informant: "Another reason why the idea is so great is that it goes out to the level of local volunteers." The system would utilize the existing resources of the local NGO, namely local volunteers, a fact that was expected to enhance the sustainability of the system into the future considerably. This means that besides addressing a concrete challenge in a sustainable way, the system also resonated with

the DRC's strong engagement with voluntarism and connected it with the sustainability of the solution.

Moreover, this project led the DRC to the adoption of a new approach to partnerships in the form of a royalty agreement. This agreement, which entailed that MESH would be paying royalty fees to the DRC based on the sales of the system, had a five-year time horizon for the geographical context of the Philippines, within which the system was being developed. It also specified an intention to extend into other countries in the future. The agreement ran parallel with an open-ended partnership agreement that signified the wish of the organizations for a long-term engagement. According to an informant:

> We have invested in them, which we have never done before […]. We are linking ourselves to the future of the development of the company without us being their sales agent […] I think this is a good way to do it when you run into these difficulties of how to do the scale up.

In other cases, like in the MEDIGI case—a partnership with a start-up that primarily aimed to digitalize a clinic in a refugee camp in Kenya—the decision to use or seek more funding for longer-term engagement was more difficult to make. In an informant's words: "For the time being it's nice, it's a pilot, but we need to move it to the need to have it." Informants mentioned that the project demonstrated useful results, such as the possibility to use data on the visiting patterns at the clinic to optimize the presence of volunteers. However, the future value creation potential was at a rather abstract level. On that point, an informant added:

> They need to show us the added value in a clear way, a specific added value to our strategy. Maybe we do some pilot in order to learn something, but if it does not match our strategy, it is unlikely that we continue funding the project.

Concerns of legitimacy underpinned these reservations, which were also exacerbated by the acknowledgement of difficulties in depicting concrete criteria that would standardize the

choice of partners among start-ups with similar offerings. In an informant's words:

> (Company name) is a good example of us having doubts on what to do. We had a successful pilot... The question is: what next? We can maybe scale, […] but the difficulty is, are we going to be sales agents? Why would we do that? Can I provide evidence that they do it better than twenty other companies that do similar things? And then I feel uncomfortable about what our role in the scale up is.

Moreover, informants attributed short- and long-term tensions to project-based organizing of partnerships, which is also the predominant model of organizing development work for most NGOs. For example, informants said that while the DRC's headquarters saw a particular project as bearing a particularly significant potential for a new sustainable solution, the DRC actors in the development field—juggling many projects simultaneously—treated it as "just another of projects" and did not respond to the issues at hand in a timely fashion. As an informant mentioned: "The field didn't feel this project was as important as the headquarters did, and did not prioritize it." Informants were convinced that this tension contributed to the short-term duration of this partnership.

Informants also thought that short-term projects led to unsustainable solutions, because they could not account for important issues related to the longer-term sustainability of the very solutions that they offer, as such solutions require the allocation of adequate time. Many informants referred to the Waterworld case as a good example of that. In this particular case, the long-term sustainability of the system depended on two interrelated factors. The first factor was the actual use of the water system by the local communities, who had to pay for both getting access to water and maintenance through an annual fee. The second factor was the company providing maintenance and service for ten years. However, the local use of the system was below expectations, and the company, while expressing the wish to continue providing the

system and training relevant stakeholders, did not want to take responsibility for the continuous maintenance of the system in the future. Some of the informants' interpretation is that the project, with its expectation to be implemented within a predetermined timeframe, failed to allocate adequate time in empowering the communities and ensuring that the water-system would actually be used by them as it was envisioned. Thus, the project failed to materialize as a sustainable solution.

Furthermore, informants shared that they saw many short-term projects as missed opportunities to optimize or renew organizing models to the benefit of sustainability in different domains. An informant mentioned: "This project could have influenced our whole approach in this area […], this could become a much more sustainable approach, […] but it takes time to see that," and "that was a big missed opportunity; we didn't allocate time to explore what the value of this project could be for our organization." Missed opportunities for more sustainable solutions also related to the interplay between short project duration and the lack of time to engage with projects. As an informant put it:

> It is a one-year pilot, and the struggle is that this agenda needs to be embedded in the operations rather than being at my desk. If it stays with me, it's too limited. We lose the opportunity to really benefit from it. That's where the struggle is right now, that colleagues don't have time to do some of these long-term development issues.

Thus, other pressing NGO tasks absorbed the attention of organizational members and did not allow them to devote the necessary time to partnership projects. In this sense, the lack of substantial time devoted to projects during their short duration hampered sustainability potential.

Temporal perspectives tensions

Another set of tensions arose between a clock-time vs. process-time perspective. The DRC's temporal perspective in relation to projects was rather open on a theoretical level. Projects were

perceived as fluid processes marked by events, the exact occurrence of which was difficult to specify with strict clock-time temporal structures. These events were crucial for the sustainability of the solutions that the DRC envisioned for the more distant future. Informants perceived companies to be strictly oriented toward deadlines and reluctant to discuss future events without framing them with clock-time planning. This was further reflected in companies' reluctance to include explicit provisions for long-term development horizons in project agreements. An informant put it in the following way:

> There was a lot of talking in the start from our side, trying to ensure long-term sustainability, and that is common sense in our world—it is so common sense that you don't even think about it, but the company said this is not how we should do it.

According to informants, the companies' clock-time orientation was also illustrated by an overemphasis on contracts and their temporal structures, an emphasis that limited the necessary attention to actual foreseen and emergent needs, the accommodation of which demanded the allocation of adequate time to ensure sustainability.

> I think they are […]focused on seeing a partnership with us as part of a business strategy. In this case it was employer branding and probably also business development. For them it was more a contract than a partnership […] There was this cultural thing about it; a contract means something else for them, it was a business contract. For us, it is an intention to do something. And we have a lot of flexibility; if they don't deliver this quarter, it is not like we will bring them to court […] But they do not have the same amount of patience. So, in that sense, there was a clash between a business mindset and our more long-term, softer partnership perspective.

According to informants, a clash in temporal perspectives was also shown through an overt business focus on the technology or product at the core of the project—at the expense of the process that would connect that technology or product to long-term sustainability. For

example, in one case there was discord between the partners over the starting point and duration of project implementation, which resulted in a conflict. On the one hand, there was an agreed-upon timeframe for implementing the project, setting certain expectations. On the other hand, for the DRC implementation required that certain important events take place, such as community education, before the company's system was installed. The DRC saw implementation as a more open and flexible—and thus potentially longer—process, whereas the company saw implementation and its temporal structures as related to their technology and clock-time planning, and any deviation from the plan was a nuisance. Pressure from the company led the DRC to make compromises on the time used for community education; however, exactly that educational element was crucial for the sustainability of the project. The following quote is illustrative of the tension:

> The word implementation …you think you are talking about the same thing, but later we found out we were not. For us implementation starts when we start talking with the communities to raise awareness. For them, implementation starts when you start installing your system. And that's where a lot of things went wrong. Because when we looked at sustainability afterwards, we could see the effects of not having spent enough time to ensure ownership.

Pace-Related Tensions

Informants typically aligned speed levels with the respective sector: a speedy company *versus* a slow NGO. They attributed the slow pace of the DRC partially to the nature and complexities of its operations: "We are operations-oriented, so we have systems to respond to emergencies quickly. But it is a challenge to move towards making decisions on partnerships faster…and we travel a lot." According to another informant: "There are a lot of ethical questions […] and for us to decide on these quite complicated issues, it takes a lot of time, and the companies are pressuring us, either we go, or we don't go." Even more, informants attributed the slow NGO

pace to the limited integration of projects within the DRC organization: “Such projects are a bit outside the normal bureaucratic process, and developing an ongoing stakeholder dialogue requires a lot of focus, and it is a difficult task.” Informants mentioned that it was common that companies put pressure to speed up: “I think that companies are conscious of the fact that we are extremely slow, and they push, they call, they write emails […] and for me this is good, I need this kind of pushing.” However, speed pressure was not always received positively. In one case, pressure to speed up processes of community empowerment triggered both systemic sustainability problems and a specific conflict that needed to be resolved at top management level. Several informants agreed that the pressure to speed up was related to the project having a limited duration, which was seen as highly problematic because it clashed with processes that were important to ensure as they reflected the DRC’s core values in relation to sustainability: “We need to first and foremost think about the needs of our beneficiaries, and this does not always fit with fast business agendas and short project frames.”

Moreover, informants attributed the slow NGO pace to the organizational complexity of projects, as well as the lack of clear communication lines between the partners, leading to protracted processes. One informant explicated this problem:

> We had a difficult setup, where the key account manager was sitting in fundraising, and the operations person responsible was sitting at the international department responding to people sitting in Kenya; it was extremely complicated. I don’t think we have cracked the code of how to organize ourselves more optimally, in dealing with these demanding projects.

Informants additionally viewed the slow NGO pace as a result of organizational politics:

> The problem is that the national DRC partner that needs to be included in project implementation has many other Red Cross societies from other countries coming and presenting project ideas all

> the time. So, the message can be that a project needs to wait. And you don't want to bypass people because they are well connected in their local contexts and you want them as your allies.

Moreover, informants addressed fast and slow pace in relative and comparative terms. They perceived smaller start-ups as very fast, but they also perceived a certain big company as being very slow, an impression they attributed to the company taking long-term sustainability seriously. An informant mentioned: "If you look at our new partnership, we are the agile and fast partner." Reflecting on the slow negotiation process of signing a partnership agreement, informants said that although it involved impatience and frustration, a slow pace proved to be important for creating a solid foundation for achieving project longevity and sustainable outcomes. An informant stressed that the slow pace was important for the decision making process and for ensuring a long-term horizon. She thought that this was different than in other cases because in her words: "We started by wanting each other and not a project […] we want to do this the right way, and this takes time in the beginning."

Temporal foci tensions

Temporal foci tensions involved placing particular interest, emphasis, or importance on the past, the present, or the future. Informants conferred an evident tension between the present and the future, sharing that they thought it was challenging to organize in the present for distant-future sustainability issues and for the future of a project while "being in the middle of it and knowing that it will soon be over." They also explained that the institutional environment (framed in relation to DANIDA and the UN's sustainable development goals discourse) drove the DRC to focus on engaging in several partnerships in the present. At the same time, the difficulty to concretize the potential of partnerships, the partnerships' complex character, and the concern that business involvement in sustainable development might become the norm in sustainability

governance in the future, created uncertainty about the future role of NGOs and partnerships. As an informant mentioned:

> We are in the middle of a river. I think that we don't know where it takes us, and I think not enough people have understood that this is an important agenda to understand. We also need to be critical. Is this the development that we want to pursue? I am skeptical about the long-term implications of this.

Moreover, informants explained that as a humanitarian organization, they are very much focused on the present because they need to prioritize and organize action around acute humanitarian aid. This hampers a focused view into the future regarding sustainable development and partnerships, as well as the development of tools that would enable the organization to envision the future or to rely in concrete ways on their past experiences with partnerships. An informant mentioned on this point:

> When we go into partnerships, we are not clear on what the criteria should be for us stopping, continuing, or moving to the next level. In the beginning it is about exploring what we can do and how it looks. Maybe the biggest problem is that we don't take stock.

Informants moreover described a fundamental dilemma: either develop NGO capabilities locally to be able to have greater sustainability impact and help more people in the future, or contribute with a more direct—albeit, maybe smaller—impact, focusing on solutions in the present. Informants believed that focusing on the future required using valuable time in the present, but they also believed that such a focus might yield important sustainability benefits, as expressed in the following quote:

> The interesting thing is to answer the question: Can our normal way of doing things, that is not always sustainable, be more sustainable in the future through private partnerships, even if this means providing solutions on a commercial basis sometimes?

Finally, informants mentioned that current funding concerns motivated an orientation toward the future to explore new funding opportunities. For instance, they talked a lot about innovative finance models or innovative long-term partnerships. As an informant put it: "You have these rising needs and slowly declining state aid. Who should step in and meet some of the costs? [...] This whole idea of working with businesses is about shaking ourselves a bit." Overall, partnerships were seen as a potential source of future income, either through company funding or partnership business models that could generate economic value for the NGO.

Temporal Ambiguity in NGO-business partnerships for sustainability

This article defines temporal tensions as tacit or explicit clashes of ideas, objectives, values, principles, logics, and/or actions, which emerge and manifest themselves as competing or contradictory temporal demands, and which are underpinned, triggered, and shaped by different time-related perceptions, practices, and norms. For analytical reasons, the article presents four discrete categories of temporal tensions that emerged in the data structure (Figure 1): time horizons tensions, temporal perspectives tensions, pace-related tensions, and temporal foci tensions. However, in reality these tensions may not always be analytically distinct. This is because temporal tensions are entangled, situated, relational, and contextual, and they may affect organizing for sustainability in different ways depending on the situation at hand.

Temporal tensions are *entangled* in the sense that they interrelate in ways such that they may acquire a different meaning and spark different responses and outcomes if seen or

experienced in relation[26] to another temporal tension or set of tensions. An example is an entanglement between pace and time horizons tensions: slow pace within a short-term project may be seen as positive when it is enacted to accommodate a process that is critical for the success of the partnership project because it involves the beneficiary communities. However, slow pace may be detrimental for sustainability in situations when the pre-agreed short-term horizon of the project does not leave enough time for partners to explore the potential of their partnership in depth.

Additionally, temporal tensions are *situated* because actors address them through their ongoing activities as part of temporal structuring (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002; Reinecke & Ansari, 2015). Actors may thus maintain an a priori given temporal structure or change it, and this orientation towards the reproduction of the same temporal structure or the adoption of a new one can be strategic. For example, when NGOs experience a time horizon tension, they may use the one-year pilot project norm to terminate a partnership that involves legitimacy concerns, or instead, they may devote additional efforts to secure funding to extend the one-year pilot when they perceive this as beneficial. However, structural constraints related to the funding landscape beyond the direct influence of organizational members may further influence the strategic leeway of actors. Besides being conditioned by structural constraints or strategic choice, the orientation towards reproducing or changing a temporal structure can also be the result of inter- and intra-organizational power struggles. Power struggles may lead to the negotiation of temporal structures through temporal brokerage, which may condition temporal structuring in the event of temporal tensions (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015). Temporal brokerage may result in accommodating the tension and temporarily resolving it by agreeing upon a particular "ambitemporal" structure. The findings indicate that the resolved tension is evaluated by actors

[26] For example, in light of, simultaneously with, or in the context of another temporal tension or set of temporal tensions.

in retrospect in relation to how the particular settlement may have affected sustainability, illuminating the importance of recurrent adaptation and learning in the ongoing processes of ambitemporal management of temporal tensions (Reinecke and Ansari, 2015).

Furthermore, temporal tensions are *relational* not only at the level of the entanglement of multiple competing temporal demands, but also at the level of the continuously interrelated flow of actors, organizations, and other entities in the process of becoming (Chia, 2002). This implies a multiplicity of coexisting, intersecting, multi-faceted, and ever-changing temporalities upon which actors may reflect and act as they try to accommodate temporal tensions. For example, in the partnerships described here, the interrelated flow of actors involved not only the project teams, but also members from the ongoing organizations in which the projects were embedded, including people located in Denmark, Africa, or Asia and other organizations that were involved in project implementation. Finally, temporal tensions are also *contextual* because they depend upon or relate to the circumstances that form the settings for the events that spark the clashes between competing or contradictory temporal demands. For example, the fact that in one partnership the water systems were installed in isolated areas that were very far from the closest big city posed additional time-related challenges.

This article theorizes temporal tensions as entangled, situated, relational, and contextual expressions of *temporal ambiguity.* Following organizational theorizing of ambiguity (Santos & Eisenhardt, 2009), I define *temporal ambiguity* as the simultaneous presence of multiple conflicting temporal elements and the ensuing lack of clarity about the meaning and implications related to temporal tensions events and situations. Temporal ambiguity may thus affect interpretations of future implications of action or inaction and what is important to consider in decision-making. Temporal ambiguity denotes a fundamental and *a priori* irreducible temporal vagueness. This implies that when organizational members are willing and able to accommodate temporal ambiguity constructively by accepting it as impossible to solve

conclusively, this decisively shapes their action. Thus, whether temporal ambiguity is perceived as a limitation or an opportunity by organizational members may positively or negatively affect sustainability. While temporal ambiguity cannot be resolved conclusively, it can arguably be reduced by trying to achieve shared interpretations of what is important and an active engagement with the implications of current action for the future. While an inherent limitation is that temporal ambiguity implies that temporal tensions cannot be empirically captured in their full scope, this article still argues that there seem to be some prevalent expressions of particular types of temporal tensions as expressed in the emergent analytical framework. This framework, presented in Table 13, identifies the prevalent expressions of temporal tensions in each category, their seeming roots, and their implications for organizing for sustainability.

Dominant expressions and roots of temporal tensions

Some expressions of the opposing elements of temporal tensions seem to be dominant. These concern the prevalence of short-term over long-term projects, clock-time over process-time perspectives, slow over fast pace in NGO partnership execution, and NGO focus on the present over the future. To be sure, other more balanced expressions were also at play as presented in the findings. The predominance of short-term projects seems to be rooted in the interplay between funding possibilities and the clarity and strength of sustainable value, which affects partnership longevity and legitimacy perceptions. It is furthermore rooted in the idiosyncrasies of each sector. In particular, on the business side it seems to be rooted in short-termism and changes in business strategies. On the NGO side, the predominance of short-term projects seems to be rooted in the lack of time and resources, the lack of future value and partner assessment capabilities, and the norms of project-based organizing in development work. At the same time, short-term project duration is often a strategic choice that NGOs make to be able to maintain

TEMPORAL AMBIGUITY IN NGO BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABILITY	TEMPORAL TENSIONS	DOMINANT EXPRESSION	ROOTS	IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZING FOR SUSTAINABILITY
	Time horizons: short-term / long-term	*Prevalence of short-term over long-term partnership projects*	**Funding challenges:** - Funding is limited - Securing funding is time-consuming - Uncertain future of state funding **Value assessment challenges:** - Weak partnership value proposition: poor match with values, identity, strategy - Unclear partnership value proposition due to technological complexity **Legitimacy concerns:** - Low legitimacy perception in relation to project / partner **Business conditions:** - Short-termism - Changes in business strategies & leadership **NGO conditions:** - Poor value assessment capabilities - Lack of criteria for partner choice - Lack of time & other resources Project-based organizational form	Short-term projects seem to hinder sustainability affecting the development of new sustainable value propositions or/and new sustainable forms of value creation for tackling targeted problems. Partner fit with core components of identity and operations can lead to longer-term partnerships Learning potential through experimentation with different projects but often untapped NGOs need to differentiate between partnership projects and other types of projects that constitute the main organizational form for value creation
	Temporal perspectives: Clock-time / process-time	*Prevalence of clock-time over process-time*	**Business conditions:** - Prevalence of clock-time organizing - Prevalence of other business agendas over sustainability (e.g focus on product development, short-term profits, employer branding ect) **Partnership projects:** - Short-term agreements with no long-term provisions Reliance on contract terms than actual sustainability needs	Hinders development of sustainable solutions to targeted problems Enhances synchronization between partner activities Can cause compromises in the use of in-house capabilities in infrastructure management May jeopardize relationships with beneficiaries
	Pace tensions: Fast / slow tempo	*Prevalence of slow over fast tempo in NGO partnership execution*	**NGO operations issues:** - NGO operational complexity - Limited integration of partnerships in NGO permanent organization **Willing "to go slow" business partner** **Organizational issues:** - Partnership projects' organizational complexity - Organizational politics	Integration of partnerships within permanent NGO can speed up project processes and reduce organizational complexity Speed pressure can be a driver or a hustle depending on the character and importance of the activity / Projects need a values-based approach on that Slow partnership formation phase can enhance project longevity and long term sustainability
	Temporal foci: Present / future	*Prevalence of NGO focus on the present over the past and the future*	**NGO operations issues:** - Need for urgent response in the present - Limited integration of partnerships in NGO permanent organization - Lack of time and other resources - Lack of tools for envisioning the future and taking stock **Institutional pressures demand focus on the present**	Hinders a focus on the distant future of sustainability, e.g. the SDG 2030 horizon / Organizing needs a future-oriented approach in all components Hinders learning from the past May hinder innovative solutions in relation to funding challenges

Table 13: Analytical framework: Temporal ambiguity in NGO–business partnerships for sustainability as a manifestation of entangled temporal tensions and its implications for organizing for sustainability (Own contribution)

legitimacy and navigate the plethora of opportunities that seem to be available through different innovative sustainable solutions that companies may "promise."

The prevalence of clock-time over process-time is attributed to the business' prioritization of other agendas over sustainability, the business' insistence on contract terms with preconceived temporal structures, and the general predominance of clock-time organizing in society, including NGO organizing. The prevalence of slow over fast pace in NGO partnership execution is driven by the complexity and distinct temporalities of NGO operations, as well as the limited integration of NGO-business projects within the NGO, including the implementation field abroad. It is moreover driven by NGO organizational complexity and organizational politics. More rarely, slow pace is driven by a synchronization of the NGO with business partners that are willing to devote more time to create a solid partnership foundation and capitalize on the full potential of the partnership. Finally, the pattern of NGO focus on the present over the future and the past is prompted by institutional demands, as well as by issues related to NGO organizational models, including the nature of acute relief operations. It is also prompted by limited buy-in of NGO-business projects across the NGO organization, lack of time in general and in partnerships in particular, and lack of tools for envisioning the future and taking stock of past experiences.

Implications of temporal tensions for organizing for sustainability

Temporal tensions in NGO-business partnerships and the ways in which NGOs attend to them have a variety of implications for organizing for sustainability. In this article, sustainability is seen as a primarily temporal concept concerning interventions that provide enduring solutions to social and/or environmental problems intended to balance current and future needs. The focus may be on present solutions that can last and be relevant in the future, as well as on solutions

that work in the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The need to focus both on the present and the future has been emphasized in corporate sustainability literature, which has warned about the detrimental effects of corporate short-termism and temporal myopia on sustainability (Slawinski & Bansal, 2015). This work has thus pointed to a temporal tension that has been conceptualized as a tension between the short-term and the long-term—where the short-term refers to a chronologically-near future and the long term refers to a chronologically-more-distant future—or as a tension between present and future needs. This is consistent with the temporal tension in this article, which is conceptualized as a tension of temporal focus, i.e. focus on the present, the past, and/or the future. The findings show that while NGOs are aware of the importance of considering both current and future needs in their everyday operations and in their partnerships with business, they also describe several challenges that make it difficult to strike the desired balance, as illustrated in the previous section. These challenges relate to the general conditions under which NGOs operate—for example, because of institutional demands, the nature of acute relief operations, or the lack of tools for envisioning the future and taking stock of past experiences. They also relate to particular conditions of NBSPs—for example, the lack of buy-in and partnership integration within the NGO, as well as what informants specifically refer to as the lack of adequate time to engage in NBSPs. This also has implications for how well NBSPs can actually address sustainability by balancing present and future needs.

In this article, the issue of adequate time as expressed in the findings is presented in more detail under the category temporal horizon tensions, which concerns the long-term and the short-term in relation to the duration of partnerships. In extant literature the short-term/long-term horizon tension is essentially a tension between the near and the distant future in relation to societal needs (Slawinski and Bansal, 2015), thus referring to the end-point of the horizon. Differently, here the short-term/long-term horizon tension refers also to the duration of

organizing for sustainability, thus to the duration of the organizing horizon. It should be noted that scholars have emphasized that the notion of a time horizon relates to both the duration and the end-point of a time-period (Schultz & Hernes, 2019). The dominant concerns revealed in the findings under the time horizon tension relate more to the short or longer duration of the organizing structures in NGO-business partnerships and their implications for sustainability, rather than the future chronological end-point of considering future sustainability needs. Thus, there is a difference between addressing sustainability through ongoing practice in a single organization and addressing sustainability through a temporary structure engaging multiple organizations. This may be because in ongoing organizations, the presence of organizational members and the possibilities for cooperation are indefinite and taken for granted. In single organizations, action is ongoing and organizational members may adjust their short-term and long-term sustainability strategies along the way. However, in the case of partnerships, time is more limited and a main concern seems to be that short NGO-business partnership duration may not be adequate for ensuring sustainability impact.

All partnerships examined were operationalized through projects characterized by a limited time-period that was defined *ex ante*. They were also pre-destined to be temporary, which is a structural and largely taken-for-granted condition anchored in the inter-organizational character of collaboration, as well as in NGO funding cycles and in the prominence of project work in NGO sustainable development work. In particular, the limited partnership duration has to do with fragmented funding, the ambiguity around the perception of future value creation, legitimacy concerns, an urgency to accomplish results by pre-determined end-dates, and a strain on partner relations due to an inability to imagine a common future. Researchers have suggested that a limited duration may affect processes, behavior, perceptions, and outcomes, and issues such as time use, communication, norms, and coordination (Jones & Lichtenstein 2008; Bakker, 2010; Bakker, DeFillippi, Schwab & Sydow, 2016).

The temporal tensions that NGO actors describe reflect different aspects of the projects' limitations, which involve the duration of partnerships and their consequences for organizing for sustainability. Project work presupposes an agreed-upon series of activities that are envisioned to lead to a more or less specific outcome by an agreed-upon deadline. However, as the process unfolds, unforeseen tensions may arise between the temporal elements surfaced within this context of limited duration, as well as between the temporal needs of the organizations in terms of sustainability. Informants stress that it takes time to build trust with the partners and establish a strong partnership foundation, it takes time to understand the potential of technologies, it takes time to secure funding for continuing promising projects, and it takes time to discuss the future implications of present actions. Furthermore, the negative consequences of the limited duration may intensify due to temporal ambiguity brought on by the fact that NBSPs include at least two ongoing organizations, affiliate and subsidiary organizations in the developing countries where project implementation takes place, two sets of organizational fields, and complex institutional local and national environments. This is a network of "time givers" (Dille & Söderlund, 2011) to which partnerships also need to adapt, affecting coordination and alignment towards achieving sustainability goals.

Discussion

On engaging temporal tensions generatively in NGO-Business Partnerships

When examining the general attitude of the NGO under scrutiny, one could make a strong claim that they cognitively understand temporal tensions in "both and" terms, upholding both elements of each set of tensions (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015; Slawinski & Bansal, 2015; Sharma & Bansal, 2017). They do see sustainability as striking a balance between the present and the future; they do treat "slow" and "fast" as relative and not as something that they need to choose between; they do accept that organizing for sustainability through partnerships is necessarily a structure of

limited duration, the length of which they can influence through taking concrete action; and they do organize by combining clock-time and event-time temporal structures.

When examining the action of the NGO, one can see that the NGO has been engaging in processes of dialogue and contestation, both internally and with partners, through which they seem to have developed temporal reflexivity and a better understanding of the business perspective and the interdependencies between the goals of the two parties (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015). There were several instances of temporal brokerage (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015) revealed in the data, where the NGO and businesses negotiated their different temporal stances and reached a consensus to be able to proceed by changing, adapting, or maintaining a particular temporal structure (e.g. an implementation schedule) or temporal element (e.g. speed of execution). The cross-sectoral nature of these partnerships for sustainability may have enhanced the actors' capability to balance temporal tensions. This is in line with Slawinski & Bansal's (2015) findings, which indicated that engagement with stakeholders and cross-sector collaboration evokes different perspectives and a richer understanding of the challenges that can broaden the sustainable solutions space and support temporal ambidexterity. Moreover, informants talked about how they have coordinated with some of their partners to build timeliness capacity (Sharma and Bansal, 2017) and find emergent solutions—for example, through their willingness to look for additional funding to prolong a project.

However, when one looks at particular events, actions, and perceptions in the data, these reveal some additional insights. First, processes of temporal brokerage (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015) may not always be generative in ways that accommodate temporal tensions; they may also lead to conflict. In one event, although a temporal tension around timing was initially approached through dialogue and contestation in line with the notion of temporal brokerage, the tension escalated to a conflict that reached the top levels of the organizational hierarchy and was never completely resolved. This implies that it may not always be possible or desirable to make

interpretative shifts (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015) that lead to actions that engage the paradox, although one may be able to see the interdependencies between conflicting goals at the general cognitive level. One reason for that may be that not all organizational members involved in partnership implementation are exposed to diverse ambitemporality processes with business actors, since this exposure mostly takes place at the level of the headquarters and among members that are actively involved in partnerships on an ongoing basis. Another reason could be that there are certain fundamental values that organizations are not willing to compromise for the sake of accommodating temporal tensions. This could be, for example, the "leave no one behind" principle, which guides humanitarian action in sustainable development interventions.

Second and relatedly, the data reveal that sometimes actors do polarize opposing temporal tensions, attributing distinct meanings to each polarity (Slawinski & Bansal, 2015). For example, they make short-term decisions, such as choosing to terminate a partnership, due to legitimacy concerns even if this may lead to less sustainable solutions for their beneficiaries in the future. In that sense, then, they may have favored the present at the expense of the future. They chose to be slow in their pace to execute partnerships when they attributed greater importance to dedicating their resources to acute humanitarian aid. This implies that sometimes the boundaries between polarizing and juxtaposing tensions (Slawinski & Bansal, 2015) may not be clear. Moreover, the findings indicate that although clock-time primarily aligns with a market logic and process-time primarily aligns with a development logic (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015), NGO sustainability interventions—regardless of whether they are in partnerships with business or not—are organized as projects, i.e. clock-time temporal structures *par excellence*. Thus, NGOs need to balance the inherent tension between short-term project organizing and long-term sustainability on an ongoing basis, independent of their relation to the market. This may be an enabling factor towards an ambitemporal approach to temporal tensions in NGO-business partnerships.

These insights indicate that both a paradox approach, which sees tensions as interdependent pressures that need to be accommodated, and a trade-offs approach, which holds that organizations apply polarized "either-or" strategies, may be at play in addressing temporal tensions in NGO-business partnerships for sustainability. Further, it indicates that these approaches are applied *in situ*. For example, when important principles are at stake, a trade-offs approach which favors principles, may seem more appropriate in helping to protect long-term sustainability. This dual approach may relate to the temporal ambiguity inherent in NGO-business partnerships, which is caused by the simultaneous presence of multiple and entangled temporal tensions and the consequent lack of clarity about their meaning and implications in relation to particular events and situations. The above reflections also indicate that although actors do not necessarily cognitively separate temporal tensions into opposing temporal elements, they may separate them at times through their actions to achieve their idiosyncratic strategic goals in relation to their broader engagement in sustainability work. This is in line with Sharma & Bansal's (2017) insight that cognition and action seem to be deeply related in engaging paradoxes—although perhaps not in absolute ways, as these findings imply.

Taking the above remarks into consideration, this article proposes a paradox view on the "paradox – trade-offs dichotomy" around the management of temporal tensions. Processes of temporal ambidexterity and ambitemporality are generative, ongoing processes that enable the management of temporal tensions by accommodating and confronting them. However, confrontation may also involve trade-offs of temporal tensions that, in the long run, could strengthen the ambitemporal capabilities of actors. Thus, trade-offs can be seen as an integral part of ambitemporality, which is a continuous process of becoming ambitemporal—and not an end-state or outcome of temporal brokerage that conclusively resolves temporal tensions (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Reinecke & Ansari, 2015). Becoming ambitemporal involves experimentation, learning, reflection upon, and reinterpretation of past and future events

(Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Hernes & Schultz, 2020). For example, when a process of temporal brokerage led to a compromise of following a clock-time structure instead of an event-time approach, actors retrospectively reinterpreted that event as damaging for the future sustainability of a solution. This reinterpretation may inform future ways of managing temporal tensions generatively.

Moreover, temporal ambidexterity has been conceptualized as a process of embracing temporal tensions *inter alia* through engagement in time-consuming practices, such as exploring qualitative scenarios that broaden the solution space (Slawinski & Bansal, 2015). However, the NGO reported that there is not so much time for engaging in time-consuming practices with businesses. NGOs attribute this limitation mostly to the acute nature of their humanitarian engagement and the short duration of partnership projects. Relatedly, research has noted that short-term projects with *ex ante* termination points generate low expectations for their continuity at the expense of relationship-building (Bakker, 2010). Thus, the short-term duration of partnership projects and its effect on relation-building may make it difficult for project members to engage in temporal brokerage (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015). This implies that temporal ambidexterity and ambitemporality may be more strongly associated with an expectation of ongoing operations or/and open-ended interactions between organizational members. To be sure, Sharma and Bansal (2017) have shown that some NGO-business partnership projects have successfully engaged the commercial-social paradox to address tensions, including temporal tensions around timeliness. However, Sharma and Bansal (2017) do not provide information and insights related to the duration of these projects. In any case, the relationships between businesses and NGOs in these projects are buyer/supplier relationships, i.e. sharply different than the collaborative relationships in the projects in focus in this article (Gray & Purdy, 2018:1). Arguably, long-term partnerships may be better equipped to attain temporal ambidexterity to the benefit of sustainability, as projects with longer durations are more likely to

develop processes similar to those found in ongoing organizations (Sydow, Lindkvist & DeFillippi, 2004). The findings of this article indicate that short durations may be related to difficulties in adopting more future-oriented approaches, which are also due to inertia in NGO operations, as well as limited integration and lack of buy-in for NGO-business projects across NGO organizational functions. Taken together, these factors may result in difficulties in effectively accounting for issues that incite temporal tensions.

Implications for further research

Understanding how actors attend to temporal tensions in their everyday practices has implications for decision-making, partnership performance and impact, and, importantly, sustainability (Bansal, Reinecke, Suddaby & Langley, 2019; Slawinski & Bansal, 2012; Bansal & DesJardine, 2014). Further research that applies an explicit temporal lens can shed more light on how organizational members attend to temporal tensions within NBSPs, how temporal tensions become entangled in practice, and how they may relate to temporal structuring that leads to changes in temporal structures (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002). Further research into temporal tensions in NBSPs can focus explicitly on the aspect of temporary organizing in complex NBSP projects, where short-term clock-time appears to be at odds with long-term goals, visions, and political agendas. Situating previous research within the literature on temporary organizations and time (e.g. Sydow & Braun, 2018; Burke & Morley, 2016; Bakker, 2010) may provide valuable insights into temporal tensions and their management. Here, the level of analysis should be the project and the data collection, and analysis should be squarely focused on project-level data, as it is the partnership project work that is temporary. Relatedly, further research can focus on how the short duration of NBSPs may influence the management of temporal tensions. Arguably, approaches in extant literature on the time horizon tension of sustainability have primarily focused on examining the end-point aspect of the time horizon

rather than on the duration ingrained in the notion, which can shed light on what actors (can and cannot) do while enacting the planned horizons. By the same token, further research can formulate research questions to focus more deeply on different aspects of the analytical framework in relation to their role in addressing temporal tensions paradoxically. They can seek to determine, for example, the exact role of values and principles or the institutional environment or the clarity of value propositions and technologies; the internal buy-in and the level of exposure to processes of ambitemporality that organizational members receive; and so on.

In this article, the level of analysis is the NGO, and the unit of analysis is the narrative provided by NGO actors. Thus, generalizations for partners or businesses are not possible with the current results. A research design that takes the partnerships as the level of analysis and analyzes narratives provided by both NGO and business organizational members might enable a better understanding of how actors address temporal tensions in NGO-business partnerships. Furthermore, a close longitudinal examination of the interplay between cognition and action can shed further light on the management of temporal tensions, something that the present study was unable to do due to the nature of the data.

Implications for practice

Although the time constraints associated with short-term projects in NGO-business partnerships cannot be completely removed, NGOs can direct their efforts towards a more "open time view" of partnership projects (Stjerne & Svejenova, 2016). This would allow for capturing and understanding the interplay among past experiences, present situations, and future aspirations (Stjerne & Svejenova, 2016). Further, it may contribute to the development of ambitemporal capabilities that would enable NGOs to transcend temporal tensions more generatively. In this sense, a short project duration is not necessarily an *a priori* limitation that puts sustainability

efforts at a disadvantage, but rather an integral part of a long-term endeavor that includes processes of ambitemporality. In that respect, answering the question of how long-term collaborations can be realized through successive short-term partnership projects may be crucial. Moreover, continually including long-term considerations around sustainability issues in short-term projects may provide direction for the future and increase the likelihood of longer-term partnerships and better sustainable solutions. Arguably, through longer-term processes, the future-oriented notion of sustainability can frame partnerships more meaningfully, as it can become less abstract by engaging in the practices identified in the literature (see Table 7) that support a generative approach to temporal tensions. This presupposes that partnerships are also tasked with putting effort into creating some kind of temporal structuring of the distant, long-term horizons of sustainability—that is, somehow engaging in making sense of the distant future of sustainability and reaching shared understandings of possible futures. Engaging with distant time horizons is important and can be generative because different temporal depths reveal different aspects of the world (Bluedorn & Standifer, 2006).

Thus, NGOs with ambitions to achieve long-term sustainability may explicitly aim for "sustainable partnerships," i.e. NBSPs that endure and flourish. One strategy would be to only consider partnerships with companies that can demonstrate long-term commitment from the outset. The findings indicate that it is crucial to reserve a lot of time at the initiation phase to ensure that commitment. Moreover, important aspects emphasized in the above analysis need not only to be at the center of the partnership design, but also to be problematized against each other, through an explicit *temporal prism* during processes of temporal brokerage. These aspects include the humanitarian principles that guide sustainable development, the partners' values and what they consider important, the particularities of the solutions the partnerships target, and how well those solutions match the sustainability needs. This explicit temporal prism is reflected in several questions that can be posed. For example, what does it mean to put the beneficiaries'

needs first, in terms of all the temporal elements that surface in this study? What is long-term sustainability in the context of each project, and how can it be achieved and maintained over time? Through what temporal structures can partners continue their collaboration in the future, and how can they be created? How can partnerships be better integrated temporally within the ongoing organizations? How can milestones become more focused on optimizing the process to achieve the outcome than on achieving it within unreflexive deadlines? How can partners consistently demonstrate, update, and maintain a strong and clear sustainable value proposition that matches each organization's values, identity, strategic orientation, and temporal needs? How can short-term projects be seen as segments of a long-term, ongoing process towards sustainability despite their short durations?

Conclusion

Understanding how temporal tensions in cross-sector collaboration for sustainability can be managed generatively has important implications for the grand challenges that humanity faces. The findings demonstrate that NGO-business partnerships foster inherent and emergent temporal tensions that entail temporal ambiguity. Within this ambiguity NGOs see both limitations, e.g. in the lack of adequate time, and opportunities, e.g. in how the fast pace of companies may motivate a more timely engagement with partnership tasks. Temporal tensions are inherent in the notion of sustainability, which is oriented towards the future, in the different temporalities of NGO operations, in sector-specific norms and understandings of time, in the short-term nature of partnership projects, and in the prevalence of clock-time temporal structures in organizing. Temporal tensions are also emergent, sparked by particular power struggles, interests, priorities, and agendas that influence decisions on how partners use time within the prevailing temporal structures. Moreover, temporal tensions are interrelated, situated, and contextual, as shown in the ways informants identify and articulate their experiences around

them, and intertwined with how actors relate to organizational phenomena and events. Finally, temporal tensions are pervasive, multi-level phenomena, spanning across the societal, inter-organizational, intra-organizational, interpersonal, and individual levels.

The complicated character of temporal tensions needs to be taken into serious, explicit account, and the analytical framework depicted here can be useful. Analytically breaking down the components of temporal tensions and gaining an in-depth understanding of how actors perceive the tensions' character, roots, manifestations, and implications is pivotal for successfully addressing them. Achieving a long-term, serious commitment to achieving sustainable solutions can be a complex, long, and slow process that requires shifting taken-for-granted temporal structures and assumptions. Efforts can be directed toward promoting a generative interplay among the temporal tensions within partnerships, as well as between temporal structures with foreseeable and well-defined temporal horizons. Such efforts can promote sustainability with the open-ended, abstract, and rather eternal character, which is connected to a long-term horizon and an unforeseeable distant future.

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ARTICLE 3: TOWARDS A CONCEPT OF COLLABORATIVE MODEL FOR SUSTAINABILITY FOR NGOS: AN APPROACH OF TEMPORAL DIVERSITY

Abstract

This article introduces the notion of a *collaborative model for sustainability* for NGOs in the context of NGO-business partnerships for sustainability and combines it with a temporal approach grounded in the predominantly temporal character of sustainability. The overall aim is to conceptually examine how a temporal approach, which emphasizes the creation of *value for sustainability* and the operationalization of the neglected qualitative elements of the distant future of sustainability, can enhance understanding of collaborative efforts to achieve sustainable solutions. The article's main contribution lies in introducing *a theoretical perspective of temporal diversity* to the study of NGO-business partnerships. It does so by integrating an approach of *organizing time*, which primarily focuses on planning approaches as expressed in temporal structuring of actionable time horizons, with an approach of *engaging temporality*, which primarily focuses on eliciting temporal explorations around the future possibilities for sustainability. The article suggests that this integration, by capturing the contextual and qualitatively different temporal elements of sustainability, may have important implications for practice—and may lead to more successful and aligned efforts to address sustainability collaboratively through temporally sensitive, longer-term, and more future-focused cross-sector partnerships.

"In the form of time is to be found the form of living" (Jaques, 1982:129)

Introduction

In recent years, a discourse has developed within intergovernmental and governmental organizations, civil society, business, and academia that emphasizes that single organizations are unable to contribute to the achievement of sustainability without adopting collaborative mindsets and practices that aim to co-create significant societal value (Pedersen, Lüdeke-Freund, Henriques, & Seitanidi, 2020). However, we still lack effective collaborative models that can address sustainability challenges at multiple scales (Ibid). An organizational model that is increasingly employed to address sustainability challenges cooperatively is cross-sector collaboration, which often involves partnerships between NGOs and businesses (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a & b; Doh, Tashman & Benischke., 2019), hereafter called NBSPs—that is, NGO-business sustainability partnerships.

However, NBSPs have been criticized for not living up to their sustainability promises, as often they do not result in deep sustainability-oriented changes at the organizational or societal levels (Dahan, Doh, Oetzel & Yaziji, 2010). Moreover, corporate sustainability strategies, within which NBSPs are embedded from the business "side," have also been criticized for their predominantly instrumental rationale that prioritizes the creation of economic value and reduces both sustainability to a measurable quality and NBSPs to "business cases" (Painter-Morland & ten Bos, 2016; Johnsen, 2020; Hahn, Figge, Pinkse & Preuss, 2017). Furthermore, corporate short-termism (Laverty, 1996) and the corresponding short-term orientation of NBSPs (Dahan et al., 2010) conflict with the tenets of sustainability: the long-term vision (Austin & Seitanidi, 2014; Gray & Purdy, 2018) and the serious consideration of time (Slawinski & Bansal, 2012, 2015; Bansal & DesJardine, 2014).

This article thus introduces the notion of a *collaborative model for sustainability* for NGOs and their NBSPs. It combines this model with a temporal perspective, which is central to the concept of sustainability, with the overall aim to examine the generative interplay between NGOs, organizing through NBSPs, and the future-oriented temporality of sustainability. In doing so, the article lays the foundations for a *collaborative model for sustainability* for NGOs, which employs a temporal approach that can enhance understanding of NBSPs and their potential to achieve sustainable solutions. The paper sees collaborative models for sustainability as abstractions of sustainability strategies, arguing that such abstractions are useful for describing the rationale behind creating *value for sustainability* and for envisioning alternative possible future ways of creating such value.

It should be noted that the term value for sustainability is qualitatively different from the term *sustainable value* (Hart & Milstein, 2003), which has been used by corporate sustainability and cross-sector partnership scholars. This article sees *value for sustainability* as having a broad, intrinsic temporal character. It is value that relates to long-term time horizons in organizing processes and structures, but also value that is inherently future-oriented towards securing intergenerational equity—a temporal notion at the heart of sustainability—and entangled with qualitatively different ways of seeing, representing, and enacting the future (Augustine, Soderstrom, Milner & Weber, 2019; Hernes & Schultz, 2020). More specifically, the collaborative model for sustainability for NGOs conceived in this article sees the creation of value for sustainability as deriving *inter alia* from two fundamental elements. On the one hand, it emerges through strong, deep, and lasting collaborative relations; on the other hand, it comes about through reflexive (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002) and reflective (Hernes & Schultz, 2020) temporal organizing, which both accounts for and goes beyond the prevalent focus on the need for structuring longer time horizons. This need has been emphasized in the extant literature (Gray & Purdy, 2018; Slawinski & Bansal, 2015; Bansal & DesJardine, 2014). Going beyond

the dominant focus on temporal structures involves embracing the ambiguity associated with the distant future (Augustine et al., 2019; Hernes & Schultz, 2020) of sustainability, as well as developing a temporally sensitive sustainability vision with a long-term strategic orientation.

Scholars have called for research at the intersection of cross-sector collaboration, organizing models, and sustainability, highlighting the need for an integrative perspective that can enable the development of stronger sustainability initiatives (Pedersen et al., 2020). Moreover, scholars have argued that putting time at the center of organizational theorizing can enhance both organizational and societal future outcomes over the long term (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014). Responding to these calls, the paper asks: *"How can we conceive of a collaborative model for sustainability for NGOs in temporal terms through which we can better examine, understand, enact, and utilize the relationship between time and sustainability, and in particular the significance of the inherent future orientation of sustainability for organizing through NGO-business partnerships?"* The article addresses this question by employing some initial conceptual proposals, aspiring to pave the way for further research and practical considerations. The conceptual foundation of this temporal approach draws on interpretative and situated analyses of time within organization studies, focusing on the notions of temporal structuring (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002) and temporal work (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013), as well as on conceptualizations of distant futures (Augustine et al., 2019) and temporal distancing (Hernes & Schultz, 2020).

In applying the collaborative model to the study of NGOs in the context of NBSPs, the article makes five main assertions. First, it views collaborative models as "model-like" descriptions in two senses: in the scientific sense, where they are concerned with both theory and practice to allow for experimentation, and in the Weberian sense, where they refer to abstract, ideal types. The article thus views collaborative models as abstractions of strategies that can embody multiple mediating roles, accounting for not only how the organization

operates (descriptive model), but also how—in the ideal sense—the organization wants the future to be (ideal model). Second, it calls for an investigation of the relationship between novel collaborative models for sustainability, such as NBSPs and the general NGO collaborative model, and the possibilities for innovative synergies. Third, it grounds the collaborative model in a notion of value creation that spans organizational boundaries. It thus has the potential to advance our still limited understanding of whether and how NBSPs can create *value for sustainability* with and for stakeholders, as well as society at large (Pedersen et al., 2020). Fourth, as NBSPs are challenged by tensions that can lead to coordination challenges, distrust, and even project termination and failure (Kourula & Laasonen, 2010, Bryson, Crosby & Stone, 2015; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Rondinelli & London, 2003), the article asserts that a collaborative models mindset may provide partners with a common language, and thus greater clarity and alignment, as businesses are deeply concerned with value creation. Finally, the article promotes more consideration of NGOs' position in NBSPs, due to a relatively asymmetrical focus of research on the business side of these partnerships (Shumate, Hsieh, & O'Connor, 2018; Seitanidi & Ryan, 2007; Dahan et al., 2010).

In putting forward a collaborative models perspective, the paper employs a temporal lens, returning to the original meaning of sustainability. Importantly, the concept of time is fundamental to the notion of sustainability, which has been defined as the capacity to endure and flourish indefinitely (Slawinski & Bansal, 2012; Jay, Sorerstorm & Grant, 2017; Schaltegger, Hansen & Lüdeke-Freund, 2016), and as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UN General Assembly, 1987). Relatedly, from a development logic, sustainability is seen as an ongoing process (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015) that aims at securing intergenerational equity rather than an end-product; it also concerns long future time horizons (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014) and an ambiguous distant future (Augustine et al, 2019; Hernes & Schultz, 2020). Moreover, the

centrality of time is also implied in the urgent character that we often ascribe to sustainability challenges, and urgency requires a rethinking of the logic of organizing to achieve at-speed sustainable solutions (Pedersen et al., 2020).

Although the temporal dimension of sustainability was stressed already in one of the earliest conceptualizations of sustainable value creation (see Hart and Milstein, 2003), it remains rather under-developed (Cardoni, Kiseleva, & Taticchi, 2020). For example, while corporate sustainability studies have connected sustainability with time horizons by stressing that sustainable value creation concerns the short, medium, and long term (Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013), they do not provide deep insights into how organizations can adopt long-term time horizons and future orientation in practice—or how they can align competing temporal demands in a timely manner. Exceptions are studies that focus on temporal tensions in the context of corporate sustainability and hybrid organizing, which have shown how organizations can develop capabilities to negotiate, accommodate, and manage temporal tensions (see Slawinski & Bansal, 2012, 2015, 2017; Reinecke & Ansari, 2015, Sharma & Bansal, 2017; Slawinski, Pinkse, Busch & Banerjee, 2017). The usefulness of these insights notwithstanding, few studies focus on NBSPs (see Sharma & Bansal, 2017), while no studies focus on NGOs. Such a focus would be fruitful, considering that in complex settings of inter-organizational collaboration that give voice to interests and perspectives of diverse societal stakeholders, short-term versus long-term tensions tend to become even more salient (Dille & Söderlund, 2011; Jay et al., 2017).

Undoubtedly, the focus on temporal structures, such as the temporal depth of strategies and the sets of time horizons they include (Schultz & Hernes, 2019), is fundamentally important, for these structures consist of plans, goals, projects, and deadlines that define the durations and sequences of an actionable domain of activities related to sustainability. Yet, as this article posits, the temporality of sustainability also relates to realms that are not immediately actionable, concerning both distant events that are beyond the scope of partners' current

temporal structures (Hernes & Schultz, 2020) and a general, distant future characterized by ambiguity and radical uncertainty (Augustine et al., 2019). Thus, the relationship between time and sustainability involves but also extends beyond the short *versus* long time horizon tension, raising additional and qualitatively different concerns among organizational actors and partners that are not captured by current organizational practices (Augustine et al., 2019). Such concerns may reflect the values, beliefs, desires, hopes, and fears of organizational members about the distant future of sustainability, which can be utilized to see problems and opportunities that do not fit existing frameworks (Ibid).

The main contribution of the article lies in introducing a *perspective of temporal diversity* in *NGO collaborative models for sustainability*. This perspective embraces the temporal diversity and future orientation of sustainability and is centered around the notion of creating *value for sustainability* through NBSPs. The *collaborative model* conception that complements the notion of value for sustainability is a heuristic tool that helps to examine how NGOs describe, analyze, manage, and communicate all aspects of creating value for sustainability. This perspective includes a *theoretical framework of temporal diversity* that can be used to more closely examine the temporal dimensions of value creation for sustainability. It can also provide insight into how actors attend to temporal tensions that emerge in such processes, as well as, importantly, how actors address the future in their everyday activities while they try to create *value for sustainability* (a central question that surfaces in both the literature review and in the second article of this dissertation). This *theoretical framework of temporal diversity* integrates an approach of *organizing time*, as expressed in planning approaches that concern the temporal structuring of actionable time horizons, with an approach of *engaging temporality*, as expressed in interpretative time approaches that focus primarily on eliciting the temporality of sustainability. Examples of these approaches include collective explorations of what might be possible in the future, what is currently at stake, and what has

happened in the past in relation to sustainability. Thus, the *theoretical framework of temporal diversity* advanced in this paper transcends considerations for structuring longer time horizons, on which extant literature has primarily focused. It is argued that the integration of the *organizing time – engaging temporality* approaches, which together capture the contextual and qualitatively different temporal elements of sustainability, can lead to a better understanding of NBSPs and more successful efforts to address sustainability in practice. That is, this integration enables the creation of temporally sensitive, longer-term, and more future-oriented NBSPs. The theoretical perspective of temporal diversity proposed in this article builds on a conceptual framework developed in a subsequent section, drawing on organizational theory as well as the concepts of temporal structuring (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002), temporal work (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013), temporal distancing (Hernes & Schultz, 2020), and distant futures (Augustine et al., 2019). These insights were chosen for their potential to constructively and diversely engage with the dominant question surfaced in the literature review and the second article in this dissertation, namely how to effectively address the future in relation to sustainability through NBSPs. In tandem, these perspectives can provide a strong foundation for developing an understanding of temporal diversity in relation to collaborative sustainability models for NGOs.

The article is organized as follows. The literature review section first embarks on revisiting theoretical insights on time and temporality in relation to the concept of sustainability, constructing it as a temporal concept. Because NBSPs are embedded within corporate sustainability strategies from the business side, the review covers approaches to the creation of sustainable value in corporate sustainability. It also reviews how time and temporality have been viewed within the cross-sector partnerships literature. Next, the article presents a conceptual framing that subsequently informs the theoretical perspective of temporal diversity in relation to

collaborative models for sustainability for NGOs. The conceptual framework is followed by the presentation and analysis of the proposed theoretical framework and a related discussion.

Literature Review

The multi-temporal character of sustainability

The universal philosophical idea of sustainability is inextricably linked to the concept of time, particularly with the future. Sustainability expresses the fundamental normative idea that societies should exist over time, remaining capable of stable, just, and lasting social, economic, and environmentally-responsible development in the future. Scholars have argued that a temporal perspective on sustainability is a prerequisite for understanding the interplay between these three sustainability-related dimensions—environmental, social, and economic—but they also warned that conceptions of time as linear and homogeneous do not enable this understanding (Held, 2001). Sustainability can be entangled with the past, the present, and the future in various ways. For example, the present can be seen as the locus of action that creates the conditions for sustainable development in the future, or future sustainability challenges can be seen as unintended consequences of past decisions, social structures, and lifestyles (Beck, 2006). Thus, time in relation to sustainability does not concern a mere succession of three isolable dimensions—past, present and future—but an amalgam of qualitatively distinct experiences and perceptions of how past, present, and future connect to each other in various interrelations (Reinecke & Ansari, 2017).

Organizational scholars have defined sustainability as the capacity to endure and flourish (Jay et al., 2017), and they have stressed that securing intergenerational equity lies at the foundations of sustainability (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014). Specifically, the time horizons of sustainability must also embrace the needs of future generations, a normative starting point that requires organizing action with a “far-reaching” mode of thinking (UN General Assembly,

1987). Enacting such norms as intergenerational equity requires a fundamental reassessment of the relationship between organizing for sustainability and time, in favor of an explicit consideration of temporal aspects in organizing (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014). In addition to this normative link, time is also related to sustainability at the ontological level. Time becomes apparent in discussions that point to eco-systems limits, as well as discussions that highlight the urgency with which humanity needs to act to be able to address such sustainability challenges as climate change, loss of biodiversity, poverty, epidemics, and violent conflicts. Moreover, sustainability-related damages—for example, the degradation of soil, groundwater, or ozone layers—are irreversible, and the process of finding solutions is so complex that it might require a longer time-scale than the timeframe of a generation or a lifetime (Held, 2001).

It becomes clear, then, that sustainability challenges are complex, contextually-specific temporal phenomena pertaining to different temporal interdependencies. These interdependencies can involve, for example, the rhythms of nature; the speed, synchronization, and timing of human activity; the temporal depth of time horizons; and various influences from past experiences and future expectations (Held, 2001). Thus, time in relation to sustainability is not one entity to be understood, but rather a mixture of qualitatively different time-related elements that need to be taken into serious consideration by adopting a perspective of temporal diversity (Ibid).

Corporate sustainability and the temporal elements of sustainable value

Corporate sustainability has been defined as the ability of businesses to manage intertemporal trade-offs by securing their short-term financial needs and a long-term income stream without compromising others' ability to meet their future needs (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014; Slawinski & Bansal, 2015). In an effort to transcend their narrow for-profit aims, businesses have employed the notion of *sustainable value proposition* to all of their stakeholders. This value

proposition accounts for the ways in which they create, deliver, and capture economic value—while they maintain, regenerate, or develop natural, social, and economic capital beyond their organizational boundaries, over the short, medium, and long term (Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013; Schaltegger et al., 2016). However, while the corporate sustainability literature has stressed that sustainability is about providing solutions for both the short-term and the long-term (Schaltegger et al., 2016; Slawinski & Bansal, 2015), it is rare to find concrete conceptualizations that take into account the multifaceted relevance of time in practice and extend beyond the short-term/long term dominant tension (Cardoni et al., 2020).

In general terms, corporate sustainability supports the strategic, systematic, and ongoing creation of environmental and social activities termed "business cases," as integrated elements of business activities (Schaltegger, Lüdeke-Freund & Hansen, 2012). From a business perspective, NBSPs are such business cases. However, conceptions of business cases and related practices have been criticized for elevating economic value above social and environmental value (Hahn et al., 2018; Johnsen, 2020; Painter-Morland & ten Bos, 2016). To be sure, other scholars have rejected the profit-seeking line of critique, arguing instead that companies deal with sustainability to secure legitimacy in response to societal pressures (Schaltegger & Hörisch, 2017). Other scholars have endorsed a values-based approach to business cases in the realm of development cooperation, arguing for an approach that considers both short-term profits and long-term sustainability. However, they also stress that development cooperation instruments may be limited in their temporal scope and impact, as they often involve partners for a short time period (Breuer, Lüdeke-Freund & Brick, 2018). In addition, these scholars draw attention to the different speed of business actors and policy-makers, urging for alignment and claiming that business needs faster and more flexible frameworks with which to engage. The following section will further review relevant temporal features in the literature on cross-sector partnerships.

Time and cross-sector partnerships for sustainability

Overall, the cross-sector partnerships literature has generated useful, although only general, insights on the importance of temporal aspects of NBSPs. It has not examined how issues pertaining to the future orientation of sustainability could be addressed through an explicit temporal lens. Scholars have warned that NGO-business partnerships suffer from temporal mismatches: NGOs' development work is defined by long-standing social issues and efforts to address long-term societal needs, while companies tend to focus on short-term economic performance associated with market pressures and shareholders' impatience for financial returns, which come at the expense of sustainability (Berger, Cunningham, & Drumwright, 2004). Temporal mismatches also exist between decision styles, as NGOs are often more time-consuming, whereas companies typically rely on faster strategies (Ibid). Temporal tensions in partnerships also arise due to their short duration (Babiak & Thibault, 2009), and partners try to address them with focused projects, fast pace, and early stakeholder engagement (Rondinelli & London, 2003). Sharma and Bansal (2017) found that building timeliness capacity and being willing to ask for extra time can be crucial for partnership success (Sharma & Bansal, 2017), while other scholars have stressed that partners possibly need to renegotiate time horizons along the way (Gray & Purdy, 2018). Other scholars have argued that NBSPs are often opportunistic initiatives that do not result in deep transformational change, due to their short-term project character and inherent differences between businesses and NGOs with regard to values, missions, governance, strategy, and structure (Dahan, Doh, Oetzel, & Yaziji, 2010). Nevertheless, they also argued, albeit without specifying further, that some projects can form the basis for deeper, longer-term collaborations, which may result in greater impact and more fundamental changes in both businesses and NGOs (Ibid). Moreover, Austin and Seitanidi (2014) emphasized that although collaboration can generate benefits in the short term, sustainability requires a longer-term vision, so a successful mindset thinks in terms of long-term

value creation (Austin & Seitanidi, 2014). Austin (2000) has argued that partnership longevity presupposes engagement in continuous learning and a balanced exchange of value between partners (Austin, 2000). Yet, other researchers have argued that a long-term orientation can also create tensions, as it places additional burden on NBSPs and requires partners to commit to continuous efforts (Berger et al., 2004).

In this section, the article has explicated the temporal character of sustainability, revealing a prevailing concern with the challenges regarding the management of the future in relation to sustainability within extant literature on corporate sustainability and cross-sector partnerships for sustainability. Because this article promotes an explicit temporal lens to understand how a collaborative model for sustainability can produce and enact sustainable futures, in what follows the article turns to organizational theory and constructs a conceptual framework to inform this temporal lens. In doing so, the article lays the foundations for a perspective of temporal diversity, which entails combining planning approaches, which involve temporal structuring of actionable time horizons, with approaches, which are based on more interpretative understandings of time and new qualitative ways of seeing the role of the future in organizing. It is argued that given the intrinsic temporal character of sustainability and the temporal ambiguity within NBSPs (in the second article of this dissertation), the development of a holistic framework that takes into consideration the multifaceted character of time can enhance understanding of organizing for sustainability through NBSPs, while it has important implications for practice. The perspective of temporal diversity in relation to collaborative models for sustainability in NGOs is informed by the notions of temporal structuring (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002) and temporal work (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013), as well as newer notions that enable nuanced understandings of the future, namely temporal distancing (Hernes & Schultz, 2020) and distant futures (Augustine et al., 2019).

Conceptual framing

Arguably, every organizational activity is future-oriented and organizational actors produce and enact futures in numerous ways (Hernes, 2014; Wenzel, Krämer, Koch & Reckwitz, 2020). This framework focuses on selected insights from organization studies on how organizations can address the future by implicitly or explicitly viewing and using time as a medium in their efforts to deal with the uncertainties and ambiguities of an unknowable future. Throughout its history, organizational research has reported a plethora of increasingly sophisticated planning practices that construct the future as a temporal category that can be anticipated and controlled (Wenzel et al, 2020). However, organizational experiences and prevalent discourses alike increasingly cast the future as more open-ended, pluralistic, and problematic—as it is also the case with sustainability. So, organizations start realizing that planning approaches need to be complemented with a deeper engagement with a variety of alternative "future-making practices" that are based on a more interpretative understanding of time as temporality (Ibid). This article understands temporality as the dynamic aspect of being in its becoming, changing, and perishing, which mixes immediate experience in the unfolding present with conceptual and theoretical engagement with the past and the future. Past, present and future become interconnected and integral in every process as an ever-changing unity of different aspects of them.

Several studies have conceptualized how organizations "create futures" in the present by connecting past, present, and future in different ways. For example, Garud, Schildt, and Lant (2014) examined the role of projective storytelling; Gioia, Corley and Fabbri (2002) examined future perfect thinking, i.e. envisioning the future as having already occurred; Hussenot and Missonier (2016) examined how the organization may be defined as a structure of past and anticipated events; Stjerne and Svejenova (2016) have proposed a temporality perspective on temporariness; and Suddaby, Foster, and Trank (2010) examined rhetorical history as a source

of competitive advantage, to name only a few. The conceptual framework that this section unpacks focuses on four interrelated perspectives that collectively provide a solid foundation for the development of the perspective of temporal diversity, which this paper envisions as an important perspective in the study of collaborative models for sustainability in NGOs. First, this framework revisits the notion of temporal structuring (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002), which is grounded in the important insight that organizational members enact time through their everyday activities. Second, the framework explores the notion of temporal work (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013), which emphasizes the importance of linking interpretations of the past, present, and future in constructing strategic accounts that enable concrete strategic choice and action. Third, the framework examines the notion of temporal distancing (Hernes & Schultz, 2020), according to which organizational members may transform temporal structures by addressing distant events through their situated activity. Fourth, the framework includes Augustine and colleagues' (2019) notion of the distant future as a new qualitative way of seeing the future in collective efforts.

Experiencing time through processes of temporal structuring

Orlikowski and Yates (2002) have advanced an understanding of time as an enacted phenomenon within organizations. According to their perspective, time is experienced by organizational members through their engagement in ongoing processes of temporal structuring (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002). Organizational members, through their everyday activity, recurrently produce, reproduce, adjust, and occasionally change temporal structures, such as schedules or deadlines, which they experience as "time." In turn, these shared and multiple objectified structures shape the temporal aspects of the actors' practices, both enabling and constraining action. Through temporal structuring, organizational members implicitly or explicitly make sense of, regulate, coordinate, and account for their activities (Ibid). This

perspective emphasizes the active role of organizational members in shaping the temporal contours of their organizations in situated practices, while also acknowledging the structural constraints of taken-for-granted, institutionally reproduced—but potentially changeable—temporal norms, such as interim statements or deadlines. Interestingly, the more that particular temporal structures become closely associated with certain social practices, the stronger their influence and persistence (Ibid). This implies that actors tend to reproduce previously enacted temporal structures, while change can be both rare and challenging, requiring the investment of explicit and considerable efforts (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002).

Strategy-making through processes of temporal work

Kaplan and Orlikowski (2013) have argued that organizational actors' competing interpretations of what might be possible in the future, what is currently at stake, and what has happened in the past hinder organizations from constructing strategic accounts that enable concrete strategic choice and action towards the future. These scholars found that the ability to construct such strategic accounts and thereby enact new visions for the future requires processes of *temporal work*, which constitute a central practice of strategy-making. These processes entail ongoing efforts to settle on coherent (logically connected), plausible (matching organizational, technological, and sectoral contingencies), and acceptable (conflict-reducing) interpretations of how desirable futures connect meaningfully to particular understandings of the past and specific assessments of the present. Settling on such interpretations presupposes efforts to reimagine the future, rethink the past, and reconsider present concerns and pressures—and that these efforts may be challenging to achieve in the short term. External pressures, deadlines, and other structures may affect settling on strategic decisions, which leads to additional temporal work that may cause new breakdowns in interpretations. Thus, temporal work is an ongoing process, as settlements weaving together particular past, present, and future interpretations are context

specific, open to later reinterpretation, and therefore, always provisional. Nevertheless, the more intensively that actors engage in such processes, the more likely it is that strategies depart from the status quo. Intensive engagement in negotiating and resolving divergent interpretations of past, present, and future may include a variety of practices—for example, the use of analogies and metaphors, framing experiments, "strange conversations," creative re-combinations of temporal interpretations, and explicit deliberation of problems and priorities (Kaplan and Orlikowski, 2013).

Constructing alternative futures through temporal distancing

Hernes and Schultz (2020) have conceptualized how actors may construct alternative futures in their ongoing activity through a process of "temporal distancing," which entails constructing and reconstructing distant and particularly significant events that relate to but ultimately lie beyond the temporal structures within which actors operate. In this view, events are defined as distant because they lie beyond the scope of actors' temporal structures—not because they are chronologically distant. In addressing distant events, actors are able to reflect collectively upon the temporal structures in which they are embedded and these structures' broader implications, which may thereby change these structures. Importantly, changes in temporal structures—for example, changes in schedules or deadlines—may induce changes in such temporal characteristics as the pace, rhythm, timing, speed, duration, time horizons, and temporal orientation of events and activities organized by enacted temporal structures. The process of addressing distant events is twofold. On the one hand, through this process actors translate distant events into their ongoing temporal structures, asking, for example, how a set of actions would unfold if actors were to face certain distant events right now. One the other hand, through this process actors also project their ongoing activity onto distant events, asking, for example, how a set of actions should unfold if actors faced certain distant events in the future. Different

techniques, such as scenario planning, can be employed to spark the imagination about future events and prepare for adjusting or changing the existing temporal structures in the sudden occurrence of distant events. Distant events may be singular or exemplary, and they may be interrelated; thus, they are not always analytically distinct (Ibid). Singular events are unique, distinctive, and highly consequential events from which other events may evolve. Singular events provide motive for action and help actors to reflect on how things were in the past or how they may become in the future. Exemplary events are more frequent, general, and representative of a larger group of events. They illustrate trajectories over time by showing interconnectedness between broader sets of events (Hernes and Schultz, 2020).

Imagining future possibilities in distant futures

Augustine and colleagues (2019) have developed the concept of the "distant future" to uncover a qualitatively different way of seeing and enacting the future in collective efforts (Augustine et al., 2019). The distant future is defined by psychological, not chronological, distance. It concerns the imagination of fictional, radical, or utopian future states that depart sharply from collective beliefs, conventional practices, and current understandings of what can be possible. When enacting the distant future, people focus on the desirability of largely hypothetical and abstract future possibilities under conditions of ambiguity. In contrast, the near future is psychologically near, concerning the imagination of future states with the purpose of forming expectations and goals that can serve as concrete guides for action. When enacting the near future, people focus on the feasibility of time horizons and the practicalities of accomplishing them under conditions of uncertainty (Augustine et al., 2019). Management research on future-oriented action has arguably developed around problems of the near future—what we usually term the future time horizon—and not on the phenomenological quality of the future, as captured in the notion of the distant future.

Studying the distant-future phenomenon of geoengineering, these scholars found that, despite their ambiguity, distant futures could motivate collective action by taking on an "as if" reality. An "as if" reality is defined as a future state in which people begin to see themselves through their imagination, and which in due course can orient action towards *or* away from this future state. By taking on an "as if" reality, the distant future gradually becomes more concrete and credible, and therefore more relevant, near, specific, and actionable. This happens through a dialectical process of explicit deliberation between increasingly differentiated groups of actors, who use progressively more concrete, detailed, and nuanced concepts. These concepts draw upon the cosmologies and ideals of particular societal-level imaginaries[27] that depict the distant future as an ideal or feared state. Augustine and colleagues (2019) posit that while cosmologies act as symbolic resources for the creation and interpretation of images of the future, ideals are aspirational and vest people emotionally, sparking and guiding the process of imagination and action. Importantly, this dialectical process also entails the development of and the ongoing contestation among increasingly differentiated domain imaginaries (in this case, particular to geoengineering), each representing different degrees and nuances of critical or favorable stances on the particular envisioned distant-future practice. Because domain imaginaries hinge on societal imaginaries, the dialectical process described above does not seem to produce a consensus or compromise for implementing the distant future at the domain level. Rather, it creates an ecology of domain imaginaries that construct distant futures "as expressions of values, beliefs and desires, giving shape to hopes and fears and making sense of moral ambiguities" (Augustine et al., 2019: 1953).

[27] Imaginaries are deep cultural structures that encompass belief systems regarding the foundational premises for making sense of the world and core assumptions about the course of history (basic cosmologies), as well as ideals about the self, social group, and humanity (moral basis for evaluating action). Augustine et al., 2019.

Thus, distant futures may not produce immediate action, but they have generative effects in that "they expand a diverging set of possibilities […] and they introduce higher-level principles and assumptions that can unsettle conventionally agreed upon goals" (Ibid:1953). This expressive role of the distant future can be particularly relevant for seeing problems and opportunities that do not fit existing frameworks, for envisioning alternatives that critique the status quo, and for enacting collective efforts for radical change, such as solutions to grand challenges, radical innovation, and disruptive entrepreneurship. Thus, the generative effect of prompting the distant future by drawing upon abstract concepts that relate to broader theories, principles, ideologies, and desired identities may not be the realization of a particular envisioned future as such. Instead, the generative effect of prompting the distant future may be the changes it sparks by expressing normative critiques and offering alternatives to the present state that can become treated as "as if" realities. The main argument of Augustine and colleagues (2019) is that the (psychologically) distant future may be consequential for creating the actual future, and being aware of the differences in processes of constructing different futures may open up new possibilities for organizing and understanding new phenomena. In what follows, the paper conceptualizes a temporal approach for collaborative models for sustainability for NGOs, building on the above conceptual framing.

Towards a perspective of temporal diversity in NGO collaborative models for sustainability

NGOs are recognized around the world for their efforts in addressing socioeconomic and environmental sustainability challenges around such issues as poverty, access to education, water scarcity, and climate change. These efforts include mobilizing the NGO's internal resources and capabilities and while engaging extensively in diverse, broad, and multiple collaborative relations with a variety of stakeholders at the local and international level. These stakeholders can be volunteers, beneficiaries and local communities, donors and grant givers

such as the state, foundations and business, other NGOs, and more recently different types of business partners. Any socioeconomic or environmental value for sustainability that emerges from these efforts is created within and through these relations. The theoretical perspective that this paper develops is centered on the notion of creating *value for sustainability* through NBSPs (that will be developed and defined in the following sub-section), while the *collaborative model* conception complements the notion of value for sustainability as a heuristic tool. This tool can help to examine how organizations describe, analyze, manage, and communicate all the aspects of creating value for sustainability. In what follows, it is argued that such a tool can be particularly useful for NGOs and business who may have a different understanding of value creation in relation to sustainability. The next section elucidates potential differences in this understanding.

From sustainable value to value for sustainability

This article develops a theoretical framework for *a collaborative model for sustainability* for NGOs in temporal terms, which aims to inspire further conceptual and empirical work. An NGO collaborative model for sustainability is conceived here as a heuristic tool that can be used to examine the temporal elements of the rationale and architecture of operations and the practices that create value for sustainability through NBSPs. The collaborative model construct, with its explicit focus on the notion of value creation, can also be of practical use in organizing for sustainability through NBSPs. It is worth focusing on the value creation logic in relation to NBSPs for several reasons. One of these reasons is the fact that the underlying value creation system and rationale of an NGO differs considerably from that of a business. Even more, the character of NGO engagement with sustainability interventions indicates that there is a need to focus on other types of value than only that of money—the value of quality, the value of society, and the value of life.

In the business world, framing value creation as sustainable has signified a shift: where value creation once centered on generating value for customers and economic profits for shareholders, it now centers on doing so, while adopting strategies and practices that contribute to a more sustainable world. Accordingly, corporate sustainability has been defined as the ability of businesses to manage intertemporal trade-offs by securing their short-term financial needs and a long-term income stream without compromising others' ability to meet their future needs (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014). Strategies for managing intertemporal trade-offs without compromising others' future needs are driven by the idea that multi-pronged sustainable value (environmental, social, and economic) is best created through stakeholder inclusion and collaboration over a longer time period. Thus, in this case, time has a crucial role in value creation, given considerations about chronological time horizons that define the end-points of temporal structures of strategies and practices; at the same time, value is still primarily sought to be created in economic terms.

In contrast, a temporal perspective of a collaborative model for sustainability for NGOs centers on *value for sustainability*, which refers to social, environmental, and economic value that is co-created over a longer period of time. Value for sustainability is captured beyond organizational boundaries and maintained over time—even after the organizations' intervention is completed—to the benefit of local communities, future generations, and society at large. To assess such value, a collaborative model for sustainability concentrates on temporal notions implicit in sustainability—for example, intergenerational equity, long temporal depths, distant future states, distant events, and understandings of how the future connects with present concerns and interpretations of the past.

Defining a collaborative model for sustainability in temporal terms

Having distinguished between conceptions of *sustainable value* and *value for sustainability*, this article conceptualizes a collaborative model for sustainability for NGOs in temporal terms, as part of an integrative framework of NBSP management. Expanding on the notion of sustainable value in the corporate sustainability domain (Schaltegger et al., 2016), a collaborative model for sustainability for NGOs is defined as a model that helps to describe, analyze, manage, and communicate the following five aspects of value-driven, sustainable partnerships. First, what value an NBSP aspires and commits to create. This requires specifying how social, environmental, and/or economic value is *value for sustainability*, i.e. how it is captured beyond organizational boundaries and *maintained over time*. Second, *with whom* (both within and outside of organizational boundaries) value is created. Third, how NBSP collaboration is *sustained.* Fourth, *for whom* within and outside organizational boundaries value is created. Fifth, how (through which processes) distinct value for sustainability (defined in the previous steps) is created and delivered *over the short, medium, and long term*—and how it is captured and *maintained* in *envisioned futures*, to the benefit of local communities, *future generations,* and societies at large.

This is a holistic temporal approach to collaborative models for NGOs that aims to enable the more explicit incorporation of temporal considerations into organizing for sustainability through NBSPs. Thus, the definition of a collaborative model for sustainability reflects both multiple temporal dimensions of value creation for sustainability, which have been analytically under-developed, and stakeholder relations—with a particular focus on external collaborations such as NBSPs. This definition is in line with the dominant external conception of value creation for sustainability (Cardoni et al., 2020). The multiple temporal dimensions of value creation for sustainability that the definition of a collaborative model for NGOs reflects include considerations about i) value created over the short, medium, and long term, ii) value

maintained over time, iii) value created through sustained collaboration, iv) what value for what (qualitatively different) futures, and v) benefits for future generations.

Moreover, the collaborative dimension of the above definition requires identifying stakeholders within and outside organizational boundaries and their contribution to value creation for sustainability. Thus, NGO collaborative models explicate the many collaborative relations among stakeholders that influence value creation for sustainability in an inclusive way. This requires developing and updating value propositions (i.e. promises of value to be created for sustainability) in cooperation with stakeholder groups, for all stakeholders involved, and for society more broadly. Besides clarifying what kind of value is (aimed to be) created for whom, the explicit inclusion of all stakeholders and their relations in NGO collaborative models helps to ensure that voice is given to stakeholder groups whose views are often underrepresented. Pedersen and colleagues (2020) draw attention to the problem of exclusion in NBSPs and conventional business-led sustainability interventions. Moreover, inclusion of stakeholder relations in the collaborative model necessarily incorporates the strategic consideration of the local contexts in which sustainability interventions are implemented. It also responds to the need for high levels of frequent community interaction proposed by scholars (Ibid). Finally, the inclusion of collaborative relations paves the way for a more integrative approach to understanding how NGOs collaborate with business through NBSPs.

Overall, the collaborative and temporal dimensions of this approach demonstrate how NBSPs create value for sustainability, as well as how such partnerships are aligned (or not) with the respective value creation logics of the NGO and the business. Thus, collaborative models serve as "guiding lights" for strategic decisions, visions, goal-setting, and partner relations and interactions. At the same time, they are informed by the practices and experiences that they instigate, which means they can reorient organizing based on contingencies that arise in the

process. In what follows, the paper will further develop the temporal dimension of the collaborative model for sustainability for NGOs.

Zooming in on the perspective of temporal diversity in a collaborative model for sustainability

In this conceptualization of a collaborative model for sustainability for NGOs in temporal terms, the first assertion is that there is a multifaceted relation between time and sustainability—and that acknowledging this relation has great potential for creating value for sustainability, particularly the potential for implementing diverse "future-making" strategies and practices. The complex integration of time with a collaborative models mindset highlights the "sustainable future-creating" power of operationalizing of time, and in particular of operationalizing the inherently future-oriented character of sustainability. While this article stresses the future orientation of sustainability, it maintains that organizational actors confront events in the present, which is their "the locus of reality" (Mead, 1932)—regardless of whether these events are emergent or probed, future or past, distant or near. The literature review, which focused on temporal aspects of corporate sustainability and cross-sector partnerships literatures, arguably surfaced one main question (reflected in the research question this paper asks), which could be phrased as follows: "How can we effectively address the future by making it more influential in how we organize for sustainability in the present?"

This article develops *a theoretical framework of temporal diversity*, which can be used to understand how organizations address this question in everyday activities that are oriented towards creating value for sustainability. This framework enables a close examination of all the temporal elements in the processes of value creation for sustainability, the temporal tensions that emerge in such processes, and the ways in which organizational members address them. The *theoretical framework of temporal diversity* integrates an approach of *organizing time* with an approach of *engaging temporality*, which I present in more detail in the following section. It

should be noted from the outset that the distinction between these two approaches is analytical and can be used to provide direction in examining related practices. In reality, practices that pertain to the two approaches intertwine, creating different constellations of temporal characteristics that are consequential for experience, cognition, and action. More specifically, *engaging temporality*, which concerns conceptually engaging the past, the present, and the future within or beyond the scope of temporal structures, may reproduce the same temporal structures or change them through temporal structuring. Such a process, then, *organizes time*, which in turn shapes practices of *engaging temporality*.

	ENGAGING TEMPORALITY	ORGANIZING TIME
WITHIN TEMPORAL STRUCTURES	Temporal Work	Temporal structuring
BEYOND TEMPORAL STRUCTURES	Temporal distancing	
	Employing distant futures	

Table 14: The theoretical framework of temporal diversity for the study of NBSPs

The "organizing time" approach

This approach sees time as the object of organizing for sustainability. *Organizing time* concerns explicit efforts to shape the forms and flow of time, such as the pace, speed, time horizon, rhythm, timing, synchronization, temporal orientation, and duration of events and activities within the plannable/actionable future. The forms and flow of time are shaped through the production and reproduction of temporal structures, which are the patterned recurring actions (e.g. bi-annual lessons-learned workshops), events (e.g. weekly meetings), and means (e.g. calendar schedules and deadlines) that organizational actors enact—and occasionally change—through situated activity (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002; Hernes & Schultz, 2020). This situated

activity includes the enactment of sustainability visions, strategies, goals, norms, rules, and collaborative models.

The declared—by partnership and corporate sustainability scholars alike—need to adopt longer-term temporal structures reflects an approach of *organizing time*. Long-term temporal structures can be conceptually understood as longer time horizons, which entail longer durations and future end-points/dates. Time horizons specify the exact chronological portions of the timeline—in both past and future—of concern to the organization (Bluedorn & Standifer, 2006). The future time horizons of strategies for sustainability concern the sequencing of periods and the durations, as expressed through plans, goals, deadlines, projects, programs, and performance indicators, which frame these strategies and aims as attainable (Schultz & Hernes, 2019). Thus, future time horizons mostly concern the chronological distance into the future that organizations include in their temporal structures. The acknowledged need to structure longer time horizons can be seen as part of a chronological clock-time approach to *organizing time*. Thus, this approach explicitly aims to enact temporal structures that shape long-term time horizons and lasting collaborative relations. A more qualitative approach within the *organizing time* approach is event-based temporal structuring, which uses the attainment of specific goals—instead of chronological end-points—as a motivating criterion. In practice, clock-time and event-time structures often intertwine. For example, a strategic plan includes both milestones and deadlines.

The "engaging temporality" approach

Engaging temporality concerns configuring the past, present, and future temporal dimensions in explicit or implicit ways that influence organizing for sustainability through collaborative models. *Engaging temporality* involves using different techniques and processes to (strategically or spontaneously) explore what might be possible in the future in light of what is currently at stake and what has happened in the past in relation to sustainability. More specifically, this

approach entails three distinct sets of processes: processes of temporal work (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013), processes of temporal distancing (Hernes & Schultz, 2020), and processes of creating "as if" realities (Augustine et al., 2019).

Engaging temporality treats the interrelation the past, the present, and the future as a medium through which organizational actors translate and address their realities as they deal with the uncertainties and ambiguities of the future (Hernes & Schultz, 2020). This approach understands temporality as temporal continuity. That is, instead of seeing the past, the present, and the future as isolable entities, it sees them as being inextricably bound and as conditioning each other (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Reinecke & Ansari, 2017). *Engaging temporality* is an interpretative approach that seeks to elicit both the future character and the temporality of sustainability, i.e. how sustainability relates to the past, the present, and the future. *Engaging temporality* may focus on all three dimensions, as, for example, in processes of temporal work that aim to align interpretations of the past, present, and future in order to achieve strategic leeway within the scope of temporal structures (Kaplan and Orlikowski, 2013). *Engaging temporality* may also focus on some combinations of the three dimensions. For example, it may concern trying to make sense of the present in view of the past or in view of the future, trying to imagine the future based on an analysis of past or present concerns, or reinterpreting the past in light of present concerns or possible futures. Moreover, *engaging temporality* may focus on one of these dimensions of time. Focusing on past, present, or future is captured by the notion of temporal focus, which places particular interest, emphasis, or importance on a particular temporal dimension (see Bluedorn and Stafinder, 2006). This article aims to demonstrate the importance of explicitly considering the future in relation to sustainability, bringing the notion of a future-oriented temporal focus to the center. Treating the future as more important (not more important than the present or past, but more important than one currently treats it) requires expanding the ways one may see the future of sustainability in collective efforts (Augustine et

al., 2019). This expanded view must acknowledge differences in a number of issues, such as in the limits on knowledge of the future (e.g. ambiguity vs. uncertainty) and in the level of abstraction with which organizational members approach it (abstract vs. concrete). Other differences concern how organizational members relate the future with the present and the past (continuity vs. isolation), the processes that condition the future (imagination vs. extrapolation), and criteria (feasibility vs. desirability) for the evaluation of the future (Ibid).

Because one of the central aims of this approach is to examine how organizational actors envision distant futures and to what extent they create shared meaning around such subjective representations of time in relation to sustainability, it is crucial to examine processes of collective deliberation. Deliberation fosters thinking about the interplay between action, sustainability, and time and temporality (for example, about the possible long-term consequences of present actions). It also sparks the imagination for new ways to address the future of sustainability. Here, scrutinizing the ways in which actors envision distant events that are beyond the scope of current temporal structures may enhance understanding of the processes that lead to sustainability-supporting changes in temporal structures (Hernes and Schultz, 2020). Efforts should be placed on understanding the significance of events for the actors and how they relate events to each other. In such analyses, the distinction between singular and exemplary events can be useful (Ibid). Moreover, the framework calls for an examination of how these events are translated into the current temporal structures (Ibid). For example, how do actors talk about what they would/could do if they faced a certain distant event now or in the future? Examining explicit deliberation among NGO actors and partners as they envision and problematize different aspects of the future can provide insights into how organizational members make the future more concrete and credible—and thus more influential for organizing for sustainability. This influence may result in changes in current temporal structures, in the preparedness level for addressing emergent and future distant events that are outside the scope

of current strategies (Hernes and Schultz, 2020), in the enactment of new strategies and visions (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013), and in the envisioning of alternative futures that express particular values, beliefs, and ideals (Augustine et al., 2019).

Moreover and importantly, the theoretical framework of temporal diversity presents an opportunity to examine the use of several temporal techniques by NGOs and partners. This calls for an examination of the temporality assumptions on which such techniques are based. For example, *sustainability-oriented organizational learning* uses past experiences to address present concerns, *sustainability impact assessment* aims to evaluate decision options by assessing future effects of strategic plans before they have even been formulated, *scenario techniques* seeks to both imagine the future on the basis of current concerns and needs (forecasting) and understand current concerns in the light of the future (backcasting), and so on. I present the main concepts of the theoretical framework of temporal diversity in collaborative models for sustainability for NGOs in Table 15, and then I proceed to further discussing the framework in the following section.

MAIN CONCEPTS	
Value for sustainability	Social, environmental, and economic value that is co-created collaboratively over a longer period of time, and which is captured beyond organizational boundaries and maintained over time, also after the organizations' intervention is completed, to the benefit of local communities, future generations and society at large.
Collaborative model for sustainability	A model that helps describing, analyzing, managing and communicating: 1. What value for sustainability an NBSP aspires and commits to create. 2. With whom within and outside organizational boundaries value for sustainability is created collaboratively. 3. How NBSP collaboration is sustained. 4. For whom within and outside organizational boundaries value for sustainability is created. 5. How distinct value for sustainability is created and delivered, over the short, medium, and long term and how it is captured and maintained in envisioned futures, to the benefit of local communities, future generations, and societies at large.
Temporality	The dynamic aspect of being in its becoming, changing and perishing, which mixes immediate experience in the unfolding present with conceptual and theoretical engagement with the past and the future, which then become interconnected and integral in every process as an ever-changing unity of different aspects of them
Temporal structures	The patterned recurring actions, events and means that organizational actors enact–and occasionally change - through their everyday practices
Temporal structuring (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002)	The process through which actors produce and reproduce a variety of temporal structures through their everyday action which in turn shape the temporal rhythm and form of their ongoing practices.
Temporal work (Kaplan & orlikowsi, 2013)	A central practice of strategy-making that entails ongoing efforts to settle on coherent, plausible and acceptable interpretations of how desirable futures connect meaningfully to particular understandings of the past and specific assessments of the present.
Temporal distancing (Hernes & Schultz, 2020)	Constructing and reconstructing distant and particularly significant events that relate to, but lie beyond the temporal structures within which actors operate, enabling collective reflections upon and change of the temporal structures in which actors are embedded.
Distant future (Augustine et al., 2019)	The future that is defined by psychological, not chronological distance, and which concerns the imagination of fictional, radical or utopian future states that depart sharply from collective beliefs, conventional practices and current understandings of what can be possible
The approach of temporal diversity	A theoretical framework for the examination of a collaborative model for sustainability for NGOs that integrates a perspective of organizing time with a perspective of employing temporality.
The "organizing time" perspective	This perspective sees time as an object of organizing for sustainability. It concerns explicit efforts at shaping the forms and flow of time such as the pace, speed, time horizon, rhythm, timing, synchronization, temporal orientation, and duration of events and activities within the plannable/actionable future. The forms and flow of time are shaped through the production and reproduction of temporal structures.
The "employing temporality" perspective	This perspective concerns configuring the past, present and future temporal dimensions in explicit or implicit ways that influence or shape organizing. It entails the use of different techniques and processes that include strategic or unprompted collective explorations of what might be possible in the future in light of what is currently at stake, and what has happened in the past

Table 15: The main concepts in the theoretical framework of temporal diversity

Discussion

This article develops a perspective of temporal diversity in collaborative models for sustainability for NGOs. The novel contribution is that sustainability is an intrinsically temporal concept, and efforts to address it need to be examined from an explicit temporal lens. However, time is not a straightforward concept that readily invites a homogeneous understanding. The perspective of temporal diversity advanced in this theoretical framework aims to systematize a lens that looks into "the temporal" in a holistic way. The starting point is to move beyond the prevalent dichotomy between objective and subjective conceptions of time. Thus, the perspective of temporal diversity is grounded in a situated view of time as an enacted phenomenon in organizational life, positing that time is made meaningful and consequential in organizations through everyday processes of temporal structuring (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002). This is why the temporal structuring practices around NBSPs need to be scrutinized. One must examine both how the organizational members' actions shape their experiences of time in relation to NBSPs and how this very action is shaped by objectified norms of time that these actors have previously enacted. For example, the literature review surfaces that the complexities around creating value for sustainability (and not just sustainable value) demand that partners allocate adequate time. This presupposes NBSPs that are themselves "sustainable," i.e. enduring and flourishing. Partnership longevity examined from a temporal structuring perspective begs multiple questions. What types of temporal structures can we identify in our data around NBSP practices, and how are these structures connected to the duration of the partnership? How did they emerge, and how and why were they sustained, modified, or changed along the way? The focus here is on identifying the interests, conditions, and actions that lead to the enactment of particular structures through ongoing processes of temporal structuring.

The next "building block" towards the gradual diversification of the approach of temporal diversity is the addition of the perspective of temporal work (Kaplan & Orlikowski,

2013). Because it is concerned with strategy, i.e. planning for an actionable near future, temporal work primarily focuses on temporal structures and temporal structuring. Importantly, it also advances an understanding of time as temporality, emphasizing the importance of examining to what extent there is alignment in partners' understanding of how the present connects to the past and the future, and assesses whether and how the level of alignment influences actors' support on future-making NBSP strategies. Another line of inquiry in temporal work is an examination of temporal work practices internally, within the NGO, and the level of alignment of past, present, and future. This may generate insights on whether temporal work enables NGOs to present more convincing, coherent, plausible, and acceptable strategic accounts (Ibid), on the basis of which they can negotiate a meaningful alignment with partners in NBSPs, directing the future of collaboration in preferred ways. This is particularly important because NBSP project teams, which primarily embedded within their respective sponsor organizations and sectors, are bound to have multiple and often competing sustainability-related and outcome-shaping interpretations of the interrelations between past trajectories, present concerns, and future aspirations. Thus, internal NGO temporal work may be a precondition for the success of the temporal work within NBSPs.

The perspective of temporal diversity is further enriched by two perspectives that suggest that time is important and influential beyond its explicit concern with the current and future temporal structures of organizing (Hernes & Schultz, 2020; Augustine et al., 2019). The temporal distancing perspective (Hernes & Schultz, 2020) examines distant events that actors envision in their everyday activity. It also examines how they collectively make sense of the effects of imagining the distant past or future as imminent, as well as the effects of projecting themselves into the distant past or future. Arguably, NGO members engaged in NBSPs extrapolate events that have a particular significance for sustainability, so efforts should be made to understand why these events are significant and how they may drive organizational

members towards changing the temporal structures of their organizing for sustainability. Furthermore, observing NBSP processes may also yield insights into how partners see the ambiguity of the distant future of sustainability (Augustine et al., 2019), as well as insights into what events spark the imagining of "as if" realities that could lead to alternative forms of collaboration. Such discussions may reveal fundamental differences in understandings of sustainability—which, according to Augustine and colleagues (2019), should not be analyzed as a sign of potential conflict, but instead as the necessary means for identifying alternatives that may currently seem inconceivable for both business and NGOs.

Arguably, a strength of the theoretical framework of temporal diversity in collaborative models for sustainability for NGOs is the possibility for examining the interrelations between *organizing time* practices and *engaging temporality* practices, which intersect in practice. For example, we may pose several questions. To what extent and how do practices of *engaging temporality* make the future become more concrete and near—and thus more in tune with practices of *organizing time* for sustainability interventions within the temporal structures of actionable strategies? Does making the future more concrete and near through explicit deliberation enable thinking about the long-term intended and unintended consequences of current, potential, or lack of action(s)? How may the extrapolation of distant events connect to actors' reflections on how current temporal structures enable or hinder the attainment of particular sustainability goals, and how as a result actors may reshape temporal structures of concrete strategies to prioritize the achievement of goals that are crucial for the success of sustainability (Hernes & Schultz, 2020)? Do actors, through their conceptual engagement with the distant future, change the time horizons of planned processes to accommodate for more "unowned" processes (MacKay & Chia, 2013) that unfold in the implementation fields of NBSPs?

Another important aspect of the perspective of temporal diversity is that time-related practices in relation to sustainability can be examined both within the NGO and at the level of NBSPs. Further, they can open up the consideration of different constellations of actors and collaborations that sustainability efforts may concern—for example, at the level of specific teams or departments. Whether an NGO has settled internally on a coherent, plausible interpretation of the connection between sustainability futures, presents, and pasts and its sustainability strategies may affect whether, to what extent, and how it engages in processes of creating "as if" realities with business partners. Relatedly, applying the theoretical framework of temporal diversity to detect processes of creating "as if" realities may reveal different dynamics, depending on if these concern NBSP processes that involve the partners or intra-organizational NGO processes. In NBSP processes that involve the partners, interesting theses and antitheses may appear pertaining to different cosmologies and ideals of organizational members that are grounded in deeper cultural structures. It can then be enlightening to observe how partners deal with the controversies and critiques that may surface and how these processes may spark the pursuit of alternative futures.

Conclusion

Sustainability is a phenomenon characterized by chronologically and psychologically distant futures that challenge organizing, which necessarily takes place within temporal structures with defined or definable time horizons. This article has conceptualized a perspective of temporal diversity, through which practices pertaining to collaborative models for sustainability can be examined. This approach focuses on how they (may) create *value for sustainability* through the lenses of temporal structuring, temporal work, temporal distancing, and imagining future possibilities in distant futures. Further research is required to examine this framework empirically and develop it further. Given the lack of empirical evidence, it may not be relevant

to raise implications for practice in their typical sense, but I want to conclude by expressing the hope that the theoretical insights I combine in this article may prompt practitioners to start seeing NBSPs and their sustainability aspirations in a new light. Arguably, a temporal lens may raise awareness of the relevance of time in evaluating current sustainability strategies, expanding strategic choice, and enacting more open-ended temporal orientations, new visions, and alternative futures. In particular, awareness of the notions of distant futures and distant events, as well as their qualitative implications for action, may generate better focus on the very questions posed by sustainability not having a fixed end in view. Thus, increased awareness may inject greater strategic agency into NGOs and enable them to nurture longer-term and more (distant) future-oriented NBSPs, empowering them to be more reflective and influential in leading sustainable development initiatives in desirable directions into the future. In the absence of adequate global regulatory incentives, such empowerment may be the key to bringing about enduring change and sustainable development through collaborative cross-sectoral action.

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PART III

CONCLUSION

Theoretical contributions

The dissertation has employed a temporal lens, returning to the roots of the meaning of sustainability, in an effort to enhance understanding of the challenges and possibilities related to NGO organizing for sustainability through partnerships with business. The dissertation constructs the concept of sustainability as explicitly temporal, as presented in part I under the section "Sustainability as a temporal concept," and in the third article. In this view, sustainability is a future-oriented concept that concerns an ambiguous distant future, and it can be best understood as a process of achieving *adaptive viability*. That is, in a world of constant flux, sustainability concerns the ability to constantly adapt to changing conditions and the ability to maintain enduring qualitative elements that are important for the well-being of current and future societies. In other words, sustainability from this view is about constructing and reconstructing the conditions under which societal benefits endure even as these conditions change. This requires a constant engagement with what sustainability demands in the flow of time, putting center stage the different ways in which current sustainability concerns are entangled with conceptions of the past and the future. It is argued that such an engagement may draw attention to an amalgam of qualitative elements that are crucial for sustainability. In approaching sustainability as an inherently and preeminently temporal concept, the dissertation contributes a perspective that arguably advances our understanding of both the concept of sustainability and NBSPs. The remainder of this section elaborates on the theoretical contributions of the dissertation, focusing on the contributions of each article as well as the synergies among them.

The first article of the dissertation revisited the civic action approach (Lichtermand & Eliasoph, 2014) and discussed it in relation to NBSPs, Then, it cross-fertilized it with an events-based temporal approach (Hussenot & Missonier, 2016) to conceptualize civic action as a dynamic temporal-relational process. The civic action approach is important to revisit because it emphasizes the need to examine the qualities of actors' everyday action and interaction, as well as the actual conditions under which activities are coordinated and outcomes are produced. This helps to determine whether the action is civic or not demonstrating that civic action is an empirical question. This general but significant approach is also embraced in the second and third articles of the dissertation. Drawing on insights from the dissertation's empirical study of NBSPs (article 2) and building on the civic action approach, the first article offers the following contributions. It elaborates on how NBSPs could be thought of as settings for civic action that span institutional sectors, thus also supporting a more open view of civic action that can challenge conventional thinking about the ways in which civic skills, virtues, activities, and outcomes are enacted in practice. Moreover, the article contributes to the literature on civic action by pointing to some potential shortcomings. Specifically, it suggests that civic styles cannot be readily viewed as general mechanisms that connect civic action with outcomes; that in civic action, both civic and non-civic styles may co-exist; and that the civic action approach maintains an overt focus on individuals' "civic" behavior, emphasizing rather few, distinct, and finite types of civic scenes. The article also argues that this approach views civic action primarily as a kind of interaction that comes with particular properties and durable patterns that may occasionally change, although not explaining how they change. Thus, the article posits that the civic action approach does not provide insights on the development from non-civic to civic styles or from one style to another. It is argued that to be able to understand how civic action qualities emerge, persist, or change over time, we need an explicitly temporal approach that examines how actors enact and configure past, present, and future events in ongoing processes

that condition the emergence, persistence, or change of these qualities. In doing so, the article contributes a temporal conceptualization of civil society as a structure of past, current, and anticipated events—a structure that continuously evolves and is defined and redefined in everyday civic action and interaction.

The second article explores an NGO perspective that reveals the particular NGO mindset around NBSPs, which can promote more consideration for NGOs' position in NBSPs. The article contributes deep insights on the ways in which NBSPs are challenged by temporal tensions that relate to the interplay between the organizing models of collaboration, the temporal mismatches between different organizations and actors, and the fundamentally temporal character of sustainability. The article provides a definition of temporal tensions that was missing from the literature on organizational time. It also draws attention to what informants see as *opportunities* in NBSPs in relation to temporal tensions, as well as to their constructive paradoxical approaches to address them. Moreover, the article examines to what NGOs see as *time limits* in NBSPs, which seem to negatively affect both their ability to manage temporal tensions constructively and their development of sustainable solutions to targeted problems. It furthermore contributes to the theorizing of temporal tensions as entangled, situated, relational, and contextual expressions of *temporal ambiguity.* The article defines temporal ambiguity as the simultaneous presence of multiple conflicting temporal elements and the lack of clarity about the meaning and implications related to temporal tensions events and situations. Thus, temporal ambiguity is not a product of the mere existence of temporal tensions, but rather a manifestation of their entangled, situated, relational, and contextual character. Temporal tensions are entangled in the sense that they interrelate in ways that may affect their meaning and thus actors' responses and outcomes. They are situated because actors address them through their ongoing, everyday activity as part of temporal structuring. They are relational not only at the level of the entanglement of multiple, competing temporal demands, but also at the level of the continuous

interrelated flow of actors, organizations, and other entities in the process of becoming. Finally, temporal tensions are contextual because they relate to the circumstances that form the settings for the events that spark the clashes between competing temporal demands.

Moreover, the second article contributes a paradox view on "the paradox – trade-offs dichotomy" around the management of temporal tensions. The findings indicate that both a paradox approach, which sees tensions as interrelated, and a trade-offs approach, which holds that organizations apply polarized strategies, may be at play in addressing temporal tensions in NBSPs. It also indicates that these approaches may be applied strategically and *in situ*. In this view, trade-offs can strengthen the ambitemporal capabilities of actors in the long run, and they are seen as an integral part of ambitemporality (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015), which is a continuous process of becoming ambitemporal. This process involves the reinterpretation of past and future events, learning, experimentation, "both/and" paradoxical approaches, and, at times, "either/or" strategies. This dual approach may arise due to the temporal ambiguity inherent in NBSPs, the lack of exposure of various organizational members to ambitemporal processes, and the unwillingness of NGOs to compromise certain fundamental values for the sake of accommodating temporal tensions. The findings further indicate that although actors do not necessarily separate temporal tensions cognitively in opposing temporal elements, they may separate them at times through their actions to achieve their idiosyncratic strategic goals in relation to their broader work in sustainability. Finally, the second article asserts that the short-term duration of NBSPs may have a negative effect on the ability of project members to engage in temporal brokerage (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015). This implies that temporal ambidexterity and ambitemporality may be more strongly associated with an expectation of ongoing operations or/and open-ended interactions between organizational members. It is thus argued that long-term NBSPs may be better equipped to attain temporal ambidexterity to the benefit of sustainability.

The third article develops *a perspective of temporal diversity* for the study of NBSPs that introduces and includes the notions of *value creation for sustainability*, a *collaborative model* for NGOs, and a *theoretical framework of temporal diversity.* The *theoretical framework of temporal diversity* that this paper advances can be used to examine the multiple temporal elements of value creation for sustainability in collaborative NGO models and to understand how actors attend to the temporal tensions that emerge in such processes. The article contributes a temporal perspective that is central to the notion of sustainability, examining the generative interplay between NGOs, organizing through NBSPs, and the future-oriented temporality of sustainability. In doing so, this perspective enhances understanding of NBSPs and their potential to achieve sustainable solutions.

More specifically, the third article develops the notion of *value for sustainability* in temporal terms—as value that relates to long-term time horizons in organizing processes and structures, value that is inherently future-oriented towards securing intergenerational equity, and value that is entangled in qualitatively different ways of seeing, representing, and enacting the future. The article complements the notion of value for sustainability with a conception of a *collaborative model*, which is used as a heuristic tool to help to examine how organizations describe, analyze, manage, and communicate the aspects of creating value for sustainability. The multiple temporal dimensions of value creation for sustainability within the definition of a collaborative model for NGOs include the examination of how value is created over the short, medium, and long term; how it is maintained over time; how value can be created through sustained collaboration; how value relates to qualitatively different futures; and how it benefits future generations. Moreover, the collaborative dimension reflected in the above definition emphasizes the identification of stakeholders within and outside organizational boundaries and their contribution to value creation for sustainability. The inclusion of stakeholders enables the

examination of how voice is given to stakeholder groups, as well as how sustainability interventions are implemented in their local contexts.

Driven by the findings in the second article, the third article contributes the development of a holistic *theoretical framework of temporal diversity* for the study of NBSPs that can capture different temporal relations and interdependencies pertaining to temporal tensions. This framework integrates an approach of *organizing time*, as expressed in planning approaches that concern the temporal structuring of actionable time horizons, with an approach of *engaging temporality*, as expressed in interpretative time approaches that focus primarily on eliciting the temporality of sustainability—for example, strategic collective explorations of what might be possible in the future, what is currently at stake, and what has happened in the past in relation to sustainability. The two perspectives intertwine; *engaging temporality* may reproduce the same temporal structures or change them through temporal structuring. Such a process, then, *organizes time*, which in turn shapes practices of *engaging temporality*.

In developing the theoretical framework of temporal diversity, the article stresses the need to examine organizing for sustainability in relation to realms that are not immediately actionable, concerning both distant events that are beyond the scope of partners' current temporal structures and distant ambiguous futures. Thus, the framework can be used to examine qualitatively different concerns among organizational actors and partners that may reflect the values, beliefs, desires, hopes, and fears of organizational members about the distant future of sustainability, which may not be captured by current organizational structures and practices. Importantly, the perspective of temporal diversity can provide insights not only into how temporal structures shape action and how action may shape temporal structures through temporal structuring, but also into how temporality seen both within and beyond these structures can influence the temporal structuring processes. This framework may help us to understand how organizational members' ways of thinking change and how temporal structures can be

changed in ways that allow for more serious engagement with the inherent temporality of sustainability.

We know from extant literature that organizational actors experience time through practices and processes of temporal structuring. Through these processes, they reproduce objectified temporal structures or occasionally change them. We also know that changing temporal structures is more difficult than reproducing them, as it demands strong motivation and considerable effort due to the reification and taken-for-granted nature of objectified structures. Both the literature review and the findings in the second article point respectively to a need for and attempts to change temporal structures, which may allow partners to have more time together and include more long-term considerations in their decision-making. These time affordances can lead to action that takes the temporal character of sustainability and its relation to a distant future seriously. We need additional conceptual tools to be able to understand these attempts and how they may succeed or fail. This can arguably be realized by applying a theoretical framework of temporal diversity that scrutinizes temporal practices that are both within and beyond the scope of temporal structures. Examining the role of the past and the future beyond temporal structures opens up the constant possibility for engaging actively, creatively, and freely with the momentary processes to influence the future and bring forth different versions of it. Overall, it is argued that coherent, explicitly temporal perspectives for the analysis and management of cross-sector collaboration for sustainability—like the perspective of temporal diversity proposed in this article—can strengthen both our analytical gaze and the potential for managing interventions. The following section will discuss the practical implications of these contributions for managing NBSPs.

Implications for further research

In relation to the first article, further research can apply the theoretical framework of *civic action as temporal process-in-relations* and explore the civic styles and scenes of collaboration with an events-based approach. Process research designs and comparative approaches may identify relational processes that reveal qualitatively different civic (and non-civic) scene styles in NBSPs. They could explore how actors draw on past and future events in scene-switching practices in NBSPs and whether different scenes and styles may be related to particular processes and outcomes, as well as in relation to the events actors enact. Importantly, using events as the unit of analysis, process research can focus on how civic scenes may change and develop throughout the lifetime of NBSPs, or how civic styles may change and develop throughout successive NBSPs in a single organization. Through the events lens, research can focus on the processes of developing shared maps, bonds, and speech norms and assess how settling on shared understandings of past and future events may enable this "sharing." Moreover, by centering the plurality of interrelated events around which these partnerships unfold, research can focus on how NBSP settings of civic action may differ from more traditional notions of cooperation around civic action. Particular focus can be placed on detecting different mixes of stability and novelty in civic action, as seen in the ways pasts and futures are constantly defined and redefined in actual events in the present.

In relation to the second article, further research into temporal tensions in NBSPs can focus explicitly on the aspect of temporary organizing in complex NBSPs projects, where short-term clock-time appears to be at odds with long-term goals, visions, and political agendas. Situating research in relation to previous work in the literature on temporary organizations and time (e.g. Sydow & Braun, 2018; Burke & Morley, 2016; Bakker, 2010) may provide valuable insights on temporal tensions and their management. Here, the level of analysis should be the project, and the data collection and analysis should be squarely focused on project-level data, as

the partnership project work is temporary. Relatedly, further research can focus on how the short duration of NBSPs may influence the management of temporal tensions. Arguably, approaches to understanding the time horizon tension of sustainability in extant literature have primarily focused on examining the end-point aspect of the time horizon—and not the duration ingrained in the notion, which can shed light on what actors can (and cannot) do while enacting the planned horizons. By the same token, further research can formulate research questions that can focus more deeply on different aspects of the analytical framework in relation to their role in addressing temporal tensions paradoxically. They can seek to determine, for example, the role of values and principles or the institutional environment or the clarity of value propositions and technologies; the internal buy-in and the level of exposure to processes of ambitemporality that organizational members receive; and so on.

Moreover, in the study in the second article, the level of analysis is the NGO and the unit of analysis the narrative provided by NGO actors. Thus, generalizations for partners or businesses are not possible with the current results. A research design that takes the partnerships as the level of analysis and analyzes narratives provided by both NGO and business organizational members may enable a better understanding of how actors address temporal tensions in NGO-business partnerships. Furthermore, a close longitudinal examination of the interplay between cognition and action can shed light on the management of temporal tensions, something that the present study was unable to do due to the nature of the data.

In relation to the third article, further research can use this framework to conceptualize NBSPs as collaborative models for sustainability and focus on how they create value for sustainability based on the parameters of the model. In the analysis of these parameters, particular attention needs to be paid to how actors organize their more immediately actionable realms through temporal structuring. Additional attention needs to be paid to eliciting the qualitatively different concerns among organizational members that relate to distant events

beyond the scope of current temporal structures. Such concerns may relate to the values, beliefs, desires, hopes, and fears of organizational members about the distant future of sustainability.

More specifically, further research can focus on examining the temporal elements of the rationale, the architecture of operations, and the practices that create value for sustainability through NBSPs. Thus, research can examine to what extent social, environmental, and economic value can be co-created over a longer period of time, as well as to what extent it is captured beyond organizational boundaries and maintained over time, focusing on the benefits for local communities, future generations, and society at large. This also requires the identification of stakeholders within and outside organizational boundaries and their contribution to value creation for sustainability. To be able to assess such value, research needs to focus on the temporal notions implicit in sustainability—for example, intergenerational equity, long temporal depths, distant future states, distant events, and understandings of how the future connects with present concerns and interpretations of the past. Moreover, further research can examine how practices that pertain to the two approaches of *organizing time* and *engaging temporality* intertwine, focusing on how engaging temporality may reproduce the same temporal structures or change them through temporal structuring. Such a process, then, organizes time, which in turn shapes practices of engaging temporality. Furthermore, the theoretical framework of temporal diversity presents an opportunity to examine the use of several temporal techniques by NGOs and partners, focusing on the assumptions about temporality upon which such techniques are based.

Implications for practice

I have discussed some implications for practice in relation to the empirical findings of the dissertation in the second article, which I will only briefly mention here as part of a more general discussion about the implications for practice. The analysis in the second article offers

new language and ways of thinking about how temporal tensions can support or diminish substantive sustainability goals, opening up a more nuanced and temporally sensitive managerial approach to NGO-business partnerships. While the theoretical nature of the other two articles may not readily invite a discussion of implications for practice in its typical sense, this work has emerged through my engagement with the empirical setting described in the second article and the findings of this study. This dissertation has proposed a theoretical approach that, if operationalized, could unleash the potential structuring qualities of thinking and organizing in terms of a *collaborative model* for NBSPs, which can account for and guide the ways in which NGOS create *value for sustainability* in NBSPs. Importantly, this includes adopting theoretically informed *practices of temporal diversity* that employ time as a strategic and tactical tool for addressing the future.

More specifically, applying a perspective of temporal diversity in partnerships entails practices of engaging strategically, actively, and creatively with the past, the present, and the future within and beyond the scope of temporal structures. Such engagement can strengthen the paradoxical management of temporal tensions—that is, through such practices actors can develop mindsets that enhance their temporal reflexivity and strengthen their ambitemporal capabilities. This engagement focuses not only on the ongoing processes for the management of temporal tensions, but also on the proactive, explicit, and detailed consideration of temporal elements during the initial stages of NBSPs. Such a proactive engagement with the temporal elements of organizing may arguably diminish instances of managing temporal tensions as trade-offs. It can also enhance understanding of the principles and values behind promoting particular temporal structures over others. Importantly, such mindsets may start viewing time not only as something stable that needs to be managed, but also as something that can be changed and adjusted to ensure sustainability. We know from the literature that the influence of objectified temporal structures on actors becomes particularly strong when they become closely

associated with certain social practices; in other words, in such instances temporal structures resist change. However, because NBSP practices are still novel social phenomena that have not yet congealed into more stable structures, NGOs have an opportunity to rethink the durations, time horizons, and other elements that relate to the temporal structures of organizing through NBSPs. This will better enable them to attain to the distant future character of sustainability. Moreover, engaging in practices of temporal diversity opens up room for creativity and novelty in reenacting and representing the past and the future in the present, inviting the conception of novel ways of engaging with the past or anticipating the future, which may influence the future towards desired directions in relation to sustainability. Importantly, such an engagement sets focus on the fact that the future is conditioned by the ongoing complex processes that comprise the actors' situated activity in any given present and particular understandings of the past. Moreover, engaging with the past in NBSP processes can shed light on the deeply-held beliefs and structural conditions that shape the present-day sustainability problems that NBSPs set out to address, as well as the future prospects in relation to sustainability.

NGO practitioners can use the notion of a collaborative model for sustainability to concretize the rationale for how they create value for sustainability through their NBSPs. This presupposes that when NGOs engage in NBSPs, they have explicit discussions about the temporal elements of creating value for sustainability and the values that are central to the temporality of sustainability—such as the value of intergenerational equity—when forming partnerships and collaborating with partners. This emphasis on the temporality of sustainability signals a call to reevaluate the current values that inform collaborative efforts as a precondition for creating alternative visions of sustainability. It is suggested that this reevaluation can be achieved through adopting practices of temporal diversity of *organizing time* and *engaging temporality*, which can generate alternative ideas for how to approach sustainability. This approach is in line with Johnsen's (2020) perspective on sustainability (Johnsen, 2020),

according to which the ability of organizations to question the preconfigured values that underlie judgments (e.g. judgements of particular solutions as sustainable) is a precondition for exploring and finding alternative responses and ways of working (Ibid; Painter-Morland and ten Bos, 2016). In this view, working with sustainability is not only a matter of committing to certain pre-existing shared values, as emphasized in the cross-sector partnerships literature, but also a matter of being able to assess the relevance of values in specific social settings to find alternative approaches (Johnsen, 2020). In social settings of NBSPs, this arguably entails questioning the instrumental line of thinking that often frames NBSPs, which includes designating measurable qualities to sustainability and promoting a technical view of sustainability that masks its political, ethical, and—not least—temporal dimensions (Ibid). In particular, using *practices* of *temporal diversity* proposed in this dissertation to explore alternative futures involves assessing values by exploring the implications of specific actions that are informed by values, which might call certain values into question.

To be sure, the reconfiguration of the concept of sustainability as temporal may seem to invite a moral line of thinking that takes this is the "right" way to view sustainability, or an ethical line of thinking that justifies why this is the "right" way to view sustainability. However, the values that underpin the temporal qualities of sustainability are not meant to be presented as prefigured normative values that can be applied over and above other values. Rather, they are seen as values that can be used as tools to help create distance from the values guiding current practice, which can enable questioning the value of all values, including intergenerational equity and dominant temporalities. The values ingrained in a temporal view of sustainability that are stressed in this dissertation are employed in an effort to explore not only what sustainability is, but also what it might become in the future—thereby expanding the potential for alternative approaches (Johnsen, 2020). The temporality of sustainability is thus employed to direct

questioning towards notions of "adequate time," "right time," and "just and resilient futures," as well as questioning each other's values and normative time-related orientations in NBSPs.

Overall, the ideas developed in this dissertation show the potential for reflection on the different ways we may become hostages to the very temporal walls that we have created. Importantly, they also draw attention to the agency we are inherently granted. Just consider the global moment: we have observed and experienced the power of our own agency during the current COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis has sparked the acute, emergent, and constant change to the temporal structures of our everyday lives and the temporal structures we engage to cope with the crisis—a disruption in our daily experience of the flow of time—as well as, arguably, new ways in which to see pasts and futures in our living presents. If the temporal characteristics of the responses to the COVID-19 crisis and the resulting economic crisis were also translated into the sustainability domain, we might be able to see more adequate mindsets and more effective responses to addressing the grand challenges of our time.

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