Managing as transcending: An ethnography

David Griesbach^{a,*}, Simon Grand^b

^a *Swiss Research Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, University of St. Gallen, Dufourstrasse 40a, CH-9000 St. Gallen, Switzerland*

^b *RISE Management Research, Institute of Systemic Management and Public Governance, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland*

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Summary The aim of this paper is to better understand how management influences organizational becoming. We suggest an alternative conceptualization based on the strong process view. Management is regarded as a process of enactment. Past and future situations are immanent in situations of the present, in the form of experiences and expectations. In turn, each present situation has an impact beyond the situation only. Through enactments, the situation is transcended, thereby influencing temporally and spatially dispersed situations. By mobilizing specific experiences of the past and expectations about the future, management judges and justifies current issues. In this process, management influences the transcendence of the actual situation, potentially influencing organizational becoming in the future. Our case study of a Swiss textile company reveals several modes of how management creates such potentialities for future enactments.

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Introduction

In this paper, we expand the understanding of the intertwined dynamic between managerial action and processes of organizational becoming. Our study responds to Willmott's (1987) call for additional empirical research on managerial work that examines the relationship between actions and their organizational significance. We suggest that the strong process view (Chia, 1999; Hernes, 2008; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002) serves as a promising theoretical foundation for advancing our understanding of this research puzzle. According to the strong process view, an organization is not regarded as a stable entity but as something that is always in a process of becoming, never reaching completeness (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). The concept of becoming can be regarded as the

ongoing attempt to create and mobilize quasi-stable references (Langley, 2009), a process that can be influenced by management. The notion of stability is not used in an absolute sense but as a “state of affairs that is sufficiently stable to admit analysis” (Hernes & Weik, 2007a: 253). In other words, what can be identified as empirically stable cannot be taken for granted, but must be described in its process of becoming.

The strong process view implies a specific understanding of time (Chia, 1999). Process is not understood as a development over time. Rather, becoming is studied as it unfolds in multiple enactments of the present (Langley, 2009). While organizations continuously are becoming in the present, the past and future play important roles in how becoming occurs. According to the principle of immanence, the past and its situations as well as the future and its situations are integral parts of the present (Chia, 1999). Both, the past and the future influence how we enact current situations, stabilizing the organizational in the present. We suggest a perspective on management that judges and justifies issues and decisions

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +41 076 320 80 03.
E-mail address: david.griesbach@gmail.com (D. Griesbach).

in current situations (Giddens, 1984; Weick, 1995). This involves the mobilization of experiences from the past and of expectations about the future. Thereby, the immanence of temporally and spatially dispersed situations is influenced and made transparent by management. As ongoing judgment and justification creates quasi-stable references in the form of generalizations and potentialities, the actual situation is transcended, thereby potentially influencing future situations. In other words, past and future situations are mobilized to cope with current situations, while the act of coping creates guidance and potential for future situations. In this sense, management influences how the actual situation is transcended. Based on this conceptualization, our research attempts to answer the following research question: *How and why does management refer to specific pasts and futures to enact current issues for future enactment in organization?*

We have found answers to this question in an ethnographic study conducted in a family-owned, internationally renowned Swiss textile company. We explore current issues that involve management, and describe how management enacts these issues by judgment and justification within situations mobilizing the past and future. In particular, we focus on managerial activities in the transition phase between the fifth and sixth management generation. Under these conditions, we can study how management explicitly and sometimes controversially influences future enactments beyond their own presence.

Theoretical background

At first, we examine how the strong process view can provide a better understanding of the relationship between situated activities and organizational becoming. In the second section, we discuss a framework that shows the conceptualization of management as a situational activity of judgment and justification that potentially influences the continuous becoming of organizations.

A strong process view on situational activity and organizational becoming

The strong process view (Chia, 1999; Hernes, 2008; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002) favors "...activity over product, change over persistence, novelty over continuity, and expression over determination" (Langley & Tsoukas, 2010: 2). Organizations are involved in an ongoing process of becoming (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). They are not "things made" but processes "in the making" (Hernes & Weik, 2007b). The development of this perspective is based on process philosophy (Rescher, 2000), in which temporality is crucial. However, temporality has not yet gained major attention in management and organization literature (Wiebe, 2010). Only recently, have organizational becoming and time been systematically in the focus of study (Hernes, 2008; Langley, 2009; Langley & Tsoukas, 2010). The strong process view suggests a radical shift from an objectified conception of time to a conception of time as experience (Chia, 1999), which Bergson (1991) calls *durée*. An objectified conception of time is based on clock time that brackets the flow of life into discrete points on a linear timeline (Chia, 1999). It uses static states to explain the change between those states (Tsoukas & Chia,

2002). In that view, we lose the fluid, dynamic, imminent, and heterogeneous character of our experience of situated action and organizational becoming. In an experienced version of time, life and time are regarded as undividable movement of becoming (Bergson, 1991). Thus, we adopt the latter conception to study how organizational actors in each situation cope with the dynamics of an ever-changing, fluid, and fragile world as it unfolds. The experienced version of time contains several aspects that allow for better understanding of the interplay between situational activity and organizational becoming.

First, the *present and its enactment* in situated actions and interactions become the focus of study. The strong process view implies that an understanding of the flux and dynamics of management and organization requires focus on the situations where change emerges and is lived. If organizations are considered processes in the making (Langley & Tsoukas, 2010), scholars must gain a better understanding of the present, where organizations are stabilized and reproduced. If something occurs in the making and as unfolding, it is only possible to be approached, observed, and grasped "in flight" (Langley, 2007; Pettigrew, 1992). Referring to Whitehead, Hernes (2008) noted "...the world presents itself to us in the form of 'occasions' of experience" (p. 35). In addition, Hernes pointed out that we cannot go beyond these occasions because they are the ultimate version of a reality where we experience this world of process and focus in the present, where these occasions are experienced.

A second aspect of the strong process view is *the relatedness of the past and the future* with the present. Butler (1995) suggests that, while we experience what is happening in current moments, we experience time in the present "only by relating ourselves to a past and to a future" (p. 928) by interpretation and experience of events "...through knowledge derived from the past, while envisioning possible futures" (p. 925). Thus, we need to observe, describe, and reflect the present in its relation to the past and the future. According to the principle of immanence, the present incorporates the past because each present event represents the actual realization of one of the many possibilities that emerge from past events (Chia, 1999). In turn, each present event incorporates the future, as the present will be the past of the future, when the future will have occurred (Deleuze, 1990). Further, intentions and expectations of the future influence how the present is enacted.

Third, the strong process view implies a *relational ontology*, in which everything only exists in relation to other things or situations (Langley & Tsoukas, 2010). In general, human thinking and acting involves a separation of time and space. If an event occurs in the here and now, it can be regarded separate from what may occur later at another place (Hernes, 2008). However, other events that have occurred in the past, that are occurring at the same time elsewhere in the present, or that may occur in the future, will be influenced by the actual present. A connection and relationship to other events exists. In the enactment of situations, the situation is transcended, thereby influencing other situations beyond the current situation only. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the verb *transcend* means to "pass or extend beyond or above (a non-physical limit)" (Simpson & Weiner, 1989). Not only is there the enactment of the situation, but also the situation itself is extended above its

unrelated presence, potentially influencing future behavior. The present situation always projects toward a “not-yet-knowable future” and “creates potentialities as well as constrains it” (Chia, 1999: 220).

Fourth, proponents of the strong process view suggest exploring the relationship between *the actual and the potential* and the *experienced and the abstract* (Hernes, 2008). Following the notions of immanence, transcendence, and a relational ontology, actual experiences bear the potentiality for what will be experienced in the future and embody the potentiality of past events (Hernes, 2008). Similarly, the distinction between the concrete and the abstract reveals that there is the concrete experience of the situation at hand as well as an abstract version of past and future situations. Organizational becoming involves the reduction of difference among organizational actors, which in turn creates shared meaning (Weick, 1995). To reduce difference and make sense of concrete experiences, an abstract version of the experience has to be developed either retrospectively (Weick, 1995) or prospectively (Gephart, Topal, & Zhang, 2010), thereby influencing the potential of future situations (Chia, 1999).

Toward a model of managing as transcending

In the previous section, we have identified the specific conceptualization of time in the strong process view: (1) organizations are continuously becoming in the present. (2) The present is always related and intertwined with the past and the future. (3) Through this interrelation, the actual situation is transcended, influencing other temporally and spatially dispersed situations. (4) The transcendence is observable in the process of generalizing and developing potentialities. On this basis, we develop a conceptualization of management that helps to better understand how managerial action influences organizational becoming. In other words, the conceptualization should allow understanding of how management creates quasi-stabilizations (Hernes & Weik, 2007a), thereby reducing difference among organizational agents (Langley & Tsoukas, 2010) and creating shared understanding (Weick, 1995). The prefix *quasi* indicates that in the strong process view, stability is relative and therefore based on a comparison in time and space (Hernes & Weik, 2007a). For example, organizational agents may have a different understanding of how to expand the product range. Management can influence such differences in situational enactments by reaching for a shared understanding in the situation. The stability of a shared understanding is itself dynamic and heterogeneous but can be identified as being stable compared to an earlier understanding of expansion.

Several empirical studies have identified management as a predominantly situational activity, which mainly focuses on current issues and topics (Mintzberg, 1973, 2009; Tengblad, 2006). As such, observing the present seems suitable to better understand how management influences organizational becoming by reducing difference and developing shared meaning. Therefore, we regard management as enactment of current issues in particular situations. Mintzberg (1971) identifies management to work at an “unrelenting pace” and to cope with issues that are “current, specific, and ad hoc” (p. 97). In this paper, we focus on the judgment and justification that occurs when management enacts current situations and issues.

The concept of *sensemaking*, as Weick (1995) has developed it, is a good starting point to better understand judgment in managerial action. *Sensemaking* means literally to make sense of issues in situations that are not clear and obvious. According to Weick (1995), there is not a shortage but an overload of information, which leads to ambiguity and equivocality in situations. To prevent becoming overwhelmed by an overload of information, people in organizations need guidance for action in the form of “values, priorities, and clarity about preferences” (p. 27). Sensemaking can be seen as an act of giving structure to problems in continuous conversation with others (Weick, 1995: 9). The structuring or valuation itself, the manner of coping with issues and situations, is justified to reach a certain agreement among organizational members. Weick (1995) speaks of “shared meanings” (p. 37) as the common denominator, which allows for coordinated organizational action. Giddens (1984: 29) similarly identifies the value attached to particular issues as processes of “signification” and “legitimation” (p. 29), in which shared meaning is constituted. We refer to such processes as *judgment* for valuing and prioritizing issues and *justification* for reaching agreement on the judgment. Justification, which leads to common agreement or shared meaning, is what allows for organized collective behavior (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). Even though individuals may have different aspirations and intentions, interlocked action is required to achieve such aspirations and a certain level of agreement is necessary to collectively act (Weick, 1979). Shared meaning can be regarded as the quasi-stabilization (Hernes & Weik, 2007a: 253) and difference reduction (Langley, 2009) that management influences in organizational becoming.

In contrast to the concept of *sensemaking*, *judgment* and *justification* are not regarded to be necessarily retrospective, contrary to what Weick (1995) suggests. Coping with issues in current situations involves not only a reflection of our own action that has occurred but also a shaping of how the current situation and previous and future situations relate to each other. Stated differently, the immanence of the past and the future, which resides in each situation, plays an important role when quasi-stabilization is reached in the form of shared meanings. We argue that management mobilizes specific experiences of the past and specific expectations about the future when enacting situations coping with issues in the present. In such a process, the past, the present, and the future are aligned to reduce ambiguity and equivocality. The mobilization of the past and future can occur, for example, by (a) telling a specific story; (b) highlighting a specific aspect of a problem; (c) differentiating between right and wrong; and (d) asking specific questions to understand an issue. The shared meaning that is reached is an abstract form of the situation, and it creates potential for future situations and thus, potentially influences organizational becoming in the future. Management transcends current situations by influencing the value and priority organizational agents attribute to the specific situations and their contents.

The following illustration summarizes these conceptual distinctions as a framework to empirically observe the dynamic interplay between situated managerial practice and organizational becoming (see, Fig. 1).

Figure 1 Theoretical basis and conceptual framework.
Source: Authors.

Because we are aware of the distributedness, relationality, and processuality of action (Tsoukas, 1996), we must consider the fragility of managerial power and agency in the shaping of individual situations or transcendence of these situations (Tsoukas, 2005). Managerial agency depends on a series of aspects relevant to a better understanding of whether, how, and why generalization and potentialization might develop in the process of judgment and justification. For several reasons, there is a stronger likelihood that the enactment of management will transcend the situation by generalization and potentialization compared to other organizational members. First, management is inevitably confronted with problems and issues that are actually or potentially relevant for organizational processes (Mintzberg, 1971). A nonleading employee is not asked why there is a loss in the factory and how to cope with this loss. Being continuously confronted with such issues and having to cope with them increases the likelihood for judgment and justification and, with it, for generalization and potentialization. Further, managerial impact, agency, and power are ascribed to managers. Nonleading or subordinate employees expect management to make judgments and justify in situated enactments according to the official, but also to an unofficial, hierarchy and authority. In addition, rather than other members of the organization, management can more easily draw on a formal space of resources to exert its agency. A nonleading employee is not allowed to make investments. Finally, management usually defines its own role with respect to organizational processes. It could be argued that the potential for transcendence is a possible way to better distinguish managerial action in relation to action in general.

Research setting and methods

Research setting

Our empirical research was conducted at an internationally renowned Swiss textile company (hereafter referred to as TEXTILE plc). We focused on the period from July 2010 to July 2011. TEXTILE plc was founded in 1819. The family-owned business originally engaged in the sale of textile fabrics produced in small mountain villages to habitants of the nearby city of St. Gallen. Presently, about 450 workers are employed by TEXTILE plc globally. Although the company previously produced its own fabrics, it currently operates as a textile converter. It buys greige fabrics (i.e., undyed or

unfinished fabrics) to sell as finished products to cutters, wholesalers, or retailers. In addition, the company owns and operates several wholesale distributorships worldwide that include important showrooms at prestigious locations in Paris, London, and Tokyo. TEXTILE plc is known for its design of creative, high-quality textiles in the luxury segment in six product groups: interior fabrics, bed linen wear, bed ware (down and feathers), sleepwear, terry clothes, and carpets.

The current CEO is the sixth-generation of the family to lead the company. When the father reached 70 years of age, the son symbolically assumed the position of CEO, in 2008. The father, who remained president of the board and principal owner of the company, left the company and did not return again for two months. Since that time, he has visited the company once a month. He continues to chair the supervisory board as its president. It was explicitly mentioned that the son and new CEO must introduce new ways to successfully guide the company into the next decade. This type of transition is of particular interest since new managerial practices must be established and reenforced by the new generation. Management cannot rely on taken-for-granted references for generalizations and potentializations. This must be reenacted in multiple situated engagements. Because of current transformations in the textile industry, we can focus on the ways that management enacts new issues in the present and prepares for an unknown future. We can also focus on how management establishes new ways to approach them. The company's heritage causes us not only to consider but also to reinterpret the past in the form of heterogeneous experiences and stories. The uncertain future implies the existence of multiple potentialities and directions in present actions and intentions.

We began our research a short time after the company leadership had passed from the fifth- to the sixth-generation family member. We were allowed to observe management's participation in multiple activities. In addition, such activities were observable across different management levels (including two generations, the board of directors, the management team, headquarters, and country managers), and across different divisions. The company faces a high degree of uncertainty because the industry has changed considerably over the past 30 years. At one time, Switzerland was well known for the production of high-quality textile fabrics sold worldwide. Presently, however, Asia and Turkey produce most of the world's textiles. Only a few textile companies have survived in Switzerland. Most focus on a niche product or segment. Therefore, these companies had to position

themselves clearly and uniquely in the market. These market aspects require companies to engage in continuous clarification to remain competitive.

Data collection

Data collection occurred between July 2010 and July 2011. We adopted an ethnographic approach that required presence in the field (Prasad, 2005). Throughout our study, the new CEO granted access to data, meetings, and persons. We had the opportunity to capture management's activities as they occurred in the present. As a result of the ethnographic approach, we could observe the ways that management mobilized certain pasts and futures to make sense of specific issues, opportunities, and current actions. During our study, the first author observed important meetings. He attended three international meetings, where directors of the central country managers from Italy, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Japan gathered to discuss international topics and new textile collections. He also attended the majority of monthly meetings of the Swiss management board. As an auditor at these formal gatherings, the first author observed informal discussions before and after meetings, and at lunches or dinners attended by national and international managers.

The first author conducted semistructured interviews with a number of executives. The interviews were designed to reveal insights about the company's history and future and interpretations of particular issues, opportunities, and decisions. The interviews were also intended to uncover individual accounts, because they also showed how managerial action referred to the past and the future to judge and to justify in the present. Finally, the first author accompanied the CEO during a visit to the company's Italian branch. We were given permission to record all meetings and interviews for review and transcription. The second author conducted interviews with the CEO and members of the supervisory board. He operated as an outside observer who possessed sufficient knowledge of the organization and the industry, based on ethnographic research conducted in other regional textile companies, to accurately interpret the data collected by the first author. The table below provides a list of formal occasions when data were collected (see, Table 1).

During data collection, it was important to compare managerial action in the context of meetings, workshops, and informal interactions with managerial reasoning displayed during interviews and informal conversations. We placed a focus on the actions of the CEO. We identified traceable associations that were generated through managerial interactions and engagements. Management's reflections focused on current events in relation to the past and the future. It also focused on the explanation and justification of certain perspectives, decisions, and evaluations. Managerial enactment of issues in meetings, workshops, and interactions concentrated on the judgment of issues and the delivery of explanations and justifications as needed.

Data analysis

The first author entered the field with the intention to discover how and why the CEO and various managers mobilize

Table 1 Data sources during the period from July 2010 until July 2011.

Data collection method Occasion	
Non-participant observation	1 Meeting to inform the personnel 6 Meetings of the Swiss executive board 4 Operational meetings (marketing, collection) 3 Meetings of the international executive board (6 days in total) 3 Meetings of the international marketing committee (3 days in total) 1 Workshop with president of the board and CEO
Interviews	3 Interviews with the CEO 5 Interviews with all the executive members Several informal talks Several informal observations
Shadowing	1 Journey of the CEO visiting the Italian branch

the past and the future to enact current issues. We observed that the CEO had a strong presence and exerted a strong impact. This can be explained by the fact that the CEO was about to create, establish, and justify his specific modes of management in relation and in contrast to the former modes of management developed by his father. A number of examples and most illustrative quotes thus originate from CEO enactments. Although it was apparent that the other managers possessed a high degree of freedom, we noticed that the alignment between the new CEO and several managers was a central part of the interactions.

Based on a grounded theory approach, we performed a data analysis that included the interrelation of coding processes and the creation of memos (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Coding occurred on different levels of abstraction (Punch, 2005). The first coding included the labeling of data with different modes of reference to the past or future. In a second step, the first author began to group topics and to select the most important ones. Topic importance depended on length of discussion, frequency of discussion, and level of controversy involved. Table 2 introduces the most important issues identified.

Based on these selections, the first author analyzed how and why the mobilization of pasts and futures occurs in specific ways, to judge and justify actions, decisions, and standpoints. He coded the material with predefined but open codes, such as *past*, *future*, *judgment*, and *justification*. These codes were iteratively enriched. New codes were inductively generated to code the observed mechanisms behind mobilization, judgment, and justification. Thus, different mechanisms of judgment and justification were identified. In a second step, the practices of managerial judgment and justification were identified, clustered, and structured, based on whether they referred to the past or future (see, Tables 3–5). Through further analysis we attempted to

Table 2 Overview and description of managerial issues.

Issue	Description
1. Losses in sewing factory in Thailand	The sewing factory in Thailand is responsible for sewing textiles for the Japanese market. Due to the specialized taste of the Japanese people, there is a special line of textiles that must be produced and shipped at low costs. This is the reason, why Thailand has been chosen as manufacturing country. During the last years, the sewing fabric has not been profitable anymore. There are two main reasons that can be identified for the losses: the decrease in orders from Japan and the inability of the existing management in saving costs.
2. Losses of the Japanese company	During the last years, the Japanese company has lost money mostly because of the bad economic situation in Japan, as TEXTILE plc is one of the biggest players within the Japanese market.
3. Growth by opening a showroom in London	In the past, TEXTILE plc used to own a company in London in which its own marketing and sales personnel used to sell and distribute the products. Because of a decrease in sales in the United Kingdom, the personnel had to be laid-off, while their activities were handed over to an external agent. Considering the fact, that there is a high market potential for home textiles in the United Kingdom and because of a location opportunity in the most important design center in London, TEXTILE plc has just opened a new showroom. The company therefore has been reactivated. The aim is to attract architects and eventually close contracts for larger projects.
4. Losses of showroom in New York	The showroom in New York is located in the most important design center of the city. New York and its surroundings represent the most important market potential for the USA. However, the showroom is still loosing money.
5. Growth by securing large contracts	The clients of home textiles can roughly be divided into private and contract clients. While private clients buy the products at their regional decorator, architects and other institutional clients will ask for direct sales with a lower price due to higher sales volumes. TEXTILE plc is interested in acquire large contracts that secure high revenues. The idea is to enforce marketing and sales activities for the contract business.
6. Expansion of the product range	There are ongoing activities to expand the product range within the limits that it has to be either home, bed or bath textiles. The German company introduced some years ago a small carpet collection. While there were some sales, it did not match the high quality and design standards of TEXTILE plc. This is the reason why carpets are now taken seriously and there is a collection to be developed which meets the necessary standards. Furthermore, there is a project that covers the introduction of living accessories such as plaids or cushions.
7. Development of own bed linen stores	Some years ago, it was decided to continually build own stores to sell bed linen directly in addition to the indirect sales channels. While the first shop is quite successful, the second shop was a disaster. It never made profit mainly due to the bad development of the newly built shopping mall it was located in. Today, TEXTILE plc has closed the second shop and the development path has been temporarily stopped.
8. Competitors	There is a difference between the businesses of home textiles and bed linen. The first one is a niche market with clearly definable competitors, while the bed linen market also include mass competitors such as IKEA or fashion labels such as Ralph Lauren. Due to the limited shelf-space, there is much more pressure from competitors in the bed linen market.
9. Development of new collections	Twice a year, there are new collections developed for the home textile as well as for the bed linen business. Each collection represents an addition to the existing collections while some of the older textiles will be sorted out. The regular development of the collections structures the way TEXTILE plc is organized. Especially when it comes to interact between the country companies. Furthermore, each collection will be presented on specialized purchasing fairs, and this serves as the main reason for the sales staff to regularly meet their clients.

Table 2 (Continued)

Issue	Description
10. Difference between home textiles and bed linen	The home textile business and the bed linen business differ considerably. The home textiles are semi-finished goods that are sold in the form of samples to interior designers. It raises the chance that the end client will chose one of the textiles of TEXTILE plc. The end client most probably does not know the brand. Having distributed the home textiles, the interior designer will further work with it in order to develop the finished product such as curtains or a couch. On the other hand, bed linen is a finished product which is mainly sold in specialized shops or shopping malls. The product will be bought directly by the end client. The brand of TEXTILE plc is known to them.

Table 3 Mobilization of the past in managerial judgment.

	Past	
	Pattern	Citation
Judgment	Valuation of the issue as severe	The loss in Thailand is relatively high this year. Presumably 200 to 300,000.- Swiss Francs or 7–8 million Bath. We are still using money in Japan, because the revenues are even worse, than we could ever imagine in our worst nightmares.
	Unnecessary issue	The loss in Thailand isn't necessary. This must not be. We really have to ask ourselves, what we are doing there.
	Review and proof of previous estimations and plans	There is a relatively new manager in Germany since two years. He came from another company, which is strong in the business of contracts for objects. And he started to build the business this year and could attract a major deal. Really big deal, that contributes 7% of the total revenue.
	Comparison with other companies	We could also call it Competitor-X-project. They have shops, you will see often in Germany. We don't want to go that far. He just does everything. He sells everything in the same style. You can go there and buy the interior design for a whole house. Everything is done very nicely. We don't want to go that far.
	Comparison with denied alternative	If we entered the furniture field, it would be much more difficult. We really don't understand anything of furniture. How to build a couch? We needed a very good partner, which we could rely upon and who knows what he's talking about. He had to empower us and then we had to teach that all the people in our company from the top to the bottom. This would be a big step. Well, a lot of our clients [interior designer] also sell furniture. The channel would be there. But considering the product, it would be very complicated. We don't touch furniture at the moment. This would be a big step.
	Estimation of the future (on the basis on past situations and developments)	The design [of the new carpet collection] is very nice and creative. Well, there are a lot of nice and creative designs out there in the market. This will not suffice. And the quality is top. These are the benchmarks in this specific field. Unfortunately, the bed linen collection [of a new competitor] is very bad. It is beautiful, but it will not hurt us extremely. Anyhow, we don't sell a lot of bed linen to our interior designer. This are the only clients, the new competitor could gain some market shares. The only competitor, which was on the same level as we are is competitor X. And he moves into another direction [...] I have the feeling that he often does what we are doing. A year later, he does the same as we have done before. He better should show up with something unique. No, the cycles to develop new collections have not become shorter. Especially when it comes to the interior and home textiles. It is normal for the bed linen, that a collection last for about a year. This is very close to the fashion industry. There are end clients. If the last year, orange was the preferred color, you cannot sell orange the current year anymore. It is just like that. And when it comes to bed linen, it's not different. The interior and home textiles are bought every 10 years. Unfortunately, this rhythm has not changed... (laughing). The rhythm doesn't get shorter.

Table 4 Mobilization of the future in managerial judgment.

	Future	
	Pattern	Citation
Judgment	Alternative option(s)	There is the alternative possibility to do the sewing in Japan [instead of in Thailand]. This would not cost more. This means, we could ask ourselves to stop sewing on our own in Thailand and outsource it in Japan in order to reduce the loss. Letting Japan go broke would be an expensive alternative.
	Plan for the future	Next year, we will launch a new carpet collection, an improved and extended one. On a higher level, than to existing one. On a more creative level. This is the first step for the expansion into a lifestyle supplier... First of all, we want to stay in the textile business... ...but we want to establish an accessories collection in the textile field, a carpet collection.
	Projection of existing plans onto a concrete picture of the intended future	There must be a positive cash flow from the sixth year on. Or rather, there must be increasing revenues from the second year on. Until now, we don't want to make furniture or lamps... I say "until now". In 5 or 10 years, it maybe looks different. But for the moment, we stay in the textile business. There are no boundaries. But I just tell this here... (laughing). For the time being, the boundaries are set by the textile business, because we know this field. The next step will be to enter the field of accessories. I mean products such as plaids or throws. That's not difficult, that's just fabrics with nice sewing. That's what we all know. We don't need to explain this to our representatives. New products should enable to benefit from synergies. One product should support another product. The sales channels must be existing. One could say that if we could launch a really well designed lifestyle program, we would become better known in general. This would promote the brand at the end consumers'. And the some of the architects would know the brand and would be more interested. Well, why should the competitors be interesting? Of course, if we enter the carpet market, there are a lot of competitors, which are much stronger in this market. We don't want to become a carpet company. We have got our brand, we have got our standards for quality and services and that's what we will deliver. And if one of our clients tells me, that he will buy everything from a competitor... fine, the he should buy there...
	Estimation of how the future will be	I say, if Gucci starts to sell bed linen, then competition starts to become important. Because in this case, we cannot compete anymore. If Gucci wants to enter this market, he is able to kick us out of some of the department stores. In the bed linen stores, the new competitor must fight for an entry into the shelf. The bed linen stores haven't heard yet about the name of this competitor. This is a new brand which has to be introduced at first. In turn, if the well-known brands decide to extensively enter the bed linen market. If they decide to do advertising with a much higher financial capacity, this will be a problem for us. In our company, the product management and the design department are very important. If the people there are not capable to work anymore, the replacement would be crucial. It is especially important, that these people get along well with the sales representatives, in order to get the information that is important for the development of the new collection. The interior and home textiles will stay a niche market. The big names are not interested in this market. Some of them had begun but stopped again, because they didn't make money with it. It is so much about details... branding is just not important.

answer the question of how and why judgment and justification potentialize and generalize future enactments. In the third step, the clustered and structured judgment and justification practices were bundled into an empirically grounded and theoretically inspired conceptualization (see, Illustration 2). This conceptualization differentiates specific justification and judgment qualities and the dynamics of relating to the present, past, and future. In a fourth step, we explored how transcendence of the enactment of the

present by mobilization of the past and future in different situations and interactions leads to transcendence of the situational and creation of potentialities for organizational development (see, Illustration 3).

The second author independently analyzed transcribed material and first-order codes. In addition, he cross-checked this data with his analysis of portions of the interview material. Essentially, the first author inductively generated codes and interpretations drawn from the field along with his notes

Table 5 Mobilization of the past in managerial justification.

	Past	
	Pattern	Citation
Justification	Reasoning and giving evidence	There are two reasons [for the loss in Thailand]... [Japan compared to Thailand] has a very active management, which correspondingly could reduce the costs And until now, there must not be asked the question, if we want to stop with Japan. The Japanese company has a lot of deposits and borrowed funds, which are guaranteed from the holding. And there is another reason: we are market leader in Japan. It would be a pity to give up this position. When it comes to contracts, this is also the reason for our showroom in London. London is the biggest specifying center in the world, as it is called. This means, that architects specify a certain fabric, which should be used for an object. This is the biggest market for interior and home textiles in the world, the city of New York and its surroundings. We have to keep the showroom in the most important design center, one has to say. It means, we are willing to make losses. And a further way to growth is to promote contracts for objects in Germany. This is something, we are already very active in Switzerland and France. In other words, we sell through the architects. As stated before, we actively do contracts for objects in Switzerland and France. One third of the revenue is generated from this field. It is about big purchases in this field. We need it [lifestyle products and accessories] because of two reasons: The first comes from Japan. The Japanese company needs more creative accessories. The ones we already sell there are very boring. They have nice fabrics and the create some cushions or plaids, and that's it. There is neither rhyme nor reason in that. Furthermore, we are talking about this with a big department store, which wants to purchase lifestyle products from us.
	Giving evidence for decision	The major order in the contract business came from the showroom, which we have developed. We also have established the showroom to get into business with architects. And the contracts increased in the surroundings of Munich.
	Weighing up pros and cons	The new showroom in London is located in Chelsea Harbour. It's a little bit expensive, but it is the best place to open a showroom.
	Comparison of similar issues	We are talking about 200,000.- Swiss Francs a year [loss of the showroom in New York]. Well, that's also a lot of money, but compared to the sewing factory in Thailand [which shows similar losses], which is just unnecessary
	Deep reflection on negative experiences	While the shop in Basel is a disaster... It has no communication impact, nobody visits. We don't sell anything. And if we did not close it, we just would have lost more money.

and recordings. The second author analyzed the data as an outsider, to double check and refine the analysis. The two analytical outcomes were compared and consolidated, resulting in four distinct analytical phases. The two authors' different perspectives allowed the minimization of biases from a too-close relationship to the field or a too-detached relationship with the case. The iterative steps were supported by discussions with the research community and in workshop settings where we exchanged our interpretations with the CEO and other company managers. In addition, we held a workshop at company headquarters where father and son, along with other entrepreneurs and managers, discussed their exchange of the role of CEO. Further, we refined our conceptualizations during a 3 h meeting with the new CEO. During this discussion, the new CEO confirmed our findings. He jointly reflected on how he potentializes and generalizes for future enactments in particular ways. We were thus able to involve the CEO in the theorization process.

Findings

We present our empirical findings in two parts. First, we identify mechanisms that explain how management mobilizes pasts and futures for judgment and justification during the enactment of current issues. The mechanisms illustrate our theoretical basis, while demonstrating in detail how mobilization of pasts and futures occurs. Second, we show how the enactment of the present is transcended by potentialization and generalization for future enactments.

Mobilization of pasts and futures for judgment and justification

We identified mechanisms of justification and judgment with respect to their mobilization and translation of the past and future in present situations. We grouped them into

mechanisms of judgment or justification, mobilizing past or future. This process led to four distinct but intertwined groups of mobilization mechanisms. We will illustrate the four aspects of managerial engagement separately on the level of the first-order findings. We will then explore their relationships based on processes of generalization and potentialization in our second-order findings.

Mobilization of the past in managerial judgment

We identified several mechanisms management uses to judge issues by mobilization of the past. Table 3 provides an overview of these mechanisms. We discuss each of these aspects of managerial judgment and justification. Then, we explore two illustrative examples to provide an understanding of various mechanisms (see, Table 3).

Management judges the current loss of the sewing factory in Thailand by *valuation of the issue as severe*. The factory in Thailand sews customized orders for the Japanese branch that has been suffering from the difficult economic situation in Japan. Management judged this situation unnecessary, feeling a change was required. The CEO stated: “The loss in Thailand isn’t necessary. This must not be. We really have to ask ourselves what we are doing there.” The New York showroom loses a similar amount of money. In contrast to the loss in Thailand, the loss in New York is considered reasonable because it represents an investment in one of the biggest world markets: it promises a future return on investment. The CEO stated: “We are talking about CHF 200,000 in losses per year from the New York showroom. This is also a lot. But, in comparison, the losses in Thailand aren’t necessary.” Further, management critically evaluates that the loss in Thailand is the result of limited local managerial capabilities. In its judgments of these situations, management thus mobilizes past experiences with losses in foreign countries in different, context-dependent ways by its engagement in alternative ways to mobilize past experiences.

When management *reviews and proves previous estimations and plans* by referring to examples of success or failure, it demonstrates the mechanism employed to judge issues in the present. For example, management regularly refers to three showrooms. It considers a new German showroom to be proof of the company’s successful strategic focus on the German architectural segment. The CEO stated: “The large order received by the contract business came from the showroom we recently built. We built it specifically because we want to do business with architects. Many more architects now visit the showroom in Munich.” However, the New York showroom continuously loses money. Further, TEXTILE plc is currently investing heavily in a new London showroom. Both investments are controversial. When referring to the success story of Germany, management uses that example as a platform to prove its estimations that the introduction of showrooms is a promising approach to gaining access to the architectural world despite initial losses. The controversy of the losses in New York and London are reduced by explicating and memorizing the positive example of Munich. As we see, each mobilization of the past in the judgment of a particular issue introduces past experiences in a specific, sometimes contradictory, way.

Mobilization of the future in managerial judgment

We identified a series of mechanisms to judge issues in the present by mobilization of potential situations, impressions, expectations, visions, or plans that relate to future developments (see, Table 4). The projection of a potential future is characterized by a variety of forms and formats that occur in managerial enactment. This indicates the experimental nature of these future-oriented engagements.

Management judges issues by *the projection of existing plans onto a concrete picture of the intended future*. For example, TEXTILE plc is developing an improved carpet collection. It is also planning the introduction of a lifestyle program. The CEO stated:

We will now think about doing some accessories, home accessories, living accessories. That will be... That could be sold to a bed linen customer just as well as it could be sold to a decorator or more likely an interior store. But most importantly, needless to say, it’s the brand that is the same. And I think as our strategy... Because the brand is the same, some of the customers are the same, the look, and the feel of the visuals should overlap. It should look like the same company. They shouldn’t be identical. But it should feel like “ah you do bed linen, you do interior fabrics” and it feels like the same company.

Management creates a mental picture of the ideal situation and the customer groups that will buy these accessories. Management explains how the situation should look and feel. It provides an example of a potential customer’s future reaction in a direct voice that empowers this projection. In addition, management’s statement of the requirements needed for execution of the plan can be seen as a coherent continuation of the present into the future. Similarly, management clarifies the limits of the extension in its discussion of furniture not intended to be part of the extension, despite the fact that furniture might be included in 5–10 years.

When management discusses competition, it regularly judges it by *the estimation of how the future will be*. For example, management attempts to foresee existing and new competitors’ potential moves. The CEO stated:

I am not afraid of big brands in the interior textile business. If Gucci starts to sell curtains, this isn’t very thrilling. In the bed linen business, I’m a bit worried. [...] If Gucci starts to do bed linen, I’m going to be interested in competition. Because then, I cannot compete. If Gucci decides to capture the Swiss market and to outcompete ourselves, they will succeed. If so, it starts to become interesting, because we will have a problem.

Although Gucci might enter the bed linen market, management assumes Gucci’s entry in the interior textile market is unlikely. The interior textile market is fragmented. Only specialists who possess in-depth knowledge survive. The brand is of little importance to the end customer. However, if a well-known fashion brand were to enter the bed linen market, TEXTILE plc would suffer because this type of brand possesses greater market power. It could appropriate TEXTILE plc’s shelf space in the sales channels. Therefore, management discusses the probability of this development as important for TEXTILE plc. Some years ago, the company was forced to sell its fashion-related business to finance the company’s continued existence. The discussion about Gucci

helps to clarify the company's relationship to fashion-related business because the company lacks sufficient market power to compete there.

Mobilization of the past in managerial justification

Although management judges issues and these issues are considered relevant, it is not always apparent why the judgment is acceptable for other organizational members and that these issues should be discussed. In other words, a topic must become an issue before its judgment can be communicated and discussed. Justification thus implies a normative orientation for what is "right" and "wrong" and for respective decisions and actions. We thus identify mechanisms of justification by mobilization of the past (see, Table 5).

By *reasoning and giving evidence* related to past experiences, management legitimizes issues as subjects suitable for enacting the present. For example, different IT systems have been installed in different countries. Many discussions have been conducted about implementing a centralized system. However, it is not yet clear if an urgent need exists for such a difficult transformation. Discussion about the issue of urgency must first be justified. The CEO noted:

We will have a common IT system in 2012. I'm glad to say that we won't make that. [laughing] Nobody here was, I think, particularly eager to change the IT systems. We will have to. Eventually. But 2012 is not the year that we will be running on a new IT system. No way. . . . Couldn't do it. . . . Except for Japan and Thailand. Japan and Thailand had a special situation. They had an old. . . oh sorry, ancient SAP version [laughing] [. . .] So we had to change. That was the urgency of the change in the IT system.

Based on the example above, no controversy exists about the issue itself. However, timing must be justified to make the issue discussable. The exception in Japan provides an example of a justification for why the IT system change could suddenly become urgent due to past risk considerations. The timing and risk involved in the change to a common IT system is justified by the mobilization of an extreme case.

Another type of mechanism we identified is *deep reflection on negative experiences*. The case of the bed linen shop in Basel, Switzerland, presents a good illustration of this mechanism. Previously, the company intended to open at least one new bed linen store yearly to increase channels for bed linen products. The Basel shop was a financial disaster because wealthy clients did not shop at its mall location.

Bed linen manager:	But if we <i>have</i> to do one [new shop] every year, we cannot finance this. We are too small.
CEO:	Yes, so I think it is an important change in strategy. At the time, it was decided "every year we do one to two new stores." Now it's Munich, now it's Dusseldorf, now whatever. . . . We can't. . . . Basel has taught us that we are not retail experts. And it's just too difficult.
Bed linen manager:	Too risky for our situation. [. . .]
CEO:	Yes. . . . So I note "change in strategy." We. . . . How did you say that?
Product manager:	We will open shops as. . .
CEO:	. . . the opportunity arises.

Management justifies its current actions of opening, keeping, and closing shops based on a specific interpretation of the Basel case. Although the approach is considered promising, management believes failures are caused by particular circumstances, such as wrong location and lack of retail experience. They are evaluated to have implications for the overall approach to new stores and showrooms. Management decides development must occur at a slower pace. It also believes that the approach should be rather opportunistic than strictly planned. Reflection on the evolution of the negative experience and the reasons for failure was intensive and deep. Overall, this type of managerial justification shows how experience is mobilized to help make more robust intuitive judgments for future enactment.

Mobilization of the future in managerial justification

Although judgment can mobilize the past and future by systematic experimentation with potential perspectives, justification is more systematically biased toward the past. Our study only reveals one mechanism of justification by *estimation of future risks*. We discovered two issues that demonstrate how such justification can occur. First, the company's investment in the London showroom is justified by management's emphasis on expected promising perspectives. Management notes that the contract can be terminated in 3 years. The CEO states: "It is a rent for three years. Stated differently, it's a lease, which we could exit after three years." Management thus transforms the strategy of opening new stores into an experimental approach that can be used to explore the potential of a new location. A possible exit from the contract is mobilized to diminish pressure on the current investment. In a similar argument, management justifies diversification of a new carpet collection because the low risks involved can mobilize the future of production on demand. The CEO stated: "We hope to generate another 300,000 to 400,000 Swiss francs in revenue if we launch a more founded program with nicer products. If not, we do not risk a lot, as everything is produced on demand." Because the carpet producer is a reliable partner and production will only be done on demand, the estimated risk is low. Management mobilizes the future by indication of risks involved in decisions and actions that must be agreed on in actual situations. This mobilization is necessary for these decisions and actions to receive full support within the organization.

Based on our results, we specify how management enacts current situations and issues by judgment and justification. These findings resonate with empirical research conducted on management "in the making" (Mintzberg, 1971, 2009). We must note that the organization-specific repertoire of mechanisms we identified is idiosyncratic. It is understood in its unique processual unfolding. Further, given the company's particular challenges as it faces industry transformation and management changes during the transition between two generations, we found that multiple interactions are biased toward specific challenges and problems that must be resolved. Essentially, the company remains open to new opportunities and future-oriented investments. Yet, these changes are established based on new judgment and justification patterns that are enforced by the engagement of new management. Simultaneously, new management uses these engagements to establish and empower itself.

Transcending the actual situation by generalization and potentialization

By our examination of the multiple mechanisms of judgment and justification, we identify several important modes management employs to transcend the present. We find answers to the initial question of how managerial action interrelates with organizational becoming by reducing difference and creating shared meaning. The actual situation and its enactments advance the particular issue or decision at hand by generalizing and creating guidance. They also create potential for future situations and enactments for other emergent issues and decisions. Additionally, they rearrange the organization-specific repertoire of enactment itself used to mobilize the past and future. The following illustration provides an overview of the identified modes of judgment and justification (see, Fig. 2). We explore these modes in detail in this section. We see these findings as more general patterns that might also be found in other organizations (Yin, 2003).

Transcendence by judgment

We observed that *managerial judgment* can transcend an actual situation in two particular modes. First, judgment questions whether a particular situation, event, or issue confirms *continuity* or indicates *discontinuity* (see for a related argument on path dependence and path creation: Garud & Karnoe, 2001). From a process perspective, we can always interpret and enact the present continuously or discontinuously in relation to the past and future. When continuity is emphasized, managerial judgment establishes the foundation for (a) the comparison to and relation of current issues to past issues; (b) the use of present insights to extrapolate future possibilities; and (c) the narration of a relationship between present and past experiences. The actual situation is transcended by generalization and potentialization in the support of similar enactments of future issues. For example, when management mobilizes the success story of the Munich showroom, future managerial enactments can support the idea of opening new showrooms and targeting contracts with architects. When management emphasizes discontinuity, it can introduce the possibility of new references to be used to block comparisons or to devalue experiences as sources for the identification of future opportunities. Management transcends the actual situation by its support of future enactments. For example, when management mobilizes the negative Basel shop

experiences, it potentially influences future enactments, as (a) more retail experience will be needed in the future; (b) more time will be required for the search for suitable locations; and (c) it will have to slow down the process of opening new shops.

The second mode of judgment questions the importance of management's efforts to *close down* a controversy in a particular situation, or the importance of management's efforts to *open up* for new possibilities (Callon, 1986; Latour, 2005). When an issue is closed down, a (temporal) decision is reached on how to proceed. The example of management's decisions on a common IT system demonstrates that, for the time being, it is decided to slowly introduce a centralized system. Management judges the urgency in this situation to be low. Management transcends the situation by sensitization of organizational members to the future importance of this issue. However, management does not express an urgent need to speed up the future enactments. When management opens up to new possibilities, it can create room for experimentation. For example, if management conducts a role-play of how customers might enact a new accessories line in the future, future opportunities can be identified. The situation is transcended by experimentation that explores the future in a way that sensitizes organizational agents to new opportunities. Yet, it also demonstrates risks that might be enacted as the issue unfolds. Thus, we can see how management enacts present situations while it simultaneously embeds them in the broader contexts of time relations (to past and future) and organizational references (that are mobilized in multiple, organization-related situations).

Transcendence by justification

Similar to managerial judgment, we described *managerial justification* as the transcendence of an actual situation in two particular ways. First, justification asks whether a development, event, or decision, is a *necessity* or a *possibility*. This statement implies different interpretations of a present situation. One possible way to emphasize necessity is by the correlation of causal relationships that indicate high probability of a particular development. For example, when management discusses the new accessories collection, it mentions that textile shops generally are being forced to change from being curtain producers to accessories retailers because retailers are considered more commercially attractive. When management emphasizes the need for a new accessories collection, it transcends the

Figure 2 Modes of transcendence.

Source: Authors.

Figure 3 Generalization and potentialization in processes of transcendence.
Source: Authors.

situation by becoming sensitive to the development of a new line. Similarly, when management emphasizes developments as possibilities rather than necessities, it indicates the contingency of an event or its interpretation. Thus, it introduces alternatives (Jullien, 2006). The example of the accessories line presented above demonstrates management's emphasis on possibilities. Management believes it is necessary to create an accessories line; however, the possibilities are very broad. Management transcends the situation by the creation of space for multiple experiments about the accessories line. This act will influence future enactments and not-yet-realized potentials such as the creation of a furniture line.

The second mode of justification asks whether a particular decision can be identified as *being within* the managerial action space or as *being outside* (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). When management engages in the mobilization of organizational identities rather than concepts, it can justify actions in its own name or in the name of the organization. If an actual situation can be identified as being within the managerial action space, it can be transcended as future enactments that will be considered to be within the managerial action space. Often, the *border* between inside and outside is based on a specific topic management must clarify and assign. For example, when management discussed Gucci as a potential entrant, it clarifies that Gucci would not be a threat to the interior fabrics business. However, it states that Gucci would be a substantial threat to the bed linen business. In other words, management's observation of and preparation for competitors' moves is within the managerial action space for bed linen but not for interior fabrics. Further, management emphasizes that, similar to fashion brands, the company's brand is important even if the company does not re-enter the fashion business. Thus, some aspects of the fashion industry play a role in future enactments, whereas others can be considered to be outside.

In Fig. 3, we present a simplified figure that demonstrates how management transcends actual situations by generalizations and potentializations that arise in judgment and justification. Whereas generalizations create guiding principles or implicit theories for future enactments, potentialization

creates and contextualizes an action space within which future action may occur (see, Fig. 3).

Discussion

Building on the strong process view (Chia, 1999; Hernes, 2008; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002), we suggest in this paper that management be conceptualized as a situational enactment of current issues simultaneously transcending the situation. The findings provide answers to the under-examined question of how managerial action and organizational becoming interrelate. On a first-order level, we could identify several mechanisms of how pasts and futures are mobilized to judge and justify in current situations. For example, previous estimations and plans have been proven by mobilizing the success story of closing a lucrative contract with an architect. The example shows how organizational becoming occurs as a reduction of differences (Langley & Tsoukas, 2010) and development of shared meaning (Weick, 1995) in at least three ways. First, the success story was not known to the others in the first place. By making the story known to all country managers, it becomes part of the organizational. The people that are part of the situation identify it as common success to be drawn on. Second, the experience of the past was mobilized at a time when the plan had to be supported in the light of the losses in other showrooms. Therefore, the mobilization could defend against potential objections, reducing differences and developing shared meaning concerning the initial plan. Third, the financial potential of earlier estimations was exemplified, which created a common desire and motivation. Other country managers were more likely to want to increase their revenues by trying to place large contracts themselves.

Further insight could be gained on a second-order level. We could illustrate and specify how management transcends the situation and potentially influences organizational becoming in the future by generalization and potentialization. For example, judgment supports either continuity or discontinuity. For the showroom example, managerial judgment clearly confirmed the previously taken path and strengthened continuity. Generalization and potentialization

was supposed to be in line with what has previously been decided as being important for organizational success. The more continuity on a certain issue and topic is stressed and agreed upon, the more likely organizational members will behave in this way in future situations. The more discontinuity is stressed and agreed upon, the more likely people will depart from previous paths (Garud & Karnoe, 2001) on the basis of situational interaction.

On a general level, our findings contribute to the strong process view with evidence for the empirical soundness of the logic of immanence (Chia, 1999) and transcendence (Simpson & Weiner, 1989). We were able to identify how specific pasts and futures are mobilized, which can be considered an act of making immanence transparent. Our findings also demonstrate how enactments experienced in the present can be examined to provide better understanding of the ways that the actual and the potential, as well as the concrete and the general, relate to each other (Hernes, 2008). Barring some exceptions (Hernes & Maitlis, 2010), until now, research on the strong process view has been rather philosophical in nature (Mullarkey, 2010). It lacked detailed empirical studies. Our work systematically drew from radical process theory to address particular management- and organization-related phenomena empirically. We did so without reliance on linear, sequential, or causal reenactments and without a shift toward a weak process view (Langley, 2009; Van de Ven & Poole, 2005) focusing strictly on enactments in the present and their influence on organizational becoming in the present and in the future. Our conceptual framework and its empirical elaboration serve as a possible reference for further empirical studies within the strong process view.

In addition to these core contributions to management from the strong process view, and to the strong process view itself, this paper might inspire studies that draw on the theory of structuration (Giddens, 1984). A focus on present enactments allows for recursivity of the micro and macro aspects in organizations to occur simultaneously. A simultaneous view of structuration might reduce some challenges involved in empirical studies in this theoretical stream (Pozzebon, 2004) because this view allows observation of action in the present and its direct and simultaneous relationship to organizational becoming. This is in contrast to the preservation of the distinction between micro and macro by explanation of sequential influences on a timeline. Further, our study could inspire the development of theories on organization and time (Adam, 2004; Bluedorn & Denhardt, 1988; Hassard, 1991; McGrath & Rotchford, 1983). A limited number of studies have examined time from a subjective experience perspective (see, e.g. Butler, 1995). Because we based our conceptualization on the strong process view, we incorporate time in the form of organizationally dispersed, heterogeneous experiences of the past and expectations of the future. They accumulate in the present and allow the present to be lived as an undividable movement of becoming (Bergson, 1991).

Because we explored the situated nature of managerial work, we can identify several practical implications that resonate with a recent call for research related to managerial practice (Johnson, Langley, Melin, & Whittington, 2007; Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003): first, the enactment of specific issues in present situations can exert a stronger impact on organizational processes and outcomes than might normally be assumed. *Heroic* managerial interventions are

observed in their situated embeddedness, leading to a more modest and pragmatic understanding of management *in the making*. Second, our findings demonstrate that managerial power, agency, and legitimacy are less obvious and more fragile than previously considered in the literature on management, leadership, and entrepreneurship (see, e.g. Alvarez & Barney, 2005; Grant, 2006; Prahalad & Hamel, 1996). Still, our research also demonstrates how managerial action enacts and influences organizational processes beyond situated enactment only. Third, by reflecting its idiosyncratic and organization-specific modes of judgment and justification, management learns how certain issues are currently enacted. It also learns how these issues could be enacted alternatively and how such processes could lead to generalization and potentialization. In this sense, our study reveals some taken-for-granted premises of managerial action. This finding is particularly relevant in the context of management succession and organizational change.

Conclusion

Our paper focuses on the interplay between managerial action and organizational becoming. We developed an alternative conceptualization based on the strong process view, presented a single case study of a family-owned, internationally renowned Swiss textile company, and revealed important in-depth empirical insights on a strong process view on management, and, in particular, on how managerial action and organizational becoming interrelate. The findings support our initial conceptualization of management as transcendence. At a more fundamental level, our research suggests an alternative view of management as it relates to organizational becoming, and its impact within organizations. If process takes ontological priority over substance, management can be considered a continuous enactment of current situations confronted with current issues, a heterogeneous past and an unknowable future. In our case study, management's impact is limited to situational enactments and its transcendence rather than heroic interventions. However, management remains important: It is deeply embedded in everyday life, mundane interactions, and operative procedures. In addition, management is no longer a formal role. Rather, it is actually an empirical question of whether, how, and why particular situated engagements influence organizational becoming.

Every theoretical conceptualization or empirical study builds on particular premises. These premises indicate the boundary conditions of a research study and help us to better understand its limitations and potentialities. Our study could benefit from further research in several respects. Our focus on a family-owned company, and, in particular, on managerial engagement in a process of management succession, is very specific. It would be of great interest to learn how similar activities take place in other organizations. Further, our focus on situated management in the present allows close observation of mundane managerial activities; however, the study of how particular issues unfold themselves during managerial engagements might be another avenue for the advancement of research. Further investigations could also engage in systematic comparisons of interpretations of potentialization and generalization and actual enactments. Finally, a more detailed conceptualization of managerial judgment and justification

related to current organizational theorization would be interesting. Despite these limitations, our study is one of only a few contributions that attempt to provide empirical insights into managerial action based on a radical focus on the present. Thus, it can be identified as a study that contributes to the call for empirical research on the interplay between managerial action and their organizational significance (Willmott, 1987). The study serves as a basis for the advancement of the respective conceptual discussion and for further empirical work from the perspective of the strong process view.

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