

Strategizing and history

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Introduction

The living role of history has so far been missing in the Strategy as Practice literature. This chapter emphasizes strategizing in the context of time and suggests a dialogical openness to the past. The literature on Strategy as Practice predominantly sees practice ‘as something that firstly can be chosen and aligned through some form of deliberative weighting on the part of a strategist (albeit on a micro-social scale), and secondly, can be observed and classified by a researcher in terms of its outputs, or effects’ (Chia and Holt 2006, p. 637). Here, a challenge is to interlink close observations of the micro-level activities of people ‘with a continuous regard for the wider institutional context that informs and empowers such activities’ (Johnson *et al.* 2007, p. 22). Even if scholars taking up this challenge put individuals’ activities in context, the contextual dimension of time is still seldom included, eschewing historical frameworks.

The aim of this chapter is to take the Strategy as Practice perspective a step further by elevating the historical dimension as a living tradition that shapes present future-oriented activities performed by practitioners in their representation and reconstruction of the past. Our focus centres on strategizing in relation to *hermeneutical situatedness*, prompting a dialogical openness to the past. Hermeneutical situatedness allows the practitioner to take on the appearance of a social historical being always affected by the testimony of history and under its influence (Gadamer 1989).

The purpose is to show how hermeneutical situatedness shapes strategizing, that is, how unfolding strategic activities bring in history through the practices and the discourse of the past, broadening present future-oriented strategizing

to include history, represented and reconstructed at present as a living tradition. With the present as the starting point for a (re)turn to history, our purpose concerns the present–future–past relationality with reference to the practitioner’s existential being in and belongingness to the world. Implied in this is the dialogical openness to the past providing the practitioner with a living relationship with history, which means that investigating history as a context and making it available to present activities is not sufficient. As Gadamer (1989, p. 168) points out, a historical context does not provide a living relationship with the individual ‘but rather a merely ideative representation (Vorstellung)’.

We hope to contribute with new understanding of how strategizing unfolds. In agreement with Chia and Holt (2006), we see a need for a revised understanding, accounting for strategizing as emanating from ‘an internalized *modus operandi* that reflects our culturally mediated disposition’ (p. 637). Here history as a living tradition plays a pivotal role.

This chapter continues with a presentation of our perspective, anchored in a philosophical hermeneutically based understanding of practice, emphasizing the practitioner as a social historical being supported by the notion of hermeneutical situatedness that accentuates the present–future–past relationality. This perspective is put into the context of the Strategy as Practice literature. After a methodological note, closely linked to our theoretical framework, there follows an analysis of different strategic activities providing insights into strategizing as hermeneutically situated. Finally, the concluding discussion brings our interpretations and insights together in a coherent view on strategizing and history through the living cultural tradition associated with hermeneutical situatedness. It also directs attention to future research issues.

Towards a philosophical hermeneutically based perspective on Strategy as Practice

Albeit Strategy as Practice studies do not deny the historical dimension, 'how it is that people *live* in history' (Lave 2003, p. 21) is mainly ignored. In focus is 'the activities of those who enact, develop and deliver strategies; with the activities related to *the doing of strategy*' (Johnson *et al.* 2007, pp. 16–17). The Strategy as Practice perspective directs attention to praxis and practices (Whittington 2003), where strategizing actors draw on certain practices when acting: 'they shape strategic activity through who they are, how they act and what practices they draw upon in that action' (Jarzabkowski *et al.* 2007, p. 10). Intra-organizational praxis is marked by extra-organizational practices, implying an integrated approach to the study of practice (Johnson *et al.* 2007; Whittington 2006). The actors construct activity, produce strategic action when interacting with distributed and accessible practices. Feldman and Pentland (2003, p. 101) describe the relevant activities as performative routines, which mean 'specific actions, by specific people in specific places and times'.

Practice scholars contribute to an understanding of many different issues and, given the multiplicity of issues, it is not surprising that there is no unified practice approach (Schatzki 2001). Neither is there a concern for history and its living dimension. A prime concern is rather the provision of detailed descriptions of everyday activity for the development of knowledge to enhance the firm's ability to generate competitive advantage. An organization's competitive edge depends on the coordination of the development of knowledge across the division of labour and on the productive move of knowledge within the organization (Brown and Duguid 2001). In this context, a crucial issue is to manage practice-based knowledge. As for effective service innovation, an integration of the firm's capabilities with customers' needs is required (Dougherty 2004). Equally important is to practise product innovation and to develop knowledge of how a product fits the firm (Dougherty 1992). Related to this, middle managers are supposed to use their stock of shared knowledge when involved in sensemaking and sensegiving (Rouleau 2005).

On the individual level, it is important to empower effective practices. Therefore, the concern is the performance of the practitioners with their local effectiveness, including a mastery of the routine (Whittington 2003) and a need for better praxis that help shape more appropriate practices and practitioners (Whittington 2006).

Strategy as Practice studies rarely discuss history as a *living tradition* with a focus on the practitioner as a social historical being. History is not merely a flexible resource the practitioner through lived experience selectively draws upon and invokes in the here-and-now time and space, as Samra-Fredericks (2003) maintains. When turning the attention to strategizing as lived experience, one needs to dwell on the practitioner's existential conditions. As Jarzabkowski (2005, p. 24) emphasizes, one must 'get inside the lived experience of the practitioners as they are doing strategy, understanding the multitude of actions and practices that constitute their "reality" in doing strategy'. But since the framework proposed by Jarzabkowski is informed by activity theory and theories of situated action and distributed cognition, the question arises on how the notion of lived experience comes into realization in the study. 'It is difficult to infer from the view of strategy as a goal-directed activity historically embedded in the organization how lived experience of the practitioners relates to the goal-directedness and the historical embeddedness' (Ericson 2007, p. 33). There is a need to secure a more philosophically based theoretical grounding of the Strategy as Practice perspective, which means placing primacy on ontologically oriented questions and taking into account the practitioner's engagement in the world (Chia and MacKay 2007).

Since hermeneutics, as shaped in the late twentieth century in the form of philosophical hermeneutics, is intimately linked with the study of history (Bernstein 1983), it is highly relevant to draw on philosophical hermeneutical insights. With reference to Gadamer (1989), a prominent figure in the development of philosophical hermeneutics, we direct our attention to the practitioner as a social historical human being, placing primacy on the practitioner's ontological engagement in the world. Influenced by the phenomenology of

Husserl and Heidegger, Gadamer inquired into the element of tradition, arguing that it constitutes the 'real nature' of human sciences. He put forth the idea that 'research in human sciences cannot regard itself as in an absolute antithesis to the way in which we, as historical beings, relate to the past. At any rate, our usual relationship to the past is not characterized by distancing and freeing ourselves from tradition' (p. 282).

The practical dimension of philosophical hermeneutics, inherited from practical philosophy with its focus on praxis, brings effective-historical consciousness and *horizon* to the fore, which means that history is operative in our lives and cannot be treated as an object ontologically independent of a subject. Horizon represents the individual's standpoint and designates 'the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point' (Gadamer 1989, p. 302). As Gadamer sees it, we are always shaped by effective history. In other words, already thrown into tradition, we cannot free ourselves of tradition. Advancing the life-world idea, which derives from phenomenology and can be traced back to the idea of life-world developed by Husserl, Gadamer stresses dialogical openness in connection with a move with horizon and broadening of horizon.¹ Here, lived experience refers to an existential mode of being-in-the-world that entails the dialogical way individuals relate to each other and to the cultural past. In terms of a communicative partner and living tradition, the past suggests a move with the horizon. Horizon then denotes the representing and reconstructing of the past – in the light of present future-oriented activities. Based on dialogical openness, the practitioner as a social historical being is able to look beyond what is nearby and change the understanding of a matter. Grounded in

¹ Gadamer is strongly influenced by Aristotle's 'Ethics' and 'Politics', the task of which was to defend practical and political reason against the domination of technology-based science. This illustrates what it means to broaden one's horizon, enabling a fusion with another horizon. The appropriation of the Aristotelian insights implies that Gadamer is critical of his own situation. In the dialogical encounter with the work of Aristotle, he realizes that practice is not to be confined merely to techno-logically organized work (Bernstein 1983).

Heidegger's phenomenological thinking, Gadamer considers every encounter that takes place with another person an encounter with the lived experience of that person.

The view of history suggested in this chapter thus interlinks with the notion of lived experience as an ongoing integrative process. This experience provides the basis in the life of the practitioner, relating the practitioner to other human beings and to the cultural past. Experience is then not the discovery of facts. What we call experience and acquire through experience is a living historical process which constitutes our existential being-in-the-world (Gadamer 1989). In this process, the present and the future are brought together with the past, proposing a move beyond a chronological understanding towards a living history, which brings us to the issue of strategizing in relation to hermeneutical situatedness. With a living history, the practitioner is always affected by the testimony of the past and under its influence. Accordingly, in approaching an understanding of strategizing that accounts for hermeneutical situatedness, an important task is to relate strategizing to a mode of being that centres its focus on human communication, attributing a crucial role to language.

Language can be seen as a social event in which individuals change and develop themselves through the processes of internalization and externalization, as Berger and Luckmann (1966) posit. Further, it can be argued that language is a medium through which we live. Our talk is a form of action and a resource for accomplishing social reality (Samra-Fredericks 2003). This integration of language into life brings out an understanding of human activity in the sense that a human being always is in her horizon. As with Gadamer (1989), understanding is a form of linguistic practice. Language includes talk and action and links the human being to the world. Implicated in this conceptualization of language is the belongingness to historical tradition – to the living past.

Methodology

Our study uses an interpretative methodology influenced by philosophical hermeneutics. This means

that it rests upon the assumption that the individual and the world interrelate through the individual's lived experience of the world and, further, emphasizes hermeneutical situatedness in reference to the individual's existential connections with the world. This notion of lived experience frames our methodology and gives primacy to an interpretative study that directs the interest to consciousness and experience, accentuating a dialogical openness to experience as dependent on historical grounding. As Gadamer (1989, p. 463) purports: 'Belonging is brought about by traditions' addressing us. Everyone who is situated in a tradition [...] must listen to what reaches him from it. The truth of tradition is like the present that lies immediately open to the senses.'

Strategy as Practice as lived experience

The focus on consciousness and lived experience is essential in philosophical hermeneutics, guiding our understanding of Strategy as Practice. History is always part of the practitioner and cannot be conceived of as an object as if it were ontologically independent of a subject. In other words, history denotes effective history which sets the task for consciousness. From a philosophical hermeneutical view, consciousness then means effective-historical consciousness (Bernstein 1983). The view of consciousness and experience espoused by philosophical hermeneutics therefore differs from that of other qualitative approaches, such as ethnography, grounded theory and phenomenological approaches (Moustakas 1994).

Ethnography and grounded theory include analyses of experience as it appears in human consciousness based on a person's memory, image and meaning (Moustakas 1994). Intentional experiences are acts of consciousness that combine an outward experience of an object with the object as contained in consciousness, as Moustakas explains. Experience is studied in an object, data about which can be collected as if the object is able to free itself from the subject that studies it.

An empirical phenomenological study involves descriptions that help the researcher analyse what an experience in a particular situation means for a person having that experience. The descriptions

underpin a delineation of meaning units that are related to each other and to the situation as a whole. To clarify the meaning of a unit, the researcher eliminates redundancies and elicits what the essence of the situation is for the subject. The aim of an empirical phenomenological study is to understand, from the subject's own description, the underlying meaningful relations of experience (Kersten 1989; Moustakas 1994).

Following the *epoche* process, in Husserl's phenomenology, the researcher studies a phenomenon as far as possible free of her own preconceptions, beliefs and knowledge of the phenomenon. Consequently, it is important to refrain from 'intendings and positings such that all that is left in acceptance are those pertaining "to the sphere of the transcendental ego's ownness" in the natural attitude', as Kersten (1989, p. 49) clarifies. Expressed differently, the deliberate attempt is to return to the things themselves. The focus is on how things and facts appear to a person in consciousness, excluding empirical interpretations and existential affirmations. 'Epoché' is a Greek word that means looking for what is really there. Such a reductionist approach, characterized as transcendental phenomenology, is basically a process of internal reflection through which a subject's stream of conscious experience is analysed for disclosing the actualities and potentialities that constitute an experience (Moustakas 1994). Here *Erlebnis* is centred on, referring to a psychological understanding of experience and thus to the enduring residue of moments lived (Gadamer 1989). As Moustakas (1994, p. 41) concludes, transcendental phenomenology takes a rational path along which knowledge emerges from 'a pure ego, a person who is open to see what is, just as it is, and to explicate what is in its own terms'. The primary source of phenomenological knowledge is perceptions, with intentions and sensations making up their content. These perceptions are called horizons.

By introducing the concept of *Erfahrung*, Gadamer (1989) moves beyond an experience related to a subject, providing the basis of history as a living cultural tradition. He ascribes to experience an ontological status. Rather than placing the emphasis on horizontalization of perceptions in which the essence of a subject's experience can be

singled out, Gadamer uses the term 'Erfahrung' to designate an ongoing integrative process in which a human being is able to overturn an existent perspective and widen her horizon. Experience is subsequently related to effective-historical consciousness.

Our methodology exhibits an awareness of lived experience in the sense marked by the Erfahrung term. Not derived from the enduring residue of specific moments in a human being's life, experience is fused with the whole movement of life (Gadamer 1989). To be able to understand practice, we must take into account historical tradition and experience as lived. This is a central tenet of our philosophical hermeneutically oriented methodology.

Empirical material and methods

A case study of strategizing as human activity is presented below. It focuses on the evolution of a small domestic business firm, founded in 1923, into a global corporation with more than 1,800 employees in 2006, called Nefab. The empirical material is generated through interviews, documents and observations at top management meetings. The emphasis is on strategizing with reference to complex, interwoven activities associated with development in Nefab without marking out boundaries of a firm or company. A world of practice emerges through the language used by individuals who consider themselves representing or being associated with Nefab (Ericson 2007).

Primarily, people with many years of association with Nefab were interviewed. Furthermore, people holding a position as manager were also interviewed, as they were expected to be engaged in strategic and organizational activities related to business development. Talking to people with more than twenty years, and in one case forty-seven years, of employment provided insights into complex, interwoven activities. In total, thirty-seven interviews were conducted during the period 2002–2006, both at the Nefab headquarters in Jönköping, situated in the southern Swedish province of Småland, and at the largest subsidiary, Nefab Emballage AB, in Runemo, located in the northern Swedish province of Hälsingland. In addition, notes were taken during seven top management meetings attended

during 2004. The owners, managers, assistants, employee representatives and board members met with actively take part in a rich array of strategic activities. The titles assigned the interviewees in the text refers to the positions they held at the time of the study (2002–2006).

The questions, posed in an open-ended fashion, focused on a broad range of strategic activities associated with three major strategies: solutions-providing, product differentiation and internationalization. Questions also focused on how the interviewees were introduced to their work; what relationships with other people were established over time and how these relationships changed; if they had been engaged in organizational and other types of changes; what type of activities they had been involved in since they were employed and what critical issues they had dealt with; what the place in northern Sweden, Runemo, where the business started up, meant to them; and what terms they would use to describe their work in Nefab. The interviews mainly took the form of dialogues through which we tried to gather indications of the interviewees' lived experience while listening to what reached him or her from the past. It is, however, difficult to continuously emphasize a dialogical character of the interviews when translating the words of another person. As Czarniawska (1997) points out, many topics that are brought up in a conversation among practitioners and the researcher get reduced in space when conclusions are drawn based on the conditions set by the researcher. Therefore, there might be a tendency to wipe out nuances in the dialogues. According to Czarniawska (1997, p. 18): 'We can become at best the spokespersons for the others, *translating* their speech by saying something that we think they mean.'

Preparations for the interviews were made by reading internal newsletters and documents. The information generated from these documents gave some hints on what kind of activities people were involved in and supplemented the interview accounts, including *Nefab Annual Report*, 1985–2004; *Nefab News*, 1976–2005 (approximately 4,300 pages); *Organisation Nefab Group*; *Handbook for Team Representatives and Facilitators*; *Offering to subscribe for share in*

Nefab AB/Prospectus; NEFAB customer survey 2004 and some confidential reports. Due to the limited time allotted for completing the research project, the written material mainly concentrated on activities and changes during the past two decades.

The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The juxtaposition of material generated from interviews with material from internal documents and annual reports, and with material based on notes from observations at top management meetings, offer insight into strategizing and its temporal context with reference to present–future–past relationality. Observations means here that the researcher's attention was directed to activities that the top managers were involved in and talked about. As noticed at the meetings, the top managers agreed on making substantial efforts, on a global level, to become a more competitive and market-oriented organization, implementing a renewed product concept while letting go of past ways of thinking about the product. At these meetings, the present, the future and the past clearly were brought together. When juxtaposing the material, our interest was also drawn to activities repeatedly referred to verbally and in the written form. Repetition indicated important activities to highlight.

A Nefab world of practice emerges in our study through the language used by the interviewees and through the language used in annual reports, internal newsletters and other documents, and at the top management meetings. The vision of this world is to become the customers' global partner of complete packaging solutions. Two customer segments are particularly significant: the telecom equipment and the automotive industries. To ensure that the customers receive complete packaging solutions promptly and efficiently, operations are organized in a matrix with five market regions – Nordic; Central Europe; South Europe, Brazil and Great Britain; North America; and Asia – interacting with three functions that cut across the regional borders – Customer Solutions; Operations; and Finance and Economy.

Akin to the ethnomethodological conversation view (Garfinkel 1967), our interpretative methodological approach takes account of talk-in-interaction

and the lived strategy (Samra-Fredericks 2003), but we try also to understand Strategy as Practice as constituted in the practitioners' existential relations with history as lived tradition. At the same time, when looking into the Nefab world of practice, it is difficult to make explicit the practitioners' existential connections with the world. We cannot directly observe another person's experience or obtain data from interviews or documents about the interrelatedness between the person in question and the world in which the person lives. This would require us to live through all the conscious states and intentional acts which constitute experience (Schutz 1932). Although language serves as a mediator of a living past (Gadamer 1989), we can only gather some indications of the practitioner's lived experience while listening to what reaches the practitioner from the past at present. The activities described and discussed can be understood as life expressions connected with lived experience. According to Seeböhm (2004, p. 94), 'the lived experience of other living beings and human beings is absent for us as well. We have only their life expressions as indicators of their own lived experience. But we have no possible immediate access to, no original evidence of, the lived experience in other human beings or animals.'

Another limitation of our study concerns the focus, which is directed solely to the historical dimension. It clearly leaves out other important aspects of Strategy as Practice, such as 'tacit' methods for doing practice and talk-based interactive routines (Samra-Fredericks 2003), how agents' identities and their strategies are co-constructed (Chia and Holt 2006), and how practitioners make sense of and narrate their notions about directionality (Barry and Elmes 1997). Nevertheless, in the next section we keep our focus on strategizing interlinked with history.

Gadamer's understanding of philosophical hermeneutics lays the groundwork for the thesis that all understanding and interpretation are intrinsically connected with practical application (Bernstein 1983). In this, a bridge is implied between our practical methodological and theoretical concerns. Our methodological approach provides us with a theoretical framework. The ensuing discussion is therefore theoretically grounded in philosophical

hermeneutical concepts, subsequently guided by the notions of lived experience and the being-in-the-world mode of engagement. This means that we direct our understanding and interpretation of the empirical material towards present future-oriented strategizing, and towards changes in horizons that open up for a representation and reconstruction of the past. The fact that the practitioner is always involved in the dialectical interplay with the past enhances the practical dimension of philosophical hermeneutics. History is operative in the lives and activities of the practitioners (Gadamer 1989).

Strategizing and history – applying a philosophical hermeneutical framework

Present future-oriented strategic activities are interpreted as changes in people's views of how business should be conducted at present. Theoretically grounded in a philosophical hermeneutical understanding, these changes prompt a move of people's horizons of the past (Gadamer 1989). The activities constitute the world of practice of Nefab people. Solutions-providing, upgrading of technological knowledge and construction of machines for producing boxes of different designs are strategic activities that propose moves with the horizons of the past.

Present future-oriented solutions-providing activities serve as our empirically oriented starting point. We cannot place ourselves in the past but reach towards the past through present future-oriented activities. These activities open up to a historical dimension, coming alive in the owners' present efforts to keep in force the history of Nefab and in the words people use when talking about their here-and-now involvement. Solutions-providing brings us back to the geographical place where the Nefab business once started. It originates in the formation of a vision and its revisions, and directs attention to a business concept that both enables and constrains people to participate in the transformation of Nefab into a solutions-providing company. Solutions-providing further interrelates with box-producing which proposes a focus on the development of packaging and internationalization of trade. The present challenge faced by Nefab people to provide the

customers with solutions rather than with boxes inevitably turns to past box-producing, and internationalization activities. Accordingly, we organize the empirically oriented illustration and our philosophical hermeneutically based interpretation by first directing our interest to the geographical place, then to the vision formed by the principal owners of Nefab and its revision, to the concept of complete packaging solutions and its enabling and constraining character, and finally to internationalization and broadened horizons.

With a concern for an individual's being-in-the-world mode of engagement, we argue that the practitioner as a social historical being expresses an interest in another person for reaching an understanding that opens up for opportunities to market, produce and sell packaging solutions overseas. The concept of horizon applied here presumes lending oneself to the emerging of something else. But an encounter with tradition may also involve tensions between the familiar and the unfamiliar, as Gadamer (1989) contends.

The geographical place

From our philosophical hermeneutically based theoretical viewpoint, it is clear that present future-oriented strategic activities call attention to the past, keeping the past alive by providing links to the geographical place Runemo, where the business started up in the 1920s, manufacturing and selling wooden products for the neighbours only. From the viewpoint of the corporate telecom coordinator and key account manager, this small community remains the centre for excellent development work of the physical product:

The heart of Nefab is in Hälsingland. There is an extraordinarily high competence level in Hälsingland, foremost with regard to all types of reusable packaging solutions. I think that many companies in the world very much depend on the people there. There are some old guys who are very competent and therefore of crucial importance for the companies that operate around the world.

The accounting assistant also highlights Runemo in terms of locality and place:

I visited Nefab in Hälsingland when I began working here at the head office in Jönköping, in 2001. I

was guided around and I talked to people. It is very important to visit the place where the business once started, I think. The heart of Nefab is still in Hälsingland. I felt a very good working spirit and I really enjoyed visiting reality, as they used to say, and see how things are done and not merely sit in my office, at the head office here in Småland, counting money. The main owners have their roots in Hälsingland, which further strengthens the impression that the heart is in Hälsingland.

The principal owners, Ing-Marie Nordgren and her husband Jochum Pihl,² still care very much about Runemo, where Ing-Marie's grandfather, father and uncle built up the Nefab business, as the facilities manager emphasizes :

It should be emphasized though that the Nordgren-Pihl family cares very much about the place where the business once started. They try to maintain a positive Nefab spirit through their simple down-to-earth way of living. Ing-Marie Nordgren feels strongly for the place in Hälsingland and she puts great effort in keeping the history of Nefab in force.

A positive Nefab spirit derives from the Hälsingland place. The project leader describes the spirit in the following way:

One is very keen on making contact easy in Nefab. The Nefab spirit is about simplicity. Much of it derives from the safe northern province of Hälsingland and some from Småland. When I visited Hälsingland during a two-week introduction program I really felt the simplicity. After visiting all companies of the Group, I feel that everyone expresses pride being part of a Swedish group. When I went to our French subsidiary, the first thing I noticed in the entrance hall was the big head of an elk, which symbolizes the connection to Sweden.

The Nefab spirit contributes to keeping the history of Nefab in force with the past treated as

a living tradition and in that sense as a communicative partner of present future-oriented activities. The hermeneutical situatedness of activities brings out the past, projecting the past into the present and the future as a living tradition. There remains a continuity of meaning which links the present and the future to the past (Gadamer 1989). The geographical place of Runemo is crucial in that respect. Newly recruited people and customers visit Runemo, which also serves as a place for training sessions and annual board meetings:

The location in Hälsingland means a lot; it has a symbolic value, which has to do with the fact that the owners are firmly rooted and truthful to Hälsingland. The owners actively take part in the business through the Board and they are involved in various kinds of development projects. Customers from all over the world visit the plant in Hälsingland so there is really a strong feeling for the province. (Staff manager)

A visit to a place where everything started evokes special feelings:

As newly employed I was sent to Hälsingland, to Nefab Emballage, for an introduction during a couple of days. You stay in Gammelgården, near the production plant. A visit to the place where everything once started evokes special feelings. I think that it is the culture, sort of [...] the culture of Nefab [...] I kind of felt that and I still have that feeling.

By inviting customers from all over the world to visit the plant in Hälsingland, the ties are strengthened with the place where the cradle of the global business once stood: 'Customers from all over the world visit the plant in Hälsingland so there is really a strong feeling for the province' (staff manager).

In addition, the philosophical hermeneutical concept of history elucidates the fact that the paintings made by Ing-Marie Nordgren's father, and the son of the founder of the Nefab business, Hans-Elov Nordgren³ who was managing director during the period 1969–1982, help represent and reconstruct the past as a living tradition. The daughter

² The ownership structure changed in September 2007 with the private equity company Nordic Capital acquiring a majority stake in Nefab. Since 1983, Ing-Marie Nordgren and Jochum Pihl, representing the third-generation owners of Nefab, have been majority owners. In accordance with the agreement with Nordic Capital, Nordgren and Pihl will stay as minority owners, yet be able to exert some influence for keeping in force the history of Nefab, as Ing-Marie Nordgren points out.

³ Hans-Elov Nordgren retired in 1982 and his son-in-law Jochum Pihl was appointed managing director. Pihl left his position at the annual shareholder meeting in June 1994 and Lars-Åke Rydh became the CEO of Nefab.

presents the Nefab subsidiaries scattered around the globe with the paintings on different inauguration occasions.

My father painted a lot, especially during his part-time sick leave the last two years before he died in 1983. There were so many paintings that I wondered what to do with them all. Then I came up with the idea that the paintings might actually add something to the cultural glue or to the Nefab spirit that helps knit people together in Nefab, worldwide. So I had the paintings framed out of the particular bars that had used to be piled on to dry. Together with a résumé of the history of Nefab and a few words about my father I present our subsidiaries with the paintings, usually when a ceremony in the form of an inauguration of a new factory is taking place or in connection with a visit by the Board of Directors. My father envisioned Nefab as an international company and when leaving one of his paintings in the care of a subsidiary abroad there will be a piece of his soul in that company. I think this is a beautiful thought. (Ing-Marie Nordgren)

The paintings seem to establish a frame of reference for present, future-oriented solutions-providing activities, actualizing the days of a former managing director. Through the material used for the frames of the paintings, Ing-Marie Nordgren links local Hälsingland culture and practices to Nefab. This constructs a situation that suggests a transposition of the horizons of the employees and customers visiting the place.

Our conclusion

Activities associated with the past project into the future through a living tradition. The fact that Ing-Marie Nordgren and Jochum Pihl care very much about the place Runemo, keeping the Nefab history in force and the Nefab spirit alive, allows the past to speak repeatedly with the present and the future (Gadamer 1989). Newcomers and customers transposition themselves in the historical horizon from which the geographical place in different ways communicates with them. Here a person's own past and that of the geographical place towards which the person's historical consciousness is directed helps instigate a move of the horizon and a broadening of the horizon. The employee and the

customer are brought into a situation that forces them to look beyond what is present.

The vision and its revisions

In reference to solutions-providing, strategizing concerns the development of the complete packaging solutions concept – the CPS concept – which involves activities associated with the delivery of reliable, cost-efficient and environmentally compatible packaging solutions, including the sourcing of all packaging material. Current talk and action largely focus on how to become a more market-oriented learning organization envisioned as a CPS supplier. Strategizing with reference to present solutions-providing activities progressively directs towards the future but, at the same time, orients towards the past. Consistent with our philosophical hermeneutically based theoretical framework, what is going on at present integrates with the horizon of the past with which people in the lived-in-world move. The underlying assumptions of the lived-in-world mode of engagement prompt an interplay between and the bringing together of the present, the future and the past. Following Gadamer (1989), we contend that the strategic activities enhance the communicative feature of the past when drawing attention to the present future-oriented formation of the vision. Strategic activities accordingly refer to a hermeneutical situation which engages the practitioner.

The CPS concept originates in the formation of the vision and its continuous revisions carried out by the principal owners Ing-Marie Nordgren and Jochum Pihl, who had already expressed the idea in the 1980s of offering the customer everything associated with transport:

In the 80s we pursued the idea of expanding the vision, incorporating what we today call complete solutions, in order to offer the customer everything that is associated with transport. However the vision was not materialized, which proved that the time was not ripe. Nevertheless we learned a lot.

At the beginning of the 90s we went back to basics. In the mid-90s we encouraged a segmentation of the market, and at the beginning of 2000 we revised the vision, drawing on the experiences we had gained about complete packaging

solutions. The time was right to do that. Now this more advanced type of packaging services was requested by the market. We do still focus on refining the vision of being a global partner for complete packaging solutions and are also engaging in the continued global expansion, in particular with regard to Asia. (Ing-Marie Nordgren)

The vision suggests a stream of activities that entails discussions, expectations, agreements and continual revisions. It exhibits the future-oriented 'Nefab way', pronouncing what is becoming. The Nefab way reveals that the winner of tomorrow is an expertise company. As Lars-Åke Rydh, the CEO, remarks: 'Tomorrow's winners in the struggle over who will win customer confidence to deliver packaging will be the company with the best expertise. We will successively develop increasingly toward being a know-how company.'

'Tomorrow' designates what has not yet occurred with the arrow of time pointing to the future.

It is no longer good enough to be a skilled manufacturer of a good product. Customers want more. The general packaging skills of our organization are becoming increasingly important. During recent years, we have made determined efforts to develop our combined expertise, a work in progress that will continue in 2003. (Lars-Åke Rydh)

'Work in progress' is consistent with the vision, communicating what the customers want the product to be. The efforts to develop expertise entail a process of constructing a more advanced offer. Implicit in this work is a disjunction between a former and a latter offer that proposes revision, instigating a movement directed towards the future. To materialize the vision, to become the global partner of complete packaging solutions, the business concept requires the managers and other employees to supply its customers within selected global market segments solutions that reduce total cost and environmental impact. The imperative is to show the market that Nefab truly has a vision of providing complete packaging solutions, according to Lars-Åke Rydh.

Applying our theoretical framework, we argue that people are drawn into the reconstruction of

their horizons, which presupposes dialogical openness, not only to each other, but to the cultural past. Hermeneutical situatedness suggests here that the experience of the principal owners helps create relations to Nefab employees and to the past.

Our conclusion

The vision implies moves of the historical horizons. In accordance with Gadamer (1989), these particular moves represent changes that occur over time in the standpoints of the principal owners, the managers and others. The vision pictures what Ing-Marie Nordgren and Jochum Pihl want the company to reach for. Here, future orientation manifests in the difference between the 1980s and the beginning of the 2000s. The principal owners' focus on refining the vision clearly marks a horizon movement reflected by what is a revised standpoint from which the Nefab business is seen.

A business concept as enabling and constraining

The CPS concept connects with the CPS Competence project, which is carried out through teamwork that enables people to actively participate in the transformation of Nefab into a solutions-providing company with global presence, shouldering more responsibility. At the same time, several challenges are faced when implementing the CPS concept and some sales persons feel constrained about engaging in providing solutions. Drawing on our philosophical hermeneutical framework, enabling refers to the broadening of horizons whereas constraining chiefly refers to the narrowing or non-broadening of horizons. It is possible to speak of both broadening and narrowing of horizons, as Gadamer (1989) informs us.

Enabling associates with a rich variety of activities performed by Nefab people through teamwork across organizational units and regions to realize the CPC concept, reaching and securing the knowledge and competence level required by the customers. According to the director of sales and marketing, 'to offer CPS the way that our customers expect us to, we have to make knowledge accessible all over the Group. Therefore, it is very

important that we share knowledge with each other instead of building knowledge “islands”.’

The group competence coordinator defines competence in the following way: ‘your ability to deliver results, by using your knowledge, your experience and your network of experts. Right values are also a significant constituent of competence. It is important to share knowledge and information in order to increase your colleagues’ ability to deliver results.’

The staff manager is involved in competence development and teamwork on the local level, in Nefab Emballage. When looking to the future, she describes competence development as a tool for strengthening the competitiveness of the company, and the goal-oriented teamwork taking place: ‘Since production moves to low-cost countries, it becomes even more important to focus on competence. Competence development is a tool for strengthening the company’s competitiveness [...] Goal-oriented teams focus on specific tasks in accordance with a goal set before-hand.’

Teamwork implies a shift in individuals’ way of talking and acting:

earlier it was up to the managers to see that you were performing in accordance with their rules. Increasingly, responsibility for the work has shifted to the employees themselves. Today you have to develop your competence, being able to actively take part in the ongoing change processes, coping with various problems that might arise. The problems are nowadays ‘put on the floor’, so to speak, and you must be prepared to take on more responsibility. This increases your understanding of what is going on, which I think is very good. Teams composed of six to ten people are taking on more responsibility for competence development and for issues associated with quality and environment. Step by step we are making improvements. The intensified competition, also from low-cost countries, forces us to consistently guard against falling behind the competitors. (Employee representative of LO, The Swedish Trade Union Confederation, and member of the board of directors)

Teamwork is a lever for developing competence also on a global level, as the director of sales and marketing says. The establishment of centres of competence facilitates global work by encouraging

cross-border communication between teams, enabling an understanding of how to provide services that cover the entire logistics chain of the customer.

Key account managers, sales people and others immerse themselves in the customers’ experience to find out what the customers’ preferences and needs are, while also dealing with tensions that emerge between familiar and unfamiliar ways of operating on the market. The global business development manager is leading various projects in interaction with one of the key customers, namely Flextronics. He says: ‘As the Global Business Development Manager I have been assigned the task of analyzing the markets of Flextronics worldwide, designing, carrying out and coordinating various projects. My responsibility is global. At present I am cooperating with Flextronics in Poland, Hungary, China and Malaysia.’

The global business development manager refers to activities performed in encounters with representatives of the Flextronic customer with the dialogue being an important part of designing and managing projects. Our theoretical framework grounded in philosophical hermeneutical thinking helps reveal that changes and reciprocities take place through the dialogues. With standpoints revised, horizons are broadened, leading to a new understanding of the present situation, manifesting in the coordination of various projects.

Local and global teamwork activities progressively direct towards the future but do also orient towards the past. Integral to the actual teamwork is the ‘quality of freedom’ that brings with it the sense of the informal and boundaryless organization that has long since evolved (logistics manager). Corridors and coffee breaks used to work as arenas for teamwork and decision-making. As the group competence coordinator informs us, ‘many decisions were taken during discussions in the corridors, and information about the decisions was shared immediately after, at the next coffee break. Communication took place in informal ways. Projects, more loosely structured, were set up without rigorous guidance.’

What is going on at present admittedly integrates with the activities of the past. Ongoing teamwork activities are not simply a product of

purposive activities. Following Gadamer (1989), it is clear that the horizon of the present forms under the influence of the past. It is not a closed horizon but something into which people engaging in 'enabling', associated with local and global teamwork, move and move with them. Not only does the CPS concept enable people to broaden their horizons, but also imposes some constraints that seem to hinder a broadening move with the horizon of the present. There might even be a tendency to close in on the traditional (non-CPS) packaging offer.

Activities supposedly constraining the implementation of the CPS concept combine with the enabling activities. This relates to the struggles that engage the president and heads of the regions and the sales people in the different markets to be on track, not deviating from the Nefab way. The president and head of the Central Europe region faces the challenge of changing the existing experienced sales team from a box seller to a CPS consultant. In the 'old' markets of Central Europe, that is Benelux, Great Britain, Germany and Austria, new ways of selling have to be learned. After years of experiencing box selling there is little readiness for change and letting go of old defences and behaviour. He reveals: 'It is hard to convince experts in other packaging materials to join us to improve the competence of the team, because we have been just a box producer and some of our local companies are quite small.'

Several challenges are faced when attempting to dilute a box-producing image, implementing the CPS concept. The president and head of the Nordic region admits that 'it is a huge step mentally for a product and production-oriented organization to become a customer-oriented organization'.

Also the president and head of the North America region points to a wood box seller mentality among the sales people in the region and the need to develop confidence in their ability to sell complete packaging solutions and to provide incentives to sell non-wood solutions. Also, he recognizes a need to enhance confidence in the entire organization's ability to deliver such solutions, pushing forwards to continue moving in the direction provided by the Nefab way. The development of confidence in

the ability to provide the customer with complete packaging solutions proposes a broadened horizon movement.

Our conclusion

In their endeavour to realize the CPS concept, Nefab people arguably broaden their horizons while representing and reconstructing the past associated with the earlier non-CPS packaging offering, without holding on to this offering. Enabling therefore refers to a shift in people's ways of talking and acting that allows for horizon movements. From our philosophically hermeneutical viewpoint, the change in the understanding, of what actions need to be taken at present in order to implement the CPS concept, prompts a move of people's horizons. In other words, the range of vision from which the future-oriented CPS concept is seen widens. Implied in this is a dialogical openness (Gadamer 1989) that relates the members of a team to each other and to customers requiring more sophisticated packaging solutions.

The dialogical openness, hermeneutically situated, fosters the communication and cooperation essential for the development of local and global competence with teamwork considered a lever for developing this competence. The establishment of competence centres further facilitates the global work by encouraging communication and cooperation between teams, enabling an understanding through a move with the horizons of the team members. At the same time, inherent in the struggles to implement the CPS concept are constraints that can be described as horizons that are bound to the old way of supplying packaging. Following Gadamer (1989), this indicates that a person does not see far enough while not being able to overturn an existent perspective, or strongly believes in the significance of the qualities adhered to the traditional way of providing packaging. But the horizon of the present continuously forms, as Gadamer points out, and might therefore express a breadth of vision that enables a person to look beyond what is nearby, 'seeing better' the advantages associated with the CPS concept. Through this horizon movement, *constraining* can turn into *enabling*.

Internationalization and broadened horizons

Notably, box-producing does not re-present a background against which future-oriented solutions-providing activities tune in as the past dynamically repeats and gains contemporaneity with the present. Some managers still face the challenge of changing from box seller to solutions provider. Present activities connect with the past, accentuating the living tradition feature of the past. Interlinked with solutions-providing, box-producing activities recall activities carried out at the physical place where the business once started. In the early 1920s, Sigurd Nordgren, the grandfather of Ing-Marie Nordgren, opened a carpentry shop at his home in Hälsingland for making skis, kitchen utensils and bread boxes in order to meet the needs of the local customers who lived in the neighbourhood. The facilities manager tells about the very beginning of the business:

The ash-tray, on which Sigurd put a small chimney for carrying the smoke away, was one of the very first hand-made products. I have been told that his eldest son (Sigurd and his wife had five sons and one daughter) met a girl, whose father was a baker. The baker was in need of boxes to put bread in and to satisfy the demand of the new customer that unexpectedly turned up, Sigurd started to make wooden breadboxes. The business expanded and in the mid-60s, when I was working here in the factory, we manufactured breadboxes, selling them to bakers all over Sweden and even abroad, in Norway.

In the years to come, increasingly sophisticated packaging was developed. The employees, who were involved in production, constructed and learned how to use different kinds of machines. They developed a high level of knowledge for advancing their technical competence. Just one single person or a team of technicians used to control all steps in the development of a new machine concept. Continuous development of the production process was highly important for strategic purposes, maintaining a competitive edge and cost efficiency. Strategic activities related to box-producing accordingly underwent differentiation that manifested in the design and construction of

machines and production equipment, quality work and adaptation to environmental regulation.

People's commitment to continually upgrading technological knowledge, constructing machines for producing boxes of different designs with the requirements of environmental compatibility in mind, implies moving and broadening of horizons. As social historical human beings, the employees relate to a past when less sophisticated packaging and boxes were produced. Applying philosophical hermeneutical theory, the upgrading of technological knowledge suggests a move with the horizon of the past. Therefore, there is no objectifying process by which employees with long experience of box-producing and a great many years of employment in Nefab can free themselves from the past. While not preconditioned by history, the past comes alive in present future-oriented activities that aim to maintain competitive edge and cost efficiency.

During the 1980s and the 1990s, trade became more internationalized and production facilities and subsidiaries were established abroad. Internationalization also meant understanding a situation in which people from Japan, Singapore, Malaysia or China find themselves. 'True optimism', 'good relationships', the opportunity given Nefab to start up production in China and hire Chinese staff within a fairly short period of time and the expression 'very well received' indicate moving and broadening horizons. Our own tradition and that other tradition towards which one's attention is directed help shape these moving horizons (Gadamer 1989).

At the very beginning of the 1990s, sales were conducted in Japan, where a full-time staff consisting of three people expressed their true optimism about sales opportunities. Before counting on regular deliveries, large customers were contacted for testing the Nefab products marketed by the Japanese agent. In Singapore and Malaysia, business relationships were developed with representatives of the company PB Packaging. From a visit to a Nefab closed for the summer, in 1992, the president and the project manager drew the conclusion that the Nefab products should have a good potential market in Singapore and Malaysia. Jochum Pihl, the co-owner, together with the managing

director of Nefab Emballage AB, followed up on this by visiting Singapore two years later. Due to the good relationships that were built up, PB Packaging decided to employ a sales executive for the promotion of Nefab products.

In 1997, a decision was made to set up a production plant in China, at a place called Wuxi, situated between Nanjing and Shanghai. Good infrastructure was provided through the contacts with the industrial park in Wuxi (WSIP), which had specialized in assisting 100 percent foreign-owned companies to establish in China. According to Jochum Pihl, 'WSIP is a unique phenomenon in China, and we, having had the possibility to study this industrial park more closely, consider it a very good alternative compared with starting a joint venture with a Chinese company'. Nefab was able to begin production as early as the first quarter of 1998 after hiring Chinese key staff.

At the end of the 1990s, the telecom equipment industry was developing rapidly and Ericsson, the biggest customer of Nefab, was in place starting up a number of joint ventures with Chinese partners – the most important one turned out to be Ericsson Nanjing Communication Co (ENC):

On my business trips abroad I used to visit our customers in Europe. I talked to them, asking them about their plans, also with regard to establishments on the Asian market. At the same time I showed my sincere interest in the particular challenges they faced and in the problems they dealt with. I felt that I was very well received. As a result of the business trips it was fairly easy to take the decision to set up a factory in Asia, following our customers in their geographical expansion. (Jochum Pihl)

By visiting ENC, Pihl found out that cooperating with ENC was a very good idea. In need of more sophisticated packaging delivery for loudspeakers and telecom furniture, ENC welcomed cooperation with Nefab, the Swedish supplier of Ericsson:

They had delivered enough to realize that production of packaging is not as simple as it might seem, and therefore they discussed the issue of future cooperation with Nefab with pleasure. This was also supported by the Ericsson staff, which welcomes a Nefab presence of some kind in China.

This is a very exciting challenge for Nefab, which is why the short visit was followed up by another visit by myself and Lars-Åke Rydh in mid May. Now we have to study the condition for an establishment more in detail. (Jochum Pihl)

Nefab started production in 1998, anticipating continued market growth, and knowing that infrastructure projects in the form of telecom expansion are prioritized in China.

It should also be noted that the temporality suggested by internationalization activities relates strategizing to the days of Hans-Elov Nordgren. As the CEO, during the period 1969–1982, he played a significant role in the development of the business, as the Nefab people interviewed witness. When describing the activities of Hans-Elov Nordgren and his way of being, the past gains contemporaneity with the present. The words people use instigate a process in which past and present continuously mediate.

Today, the focus on sustaining global presence implies that it is certainly not good enough to be a skilled manufacturer of a physical product, as Lars-Åke Rydh points out. It is necessary to develop and coordinate the solutions-providing concept ensuring cooperation with key customers across the regional boundaries, achieving globality. Filling the customer's 'complete need' requires restructuring the organization, dividing it into market units and supply units. To more quickly meet the complete need, the accomplishment of acquisitions suggests integrating the acquired companies in the existent structure, which gains the support of a key account structure for realizing positive synergies between the different units and markets. The broadening of horizons is implicated in the filling of the customers' complete need and in the realization of the positive synergies between the units, the markets, and the acquired companies and the acquirer.

Our conclusion

Internationalization unfolds in interactions among people belonging to different historical traditions. Internationalization also means the discovery of other people's horizons and traditions in which people as social historical beings hermeneutically situate. Tradition speaks from people's historical

horizons from which they cannot free themselves. Every encounter with tradition could involve a tension between the familiar and the unfamiliar. However, through a sincere interest in the other and building good relationships, one is able to reach an understanding (Gadamer 1989) that opens up for opportunities to market, produce and sell packaging solutions overseas. This implies a move with one's horizon, looking beyond what is nearby. Since the horizon of the present is always in motion, people are able to overcome their own particularity and that of the other, Gadamer contends.

Strategizing and hermeneutical situatedness – concluding remarks

Our theoretical framework derives from an interpretative methodological approach that draws on philosophical hermeneutical thinking. This framework strengthens the interplay between the ontological assumptions and the qualitative method employed in the actual research. With the focus on present future-oriented strategic activities calling attention to history, it clearly shows that the notions of effective-historical consciousness and lived experience frame our understanding and interpretation of the empirical material. On this basis, important insights are gained about strategizing as hermeneutically situated, concerned with the relationship between individual and world in which the past is represented and reconstructed at present with a future outlook.

The chapter reveals a need for an increased understanding of the practitioner as a social historical being, engaging in strategizing. The strategic activities described and discussed in connection with horizon movements reflect numerous encounters among practitioners. Owners, managers, assistants, employee representatives and board members, as social historical beings, participate and share in strategic activities associated with a geographical place, revisions of a vision, a business concept as enabling and constraining strategic activities including internationalization.

On a more generalized level, our philosophically based understanding and interpretation suggest that a geographical place, where the bricks

once were laid for a business, constructs a situation that admits a transposition of the horizons of people visiting and being exposed to the place. In the light of the present presence, atmosphere and activities associated with the place are represented and reconstructed. A person's own past and that of the geographical place towards which the person's historical consciousness is directed help instigate a move of the person's horizon and a broadening of the horizon. That towards which one's attention is directed is not locked in and constrained by history.

Further, our understanding and interpretation show that a vision holds a future orientation but reflects also a disjunction between a former and a latter customer offer which proposes revision that prompts a movement towards the future. People involved in future-oriented revising activities are, at the same time, involved in reconstructing their past, moving with their horizons of the past. Looking to the future means reconstructing the past. The horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. In the words of Gadamer (1989, p. 304):

The historical movement of human life consists in the fact that it is never absolutely bound to any one standpoint [...] Horizons change for a person who is moving. Thus the horizon of the past, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion.

Also pointed out, a business concept could be both enabling and constraining, with enabling referring to the broadening of horizons and constraining concerned with the narrowing or non-broadening of horizons. People who endeavour to implement a renewed business concept admittedly broaden their horizons, representing and reconstructing a past when letting go of old familiar ways of doing business. Nevertheless, a person holding on to an old offering may appear reluctant to move with the horizon for opening up for an offering more consistent with a renewed business concept. The horizon must express a breadth of vision that enables a person to overturn an existent perspective and look beyond what is familiar and nearby. There is no truly closed horizon, as Gadamer (1989) asserts. A horizon is something into which

we move and moves with us and, through this horizon movement, ‘constraining’ can evolve into ‘enabling’.

With reference to internationalization, strategizing concerns the moves of the horizons of those involved in communicating and cooperating across national borders. Talk and action that centre around the moves into foreign markets open up horizons from which new business opportunities are seen. Cooperating across national borders requires openness to views expressed by people coming from different countries and situated in various traditions. Since communication and cooperation involve dialogue, according to Gadamer (1989), it is important to be attentive to the differences that might be present, broadening one’s range of vision from which a project and internationalization efforts are seen. The openness is such that it exists both for the one who speaks and for the one who listens. When listening to another person’s insight into a matter, one might discover something in it, coming to an understanding. This means broadening one’s horizon, which basically presumes lending oneself to the emerging of something else, Gadamer explains. Since human beings continuously externalize themselves in activity, there is no ‘closed sphere of quiescent interiority’ (Berger and Luckmann 1966, p. 70). While being open to the unfamiliar, people join with others in a dialogical relationship.

It is our hope that this chapter contributes to an elaborated meaning of strategizing within the perspective of Strategy as Practice. Based on our philosophical hermeneutical understanding and interpretation of the empirically oriented material, a *trans-individual* dynamic Strategy as Practice perspective emerges. Strategic activities associated with the past are projected into the future through a living tradition that ‘speaks’ repeatedly with the present and the future (Gadamer 1989). This means that strategizing is not directly attributable to an individual practitioner and the practitioner’s intentions and purposes, but rather *trans-individual*, while giving primacy to culturally and historically shaped and situated practice (Chia and MacKay 2007). Consequently, we do not identify macro-entities tied to micro-activities. A reliance on a micro–macro distinction (or individual agency and

structure), where macro-entities are aggregations of micro-activities, refers to a form of social atomism, as Chia and MacKay argue. The philosophical hermeneutical notions of lived experience and the being-in-the-world mode of engagement help overcoming the need for drawing a dividing line between micro and macro.

The question of what it means to be a practitioner involved in strategic activities pertains to an ontological level. The individual practitioners, thrown into the world, are always grounded in their horizons with their present future-oriented strategic activities opening up for a representation and reconstruction of history. The present–future–past relationality is expressed through and manifested in horizon movements, assuming a shift in focus away from horizontalization of perceptions, in which the essence of an individual’s experience and practice is singled out, towards experience as an ongoing integrative human life process. Such a process holds a cultural historical practical dimension that relates experience to effective-historical consciousness and horizon. Our appreciation of the present–future–past relationality thus directs the attention to trans-individual social practice that, according to Chia and MacKay, ‘flattens’ the micro–macro dimension. As Gadamer (1989, p. 304) puts it: ‘Just as the individual is never simply an individual because he is always in understanding with others.’ This holds an awareness of the trans-individual character of Strategy as Practice, directing attention to that which emerges in between practitioners, in meetings, discussions and negotiations, always shaped by and situated in cultural tradition.

A living tradition view on history eschews a reification of history as a factor or path that constrains and determines present future-oriented strategic activities. The present ascribes to history the role of a communicative partner of the present, thus representing and reconstructing the past in the light of the present (Gadamer 1989). The practitioners’ being in and belongingness to the world opens to a dynamic trans-individual understanding of strategizing in which the interrelationship between strategizing and history – with reference to hermeneutical situatedness – emerges.

Future research

In future research, we see it as important to direct more interest to the ontological issue of human activity and the dialogical encounter with historical tradition, appreciating the practitioner's existential connections with the world and relationships with other people. In agreement with Chia and MacKay (2007) we contend that research on Strategy as Practice should be directed to philosophically grounded theorizing. As Chia and Holt (2006, p. 638) argue, 'we need to begin to acquire a new vocabulary for interrogating organizational phenomena in such a way as to urge theorizing towards new paradigms of understanding that assume practices and relationality to be the fundamental explanatory basis of social phenomena'.

There a need within strategizing and practice-based research to not only dive deeper into everyday activity and to increase the degree of 'realism' but also to explicitly address and raise questions about the realism assumptions that underpin a 'deep dive'. There seems to be a need for more explicit thinking about the logic and vocabulary underlying practice and a need to elaborate on the aspect of history. Although practice-oriented studies take into account that people live in *history* and emphasize the need 'to get inside the lived experience of the practitioners as they are doing strategy' (Jarzabkowski 2005, p. 24) and tracing the contours of their lived experience over time and space dimensions (Samra-Fredericks 2003), limited interest is dedicated to 'how it is that people *live* in history' (Lave 2003, p. 21) and how the notion of lived experience comes into realization in human activity.

As Booth (2003) points out, the importance of history is not well understood in the strategy literature. The notion of history as path dependencies recognizes that history matters and constrains the future behaviour of a firm (Teecce *et al.* 1997) but ignores a temporal context that directs attention to the present–future–past relationality. Deterministic versions of history in which strategizing is pre-conditioned by history face increasing scepticism in studies concerned with narrative aspects and in critical management studies (Clark and Rowlinson 2004). A pure chronological arrangement of the

past, the present and the future does not account for an awareness of history as a *living* tradition in the sense that history belongs to present future-oriented strategic activities. Human reality is a historical reality and not the sum of historical facts or a sequence of types of facts that can be reproduced in the present (Seebohm 2004). Our philosophical hermeneutically based understanding and interpretation goes even further, taking into account that the practitioners always find themselves within a situation and that this hermeneutical situation represents their range of vision, that is, their horizons. The living tradition view, outlined in this chapter, hermeneutically situates strategizing.

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