CEO's Temporal Strategies to Pacify Warring Coalitions: How Eliciting Emotional Fatigue Over Time Facilitates Strategy Making

ABSTRACT

Our two-year inductive field study of an organization seeking to revise its strategy for poverty reduction reveals an under-researched political mechanism we call "CEO's temporal strategies," which denote CEO's time-related political actions to influence the process and outcome of frame contests. Our analysis reveals emotional fatigue as a facilitating mechanism. Through the temporal extension and intensification of framing contests, the CEO's temporal strategies induce growing collective emotional fatigue among the warring factions. This fatigue triggers a shift in the factions' decision criteria, causing them to accept the CEO's later decision, even though their initial preferred frame did not prevail in the ultimate strategic choice. Our study contributes to the strategy making and more broadly organizational change literatures by showing how cognitive, temporal and emotional processes interact to impact organization-level outcomes.

Keywords: strategy making; framing contests; frame battle; emotion; organizational change; poverty reduction; social issue

INTRODUCTION

Formulating new strategic directions is a vital dimension of organizational adaptation. But the formulation process tends to trigger a war of frames, especially when contested issues are at stake, with unpredictable yet consequential effects on strategic outcomes. Decision-makers may have conflicting views and interests over the solutions to a problem, which may lead to confrontations over organizational choices. This issue has long been a focus of research, but it remains under-explored empirically. Most studies focus on cognitive dimensions and examine how this frame battle is influenced by political actions (March, 1962; Pettigrew, 1973). This literature indicates that coalitions form around competing frames and enter into a bargaining process to make their preferences prevail in the organizational choices (Cyert & March, 1963).

More recently, Kaplan (2008) is one of the rare scholars who started exploring this issue in some depth and introduced the concept of "framing contests" to depict the practices used by competing coalitions to get their frame to dominate in strategic choices. These framing-contest practices include legitimacy battles and frames realignment. This literature, however, remains focused on the interactions between battling coalitions, and has paid insufficient attention to the role

of organization leaders such as chief executive officers (CEOs). Yet, a few empirical studies have suggested that CEOs could conceivably play a pivotal role in the process of strategic decision-making (Burgelman, 2002; Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Gilbert, 2006; Tripsas & Gavetti, 2000) and thus influence significantly these frame battles. Thus, our initial research question is to investigate in some depth whether and how CEOs navigate through the frame battle to bring coalitions to a decision. More specifically, we ask: How do organizational leaders handle frames battles when defining a new strategic direction?

As there has been little in-depth research on this question, we have used an inductive qualitative research approach. We studied in depth the case of BigFound, an organization working for poverty reduction. Organizations working in the social sector often have to deal with competing frames when defining their future (Battilana & Dorado, 2010), which makes them suitable for the study of frames battle. We began our study as BigFound was commencing an important strategic transition. We investigated in real time for over two years, following on a daily basis the tensions that emerged around these decisions and how the team proceeded to reach a final decision. As our investigation progressed, it became obvious that two key elements (temporal and emotional dynamics) played a key role. An earlier examination of existing literature showed there were only few empirical works that explored the role of these temporal and emotional mechanisms in these frames battles. Although an emerging body literature on the temporal dimension (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013; Kunisch, Bartunek, Mueller, & Huy, 2017; McGivern et al., 2017) and emotional dimension in strategy processes (Huy & Zott, 2018; Liu & Maitlis, 2013; Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004) began to emerge, to the best of our knowledge none of these studies have examined in depth how these temporal and emotional dynamics influence the evolution of frame battles.

Our analysis reveals an under-researched political mechanism that we call “CEO's temporal strategies” to denote time-related political actions by the CEO to influence the process and outcome of organizational change. In the face of a coalitions battle, the CEO adopts a patient wait-and-observe posture and avoids actively engaging in the battle among warring coalitions. This leader leverages the protracted passage of time to bring the confronting parties to an ultimate agreement

through three subtle time-related practices: temporary leadership void, shortening at times and extending at other times the duration of framing contests. Our investigation also reveals emotional fatigue as a facilitating mechanism. Through the extension and intensification of the framing contests, the CEO's temporal strategies create a context that induces growing collective emotional fatigue. This collective fatigue triggers a shift in decision criteria from a concern for "external service" to a concern for "internal well-being." The change of decision frame lead warring coalitions to accept the CEO's later decision, even when their initial preferred frame was not reflected in the final strategic choices.

Our study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, we enrich the literature on framing contests and strategy-making by showing how the leader (CEO) affects the process and outcome of a frame battle. We show that the final decision may not necessarily stem from the domination of a coalition over another as might be implied in this literature (Kaplan, 2008), but due to the moderating performance of the CEO, who subtly shapes a time-emotion based process that gradually leads competing parties to accept a decision that does not fully satisfy their respective frames. We enrich studies that have mostly adopted a cognitive perspective (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014) by adding two complementary perspectives, namely temporal and emotional dynamics.

Second, we contribute to literature on time and strategy (Ancona, Goodman, Lawrence, & Tushman, 2001; Huy, 2001; Kunisch et al., 2017), by revealing the political dimension of time-based influence tactics (McGivern et al., 2017; Nyberg, Wright, & Kirk, 2018). Our study reveals how a CEO can use time discreetly to her advantage to manage a coalitions battle. We further highlight three practices that make up this political behavior. We also enrich this literature by showing how a CEO's temporal strategies can influence the emotional dynamics within the decision-making team on important issues of the organization. Our study is one of the rare works to explicate the link between temporal and emotional dimensions in strategy-making.

Third, our research highlights the role of emotional fatigue in a collective process. Previous studies of emotional fatigue have mainly been done by psychologists and organizational behavior scholars, with a focus on the individual level. We extend this literature by (1) emphasizing the

collective dimension, that is, how fatigue is shared at the collective level among coalition members and how it influences their collective behaviors and (2) exploring the effect in a context of strategic decision-making. Contrary to these works that take a "dramatical perspective" (Grandey, 2003) to investigate the harmful effects of chronic emotional fatigue, our empirical study reveals somewhat counterintuitively that episodic fatigue can have a pacifying effect in the context of frame battles.

Finally, we contribute to the emerging literature on societal grand-challenges (Mair, Marti, & Ventresca, 2011), in particular by emphasizing the challenge of alleviating poverty in society. Our study is one of the few to explore in depth how organizational actors co-shape a strategy to tackle the challenges of poverty. By using a practice perspective, we investigate the tensions around poverty prevention that can emerge and the micro-actions that organizational leaders use to manage these tensions. Thus we show how microprocesses of strategizing can have an effect at the macro level (Kouamé & Langley, 2018) on the societal grand challenges.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Since our findings reveal that cognitive frame, temporal dynamics, and emotions mechanisms are key to explain how leaders deal with frame battles in strategy formulation, we explore below the existing relevant literatures as a theoretical backdrop. In particular, we discuss the literature on framing contests, temporal politics and collective emotional fatigue.

Framing Contests in Strategic Decisions

Cognitive frames are lenses through which managers make decisions about strategic issues. They refer to "knowledge structure[s] that help individuals to organize and interpret incoming perceptual information by fitting it into already available cognitive representation from memory" (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). They shape the way people view the world and govern their behaviors and choices (Daft & Weick, 1984; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). It is common to observe frame divergence in decision-making processes, since the resolution of strategic issues often involves conflicting interests, bargaining about resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1974), contradictions (Smith, 2014; Smith & Tushman, 2005), and competing logics (Battilana & Dorado, 2010).

Starting with the seminal works of Carnegie Mellon scholars (Cyert & March, 1963; March,

1962; Simon, 1945), cognitive frames and framing have been a central theme in the study of strategic decisions. Adopting a political perspective (March, 1962), these works suggest that coalitions arise around decisions according to different interests and preferences and that this gives rise to political conflicts (Pettigrew, 1973). Conflicts then set in motion a 'bargaining process' through which coalitions try to influence organizational choices (Cyert & March, 1963). In line with this literature, (Kaplan, 2008) developed a model of framing contests. She suggests that "framing is purposeful in the sense that individuals and groups engage in framing practices to shape the outcomes of investment decisions, and it is contested in the sense that the frames of different groups often come into conflict" (p.746). Coalitions mobilize supporters to shift the majority to their preference. This is similar to a 'vote,' in which a coalition becomes dominant by shaping the frame of the people involved and then imposing that frame on the opponents. Kaplan's model (2008) identifies two mechanisms through which this is done. The contestants engage in a battle of legitimacy by affirming their frame first through fact-based argumentation, then by claiming their expertise. When this is not enough, they attempt to realign the frame through bridging, amplifying, extending and transforming frames. These practices are likely to change the frame of neutral actors and get their support, or to counter their opponents' frames. The choice is made only when a coalition becomes dominant.

The role of leaders, such as CEOs, can be instrumental to the outcome of a framing contest. CEOs represent key players in strategic decision-making processes when it comes time to decide on major directions (Burgelman, 2002). Their cognitive frame, such as personal beliefs, can influence strategic choices (Tripsas & Gavetti, 2000). At the same time, their role is to regulate the top-team debates, in particular when divergence of opinion occurs (Hambrick, 1994). Their behavior can therefore be fundamental in the framing contest by virtue of their position and their authority in the top team. Being above the functional units, CEOs are better able to reconcile competing frames and hold a less conflictual position (Gurses & Ozcan, 2015), making them a third party in the framing contests. Despite this influential role, the extant framing literature puts little emphasis on the role of CEOs in this frame battle, and tends to treat them as equal in terms of influence to other members of

senior management, or to treat them as leaders who impose their preferences on the contestants through hierarchical power (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988). Yet, the conflict-management literature has noted that leaders could exhibit strategic and political behavior in the context of a framing contest, ranging from active engagement to strategic observation, with the aim of, for example,"keep[ing] battling parties in a state of conflict" to benefit themselves (Zhao, Thatcher, & Jehn, 2018). They could also leverage strategic ambiguity to create opportunity for the expression of frames in competitions and maintain a balance around organizational choices (Denis, Langley, & Cazale, 1996; Gioia, Nag, & Corley, 2012; Sillince, Jarzabkowski, & Shaw, 2012).

Current research has remained relatively silent about the temporal and emotional mechanisms. Some empirical research suggests that a framing contest could affect the temporal dimension of decision-making. For example, it takes more time to make decisions in processes in which confrontations of coalitions take place (Mintzberg, Raisinghani, & Théorêt, 1976). Time-management by a CEO can help or harm the process and outcome of a framing contest, but we don't know how that actually happens. Likewise, because conflicts of frames generate tensions, it is likely to trigger extreme negative emotions (Jehn, 1997) and induce fatigue (Barnes & Dyne, 2009). Anecdotal evidence suggests that the temporal orchestration of activities by the CEO (i.e. pacing and combining activities) can generate fatigue at the lower level (Huy, 2001). Moreover, empirical research on framing contests has yet to illuminate the underpinning mechanisms linking CEO actions to organizational outcomes. For example, we still know little about how CEOs influence framing contests through the management of time and emotions.

Temporal politics

Time constitutes an important dimension of strategy processes (Chen & Nadkarni, 2017; Das, 1987; Huy, 2001; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013; Kunisch et al., 2017), yet we still know relatively little about its role in strategic decision-making, especially in the context of framing contests. Previous studies have focused on the management of emerging tensions between different temporal frames, such as the divergence of executive temporal orientations (Das, 1987). From that perspective, time is a social construct that is not static but continuously interpreted and negotiated

by individuals (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013). When managers have a diversity of temporal frames, it leads to tensions around organizational choices. A process for the negotiation and resolution of temporal tensions between these managers then ensues. Kaplan's (2013) model of temporal work describes the practical aspect of these negotiations via three types of activity: (1) rethinking the past, (2) reconsidering present concerns and (3) reimagining the future. Working on the past, present, and future makes it possible for organization members to establish provisional temporal settlements and to temporarily end disagreements over strategic choices. This negotiation can take a more political form, in which temporal work becomes masked and unarticulated (McGivern et al., 2017; Nyberg et al., 2018). Actors do not come up with established settlements to resolve the tensions. Rather, political bargaining takes on a more subtle form in which actors construe the problem to reflect their own interests and preferred solutions (McGivern et al., 2017).

Empirical research has often portrayed the CEO as a 'task-oriented' actor who is focused on managing clock time to optimize the outcome of the decision process. The term 'temporal leadership' has been coined to describe this role (Ancona, Okhuysen, & Perlow, 2001; Chen & Nadkarni, 2017). Temporal leadership refers to three activities described by Mohammed and Nadkarni (2011) as "*scheduling* (e.g., reminding team members of deadlines, setting interim milestone), *synchronizing* (e.g., coordinating the team so that team work is finished on time) and *allocating temporal resources* (e.g., building in time for contingencies and problems)" (p.492). CEO actions reduce tensions resulting from temporal conflict in order to align actors toward a common objective (Mohammed & Nadkarni, 2011). These studies put little emphasis on the CEO's time-related political behavior in the context of framing contests.

Collective emotional fatigue

Emotional fatigue represents a micro-level organizational phenomenon that could influence significantly individual and group behavior. It refers to "the state of feeling 'overwhelmed, drained, and used up' based on emotional demands imposed by others" (Barnes & Dyne, 2009):75). Fatigue is a cumulative state, ranging from slight fatigue to extreme-pathological fatigue. Collective fatigue occurs when people in the same group share a similar feeling of emotional fatigue (Sanchez-Burks

& Huy, 2009). Numerus studies have focused on *emotional exhaustion*, described as "chronic fatigue states" (Maslach, 1982) at the individual level (e.g. (Ashforth & Lee, 1990; Gaines & Jermier, 1983; Saxton, Phillips, & Blakeney, 1991; Uy, Lin, & Ilies, 2017; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). This literature suggests that emotionally demanding events foster emotional fatigue. These events may include workload pressure, role conflict, role ambiguity, team conflict and lack of cohesion (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998).

The consequences of emotional fatigue in the workplace have attracted scholarly attention. Most empirical studies show harmful effects (Grandey, 2003), such as negative consequences for productivity and health. When employees are in situations of chronic fatigue, their performance and quality of work diminish (Cropanzano, Rupp, & Byrne, 2003); for example, decline in the quality of service delivered by customer-service agents (Grandey, 2003). Chronic fatigue is a key syndrome of burnout and can cause physical and psychological health problems (Maslach, 1982).

However, individuals generally do not experience fatigue at work in a passive fashion. Oftentimes, they develop defensive and strategic behaviors (Ashforth & Lee, 1990). Scholars advancing the theory of conservation of resource (COR) theory help us understand these behaviors (Hobfolll, 1989). COR theory suggests that emotional fatigue is likely to occur when individuals lose resources that they value such as objects, conditions, time, knowledge, and social bonds. Depletion of resources creates stress and emotional tensions that contribute to the feeling of fatigue. As a result, individuals will use strategies to conserve these resources, limit their loss, and compensate for that loss through several regulatory mechanisms (Hobfoll, 2001; Trougakos, Beal, Cheng, Hideg, & Zweig, 2015; Uy et al., 2017). They can compensate for the missing resource by replacing the resource with another one, for example by going to therapy to recover a state of health. They can also “downgrad[e] goals, reframe outcomes and [let] old battles rest” (Hobfoll, 2001:46) by reappraising an event, which contributes to regulating their emotional resources (Gross, 1998). Individuals can also dedicate the remaining resources to things that matter most to them; for example, they may devote their energy to performing assigned tasks, and reducing engagement with other colleagues (Trougakos et al., 2015). They become more self-centred and “bureaucratic”

(Maslach, 1982), that is, concentrated on duties that serve to protect themselves, and less focused on satisfying the interests of their organisation (Ashforth & Lee, 1990).

Given that strategic decisions involve bargaining in which there are often intense conflicts and tensions among actors (Amason, 1996; Li & Hambrick, 2005; Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004), collective emotional fatigue is likely to ensue. Although extant research has mainly focused on individual fatigue, it is likely that the same effects occur at the collective level, that is, within a group of people engaged in a framing contest. To date, empirical research has insufficiently investigated how emotional fatigue arises and how it affects strategic decision-making, especially when a framing contest involves political behaviors.

METHODS

Research Setting

We gathered data from BigFound, an organization working in the field of poverty reduction in North America. Since its inception in the early 2000s, BigFound has become the second largest player in its territory after the government. Its early strategic directions put more emphasis on the 'global development of poor children'. This strategic direction focused BigFound's investments and actions on children and their families. Over the years, it became obvious to BigFound's leaders that the global development of children was not just about the family unit, but also about their social context. In 2006, BigFound's strategic directions were revised to incorporate (1) the educational success of children as the main target of poverty prevention (2) the mobilization of communities as a key lever. In connection with this strategy, BigFound partnered with the government to create three Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as joint-ventures, which are social investment funds (nearly $ 1 billion) that financed all the key players in the field, including about 3,300 local partners and 1,900 primary and secondary schools.

This strategic redirection of BigFound quickly showed its limits. Between 2011 and 2013, several internal and external reports indicated dysfunctions related to the target and the partnership. In 2013, BigFound managers produced a proposal of new directions with the aim of improving the partnership with the government, but after a year of negotiations, they saw no prospect for

improvement . In October 2014, they decided to end the partnership to give themselves more strategic autonomy. This change marked a critical transition, in that all BigFound activities were through this partnership and thus implied a dissolution of the three NGOs. It thus became necessary for BigFound to redefine itself and to reorient its strategy. The CEO initiated a collective reflection on the new strategic directions in November 2014, and the discussions lasted nearly 18 months, with divergence and high tensions within the management team around these directions.

Insert Table 1 about here

Data Collection

Data collection took the form of a longitudinal and real-time investigation that is suitable for grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and for a process model on change initiation (Pettigrew, 1990). These investigations were conducted by the first author over a two-year period (June 2014 to July 2016)[1]. A total of 85 semi-structured interviews, 44 meeting observations, and numerous documents were collected (see table 2). The semi-structured interviews were conducted with all key actors involved with the aim of capturing their interpretations and emotional states as the events evolved. The CEO was interviewed seven times, the five senior managers (Vice Presidents and members of the Executive Committee) were interviewed 33 times, and the seven middle managers and other actors who participated in the debates were interviewed 45 times. In order to foster diversity of viewpoints and to have a complete picture of the strategy process (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), these three categories of actors were all interviewed when significant events occured. These interviews lasted on average one hour, and were all transcribed by a professional. In addition to these formal interviews, dozens of informal conversations with these actors took place just after the meetings to capture their feelings *in situ*, or during informal meetings outside the organization. These informal conversations have been important sources for capturing some subtleties not displayed in formal encounters.

[1] Initially the goal was to understand the tensions in the partnership with the government. Following BigFound's decision to withdraw from the partnership, these investigations became geared towards the understanding of how this organization was reorienting itself.

Meeting observation was useful to follow the developing debates around the new strategic direction. All significant meetings, namely executive committees transformed into the strategic committee, strategic workshops, and other committees, were observed by the first author. The CEO participated in all these meetings, except for seven that were dedicated to subcommittees. Observation of both types of meetings was useful to understand the political dynamics. This observation was non-participant, with an average duration of 3 hours (varying between 1 and 8 hours). The researcher took extensive notes of everything that was being done and said.

BigFound's leaders granted access to all key documents produced before and during the investigations (e.g. meeting reports, PowerPoints and working document). That data source was used to chart the evolution of the content of the strategy as the debates unfolded, as well as the history of the events. Furthermore, the author had access to some emails exchanged between actors, recording facts and feelings outside formal meetings. The triangulation of these sources of information (interviews, observations, and documents) made it possible to consolidate the facts and to solidify their interpretation.

Insert Table 2 about here

Data Analysis

We started by tracing the chronology of events before and during decision-making. Three periods of deliberation were thus identified, delimited by the proposal and the rejection/acceptance of the new strategic directions. This temporal division allowed us to make comparison and to contrast events over these periods with the aim of developing a process model (Langley, 1999). We then performed open and axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Gioia et al., 2013) to see if the topics discussed in the theoretical background (Framing contest–(Kaplan, 2008); Temporal politics–(McGivern et al., 2017); Emotional Fatigue–(Barnes & Dyne, 2009)) were evident from the data and to identify new emerging themes (Huy, Corley, & Kraatz, 2014). That coding made it possible to generate first-order concepts and second-order themes aggregated under theoretical dimensions (Van Maanen, 1979). More detail on how various constructs were analyzed and coded can be supplied upon request to the authors.

Figure 1 summarizes the data structure resulting from our analysis. We examined how the different concepts and theoretical dimensions were dynamically interconnected over the three periods to generate a theoretical model, and then scrutinized the boundary conditions. In the following section, we present the results of this analysis before discussing them.

Insert Figure 1 about here

FINDINGS

For more than ten years, BigFound's main strategy was a joint venture partnership with the government, another major player in poverty prevention, with the aims of joint social value creation. The two partners created joint funds of nearly $1 billion to invest in the fight against poverty. However, this partnership was dysfunctional and BigFound's managers undertook a year-long negotiation with the partner to review the partnership. In October 2014, these negotiations resulted in a failure and the joint realization that the partnership could not work anymore. A question quickly emerged: "What's next?" Managers were at a loss about the future strategy of the organization, as one of the informants shares with us:

> We are 100% unanimous with the decision to stop our partnership ... But, it is a great decision that has a lot of consequences. What are we going to do next? Are we going to create a new business? There is so much a black hole ... A black hole that we should now address.

In November 2014, top management team and middle managers (MMs) and analysts began to reflect on various strategic directions. The reflection process that was initially planned for one year lasted about two years, with three periods of deliberation. In each period, we describe how the CEO's political actions interacted with top and MMs' frame battle and political bargaining to foster collective emotional fatigue, which over time facilitated acceptance of the CEO's original proposal. Table 3 provides additional illustrative quotes.

Insert Table 3 about here

Period 1 of deliberation (Nov. 2014 – April 2015): Emotional fatigue emerged, but the decision criteria were driven by the concern for "external service"

During this period, managers sought to define and formalize a new direction as a guide for future actions. As typical of this context, tensions arose in conjunction with framing contests (Kaplan, 2008) and political behavior among managers (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988).

Frame battle articulating and coalition's political bargaining. Very early on, dissensions emerged within teams involved in strategy-making. These dissentions were elicited mainly by TM/MMs fear of repeating past mistakes. When the end of the partnership was seen as unavoidable, various actor groups began to envision alternative scenarios for the future of their organization and produced different change narratives (Sonenshein, 2010). Some of the top and middle managers produced the "pro-change" narrative, which consisted of conveying that there had been many mistakes in the 'joint venture strategy' and that the foundation should now find a more effective direction that would avoid past mistakes. In private interviews these actors shared with us their fears and determination to do everything possible to avoid new strategic mistakes. For example, one of the informants said this before the discussion process began:

> I am so afraid that the Foundation makes new mistakes like the partnership ... When the Foundation will make decisions to transform itself and becoming a new entity, I hope we will not make other mistakes. I would like that this time the Foundation learned from its mistakes .... I will work hard for that. I would not want things to be repeated because we imagine them that way. No, No No, I would not be happy. I will fight against it.

This fear and determination fueled early struggles for a new strategic direction between two aspirational goals, "educational success" versus "community development". The pro-change TM/MMs argued that during the partnership the focus had been on individual "educational success" as the primary means to alleviate poverty. They felt this focus was a mistake and that the foundation should have focused more on improving the poor's living conditions—which they framed as "community development". In November 2014, during the first meeting of strategic reflection on the new directions, one of the powerful vice-presidents (pro-change) indicated his desire for the foundation to become more focused on community development.

> The big discussion [we should have] is the focus on the living conditions [community development] versus the individual's [educational success]... In my opinion, our orientation should be towards the living conditions for several reasons, in particular to distinguish ourselves from others actors in the field. It means providing distinctive support for community development.

This statement was supported by other actors, especially the MMs in his team. In late November 2014, a second meeting was organized under the leadership of a pro-change Vice President to suggest community development as the new strategic direction. This presentation raised concerns among other managers (whom we label pro-continuity TM/MMs). They felt that

that targeting educational success (that is, the status quo) allowed maintaining BigFound's identity and strategic coherence with the past. One of the pro-continuity managers shared with us in a private interview why he resisted the proposed change:

> When people [pro-change managers] were talking about the new directions, it was no longer clear that the notion of 'educational success' was going to be in the picture. While educational success has been the target of BigFound and the anchor to fight against poverty. I am a little worried that people start talking about 'community development' for a better society! ... There was the danger of complete misalignment in relation to the key target that is educational success.

This dissension created a polarity around the decision. The two coalitions advocated their "ideology" about the content of the new strategic direction. The pro-change TM/MMs attempted to convince their pro-continuity colleagues. They tried to find ways to bring them to accept what they considered fundamental in order to avoid further failures of the foundation. During the meetings of January, these pro-change managers offered several arguments to convince the pro-continuity side that the target of community development would not completely eliminate the focus on educational success. Their strategy was to reduce the concerns of their colleagues in order to get them accept this new target, as explained by one of the pro-change managers in a private interview:

> The others [pro-continuity] have a perception that the way we want to make the [strategic] orientations, will give more place, even the whole place, to the community development versus the educational success in the prevention of the poverty... The stake behind this perception is the fear of strictly neglecting educational success, which is wrong. But it is still a perception. So we are deconstructing that.

However, pro-continuity managers strongly resisted, which fed the tension between the two coalitions. *Then the pro-change TM/MMs tried to bypass the pro-continuity.* They decided to work without consulting them. Between February and March, they worked with an external consultant to produce integrated documents from previous strategic reflections to come up with new strategic directions. This avoidance was interpreted by the pro-continuity managers as a desire of the pro-change managers to bypass them, which created high-level frustrations, as emphasized here by one of the pro-continuity informants:

> Given that there is a tension, others [pro-change] avoid associating us .... We had a first meeting in January where they came to present us their guidelines for the new strategic direction [..] Then, there was no communication until March. We were expected to be associated to the strategic reflection, but they did not do it. They decided to work on a document called "Integrator" that would be reflect our identity and that would set the new strategic direction. But that was not well received by us.

CEO's temporal strategy–Creating temporary leadership void. A key player in the decision is the CEO, who usually holds the leadership of the strategy-making process (Hambrick, 1994). We observed that the CEO's time-related political actions during this period contributed significantly to fueling tensions and fatigue. The emergence of the coalition early in the process put the CEO in a delicate position vis-à-vis her teams, that is, whether or not to take a firm stand in the debate and be at the center of conflict. In this kind of conflictual situation, leaders typically have several strategic options, one of which is to avoid engaging in conflict by remaining a neutral strategic observer (Zhao et al, 2018). Initially, the CEO told us that the new strategic directions would be made easily and quickly, but complication ensued with the emergence of the two coalitions. Instead of taking a clear position and potentially engaging in conflict, she strategically and temporarily adopted a neutral stance, which created a void of clear leadership and ambiguity around the decision.

She delegated leadership of the process to another person. The CEO thus appointed the Vice-President (VP) strategy to be in charge, although everyone was aware that the VP was perceived by everyone as the "leader" of the pro-change coalition. This VP, in turn, entrusted the coordination of the process to a middle manager in his team. This delegation was officially justified by the CEO as giving legitimate responsibility to the VP's role, and predictably exacerbated the tensions within the top team. The CEO was present at all key brainstorming meetings, but avoided directing the process and deferred to the designated VP and MM. This delegation was experienced by both coalitions as a void of CEO leadership, as an informant explained:

> The source of tension is not personal, rather it is structural. There is a weakness in the leadership. At the top, the CEO is unable to rally everyone to a vision. The vice-presidents have divergent views on the direction of the Foundation and it percolates at the level of the teams at the bottom of them. This is the source of tension [...] I think that the CEO doesn't pay enough attention to these divisions in the teams...

Second, *the CEO avoids expressing clear views during the debates.* During meetings, some managers expected that that the CEO would take a clear position in favor of one of the competing ideologies, but this never happened. This excerpt from an observation during a crucial meeting to discuss the strategic direction is illustrative:

> *Pro-continuity middle manager*: "We are always confronted with two possibilities that the Foundation has: to intervene with the children and the family (educational success) or on the "system" (community development). I think that is a positioning that the Foundation must take..."

> *Pro-change middle manager*: "I want to reiterate what [pro-continuity middle manager] said. We have not yet taken a clear position on this somewhat nebulous issue."
> *Pro-change senior manager:* "To the question you asked, it seems that the answer is clear – our focus should be on the environment [i.e. community development] rather than on the children [educational success]...."
> *Pro-continuity middle manager:* "The danger is to forget that community development is done to support educational success [which should be the target]"
> *CEO* [Avoided giving her position and said]: "It reminds me of the discussions we had last workshop [on the strategic direction], that we tend to work on children and forget the community around them. We need to better understand that."
> *Pro-continuity senior manager*: "Are we going to support the community development or the educational success? "
> *CEO* [remained silent, avoided giving a clear position, then after 15 minutes of debate she called to pursue the reflection in the coming days]: "I am going to catch a cat among the pigeons! I think there is a missing diagnosis ... we have to continue thinking."
> *Pro-change senior manager* [Concluded the meeting]: "What I note is that we still have to work on our vision, mission and distinctive contribution."

As the CEO avoided stating clearly her position, this fueled feelings of ambiguity and tension between the coalitions, as one of the senior managers explained:

> As head of this organization she [the CEO] has to say "here is the why, here is my vision" ... which means that as long as the discussion is open, people will try .... it is visceral! It is not just ideologies, but strong thoughts ... The CEO must say: "Ladies and gentlemen, I have heard both parties, and behold, I am going there ..." You know, it is not said in such a way that she takes A or B. She must be clear: "I take this path, I expect it, I understand the implications of my choices".

CEO's temporal strategy–Shortening the time for framing contests. Temporal resource allocation constitutes a powerful means for managers to regulate the work of their employees and influence their effectiveness (Chen & Nadkarni, 2017). At BigFound, *the CEO allocated a few months when more seemed needed.* Recall that initiation of the decision process took place at the end of 2014. In her private projections, the CEO foresaw that the strategic reflection process would conclude by the end of 2015—that is, about one year—as she shared privately to us in January 2015:

> *Our question :* How much time do you give yourself for this phase of reflection [on the new strategic direction]?
> *CEO answer:* I think by December 2015 [in one year], we should have a good picture of the situation ... We will have clarified the priorities for the next five years.

As she observed the emergence of tensions between the two coalitions, she gave a period of three months to the teams to produce a new strategic direction document (January to March 2015). This deadline was likely to be difficult for the two teams because of their dissensions. As a result, *TM /MMs began feeling the pressure of time-scarcity and workloads*.—which they experienced as unjustified pressure, as one manager described it:

> Here, at the Foundation, the [CEO] puts pressure [on us] to give ourselves a sense of urgency … And we work very hard, very, very, very hard... What urgency do we have? When I was in other organizations, I did not see that ... Here, we give ourselves that pressure.

Emerging team climate and time-related fatigue. Research in psychology has shown that when people experience emotionally demanding situations such as conflicting interpersonal interactions, ambiguity, and perception of time pressure over protracted periods, they likely develop emotional fatigue—that is feelings of exhaustion (Barnes & Dyne, 2009; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Our observations indicate that TM/MMs and other actors began experiencing emotional fatigue due to the prolonged conflicts between teams that are amplified by CEO temporal political actions. First, they became gradually *exhausted by emotional tensions between team members*. In March and April, managers of the two coalitions began expressing to us their feelings of fatigue related to the tension within the organization. This emotional tension provoked continual "frustration" and "anger" during the meetings. The following quotation from a senior manager illustrates how TM/MMs perceived this conflicting situation as tense and emotionally demanding: "It is weird, the dynamics is weird. I find that there is something that is not healthy, there is something unhealthy ... It is my feeling. It is just a matter of feeling". Second, *they found it hard to convince the other coalition about the worth of their position—after trying to do so* in endless and repetitive debates with no progress. In April, these managers (pro-change and pro-continuity) shared their emotional fatigue related to this ongoing tension. A pro-continuity individual described this general fatigue among his team members as follows:

> People are tired ... it is hard to convince everyone in an organization. We have a collegial culture and suffers from this. In other organizations, leaders would have said: "This is the way. You are in or you are out, but this is the way.

Another manager (pro-change) expressed the same concern about growing fatigue:

> I feel tired ... What tires me is to always repeat the same things ... it has been a long time that we discussed the same things [on the strategic direction] ... We always come back to the discussions that are supposed to be over. That aspect weighs me down.

Third, they felt time pressure and *expressed concerns for time wasted*. The feeling of wasting time is a stressor that increases the state of emotional fatigue (Hobfolll, 1989). The sense of urgency provoked by the CEO's short three-month deadline and by feeling unable to meet this

deadline because of dissension increased their feelings of fatigue. They felt that the repetitive debates were wasting valuable time, as explained by one of the managers:

> We have not made any progress for two weeks. We could not make progress on the action plan that we submitted two weeks ago. So this is disturbing because we feel like we are going around in circles, when we could have started [acting] a long time ago.

This frustration pushed TM/MMs to beckon the CEO's mediation to put an end to their debates and tensions. Intriguingly, despite appeals from both camps for CEO's intervention, they still did not accept the CEO's proposal by stressing the superiority of their espoused ideology.

Decision frame–Focusing on external service. Our observations indicate that during this period the criteria used by both coalitions to assess the acceptability of the CEO's proposal was focused on external services, i.e. they looked at the ability of the CEO's proposal to help the organization achieve its goals of societal wellbeing, and their reading was driven by their ideology or cognitive frame. In March 2015 TM/MMs started beckoning the CEO's supreme authority: "You are the boss, you decide". Faced with the intensification of tensions, some members of the two coalitions approached the CEO to privately and insistently ask her to exercise her authority and make a decision. For example, one of the pro-change senior managers revealed to us in a private interview in April:

> I told [the CEO] that at some point it is necessary for the [boss] to say: "Listen, the trail ends here, we have had enough debate about it, I'm going over there ..." I think that the collegial mode of working has many advantages, but sometimes it is necessary to affirm your wish and say "Look, that is where we are going!"… We need a direction given by the chief, especially when discussions go around in circles."

An pro-continuity senior manager revealed that he took the same covert approach with the CEO:

> I explained to the CEO that at some point there must be a "party line". We could be stubborn for twenty years, but at some point, we need a party line ... As long as there are room for people to defend their ideology, everyone will try. But at some point, we have to assert ourselves and say: "This is what we will value."

In April, the CEO decided to take leadership on the decision process by proposing a strategic direction that might be acceptable to all key parties, as she explained to us:

> It is normal and predictable that in the kind of change of [strategic] direction as we do now, there exist hesitation and questioning [from the TM/MMs] ... The lack of clarity on the direction of the Foundation created some void and then these apprehensions ... I thus got more involved more to reposition the direction of the foundation. There are things that cannot always be bottom-up.

She thus produced a document called "One Pager" in which she summarized the new strategic direction. At the end of April, she presented this document to all participants involved in

the strategic reflection. Covertly, however, each camp was secretly hoping that their espoused ideology would prevail (educational success versus community development). As one of the pro-change managers privately shared with us:

> It is like a soccer game where there are two teams and one team says, "We are confident we are going to win"… There is a first vision that feeds on itself [educational success], then there is a second vision that feeds on the interaction with the outside [Community development]. I believe that it is the second vision [that I share] that must win.

While the pro-change camp (community development) was satisfied with the CEO proposal, the pro-continuity (educational success) managers felt that it gave too much space to the competing ideology. The proposed strategic direction by the CEO was thus rejected by the pro-continuity managers. They criticized the document publicly in meetings and expressed to the CEO their dissatisfaction with the content. A senior manager described their rejection as follows:

> The tension around the desirable strategic direction was exacerbated in beginning of April ... Then the CEO declared herself responsible for drafting the proposed strategic direction. She said "After all, the definition of the new direction is the work of the CEO". This resulted in a kind of "one pager" that reiterated concisely the [conflicting] orientations. It has not rallied or solved ideological problems ... It has exacerbated tensions among people ... The proposal failed to ideologically reconcile the tensions that had emerged in March.

An informant explained the perception that the pro-continuity managers developed about the CEO's proposal as follows:

> The CEO affirmed that "the educational success of young people must be included in a community development approach ...". But colleagues [who advocate for educational success as a focus of strategic orientation] do not want that. They don't accept that priority is given to community development.

This orientation document was abandoned by the CEO in order to avoid imposing it on the teams. A second phase of deliberation thus began in May 2015 and would last for six months.

Period 2 of deliberation (May – Oct. 2015): Increasing emotional fatigue with decision acceptance criteria remaining focused on external service.

Ongoing TMT/MMs coalition's political bargaining. In May, deliberations on the strategic direction resumed. The pro-change camp tried convincing the pro-continuity camp that the focus on community development could confer a more distinctive positioning to the foundation. However, they faced strong opposition from the pro-continuity managers, who maintained their conviction that the proposed change would distance the foundation too much from its original mission and

would be harmful for the future. This excerpt from a meeting in May illustrates this protracted debate:

> *Pro-change manager:* "When we position on the inequality gap, it brings a new way of seeing things. Our previous choice was educational success, but the other possible choice is "working together" [e.g. community development]."
> *Pro-continuity manager:* "I am confused sometimes. I don't know if our goal is inequality... [I think] there are things we can do to have greater impact on school community [educational success]… Do we want to work on [community development] or on educational success? What is more effective?"
> *Pro-change manager:* "In my opinion it does not distinguish us from doing things that are already done [positioning on educational success] ... Our added value is not to work on [educational success], but on the enabling conditions [Community Development]…"

CEO's temporal strategy: Maintaining temporary leadership void. After rejection of her proposal by the TM/MMs, the CEO again delegated the leadership of the strategy-making process to the VP strategy. As in the first phase, this delegation amplified tensions between the two coalitions, and continued creating perception of leadership void and ambiguity among actors who continued defending their respective ideologies. Some quotations in Table 3 illustrate this delegation and the feeling of leadership void expressed by the TM/MMs. In the same vein, the CEO avoided taking a clear position during the debate. For example, a special meeting was organized by the TM/MMs in September with the aim of getting from the CEO a clear position. Before the meeting a manager briefed the CEO as to what message to deliver during this meeting to end the tensions. However, the CEO again avoided giving a clear position, as one informant describes:

> Before the meeting, I said to [my colleagues]: "You will see it's going to be the end [of debates]... The CEO will give a clear direction and then we will move to more concrete, operational planning. " At the end of the meeting, it was worse than I thought. We have not moved forward and nothing has been decided ... and we have to continue to debate.

The CEO's behavior was experienced as a leadership void and was difficult to bear on the part of a team hoping for the end of conflict engagement, as one informant shared with us in September:

> My feeling is that the problem is bigger than us [TM/MMs]. We don't know what to do… I almost want to say to the CEO "What do you want? Stop asking questions that will make us return to our work. Why? Because in two months, six months we will start all over again. I want to tell her "make a decision!"

CEO's temporal strategy: Extending time for framing contests. Extension of debates when people hoped they would be ending was another CEO action that amplified feelings of fatigue.

After the rejection of the stage 1 proposal, the CEO set expectations among TM/MMs to end the debate by September. TM/MMs worked intensely over this period with the expectation that their debates would soon end. As this did not happen feelings of fatigue increased, as one informant shared with us:

> We have been working according to what was asked of us and it is like an accumulation of several months of work from January to now [September]. I was completely "depressed" that we could not get the results we wanted [after so much work].

Another manager expressed the same tired feeling as follows:

> I was expecting to be the end. I did not expect this surprising turn. … I think we have done enough cerebral [debate on strategic direction], we must now take action.

Increased time and team-related fatigue. Emotional fatigue increased after stage 1. The climate of tension between the teams increased and became more difficult for their members. In October, the debates between the two coalitions took a more personal turn. Some individuals started developing strong animosity towards others. This gave rise to frustration, anger, and interpersonal clash, which fueled emotional fatigue. An informant described this tension in a private interview in September:

> I notice that there is a real breakdown in the [collective] work. There is no longer any work that is done in collaboration. I have seen it in the last two weeks. The breakdown is major. We are no longer conflicting over ideas, we are engaged in personal attacks .... I think there is hate ..... There is zero, zero collaboration. There is really a breakdown.

At the same time, the perception that strategic deliberations had been lasting longer than expected increased the feeling of "time wasted", physical exhaustion, and, subsequently, emotional fatigue. Some TM/MMs shared privately with us their feeling of fatigue in informal interviews and their desire to end it with a clear decision from the CEO.

Remaining focused on external service. After the failure of the September meeting, both camps continued calling on the CEO to exert her authority. The CEO decided that it was time for her to intervene in the debate. First, she asked to a VP in the pro-continuity camp to produce a report on "areas of ambiguity" to allow her to come up with a decision. However, she avoided discussing the report at the collective management team meeting. Rather, she decided to consult individually each senior manager as she explained in October:

> I realized that we were "wading" to discuss the direction within the top management team. We went round in circles, we did not progress enough. I wanted to make it differently and allow everyone to

> express himself, without interruption and distraction... In individual meeting, people [senior managers] were able to express their ideas and were less influenced by others

After listening to the VPs, the CEO presented to the team her strategic direction in another document called "One Pager 2". In this one pager, she emphasized the direction of the foundation--which remained educational success—as she explained:

> Everyone has expressed his opinion ... now it takes someone to decide. This is the role that the boss can't delegate especially when there is no unanimity! ... That is what I actually did… I heard everyone, then I said "Here is what I retain, the choices I make for the Foundation is to go towards educational success."

But as happened in Phase 1, TM/MMs in each camp were ready to accept the CEO's proposal only if their ideology dominated. Despite prior calls from both sides for the CEO to exert her ultimate authority, the new proposal was challenged for a second time and rejected. Both coalitions found that the CEO proposal did not address adequately their desired "ideology". For example, although the CEO did say that educational success, would remain as the new direction the pro-continuity managers thought that the statement was only a façade meant to satisfy the community development side.. Conversely, pro-change managers who advocated community development as the desired direction found that the CEO did not give enough room for their preference in her proposal. As a VP explained to us:

> The CEO decided to meet the VPs individually and present her orientations and her willingess to reformulate the vision. But, that did not solve the problem. There was always the duality of ideologies among the [camps].

Period 3 of deliberation (Nov. 2015 – May 2016): Accumulated disabling fatigue and the shift of decision acceptance criteria towards "internal wellbeing".

During this period 3, the CEO maintained what her subordinates perceived as leadership void. After their rejection of the 'One Pager, version 2', she set up a committee called "2020 Committee" with the mandate to continue the strategic reflection, entrusting again the leadership of this process to the VP strategy. In addition, as in periods 1 and 2, she set a rather short time frame (3 months: November - January) for this deliberation phase. Negotiations between the teams continued intensively with a clearer consolidation of positions.

Accumulated disabling fatigue. After a year of protracted deliberations and tensions, the TM/MMs began to feel extremely fatigued. Personal attacks that arose during Period 2 intensified

during Period 3 among members of the 2020 committee. Outside the committee, people from opposing coalitions avoided working with one another. Conflicts among the two coalitions reached a new high, as an informant described:

> Trust no longer prevails between the teams because of polarities. People think that the Senior Manager pro-change who is in charge of the process [delegated by the CEO] wants to go soft on educational success and privilege community development. The actions taken in the committee are in the direction of community development [ideology]... and not in that of educational success.

This tense situation had the effect of increasing feelings of fatigue already accumulated over the previous two periods. In our interactions with the managers, this extreme fatigue was perceptible in their behavior. In a private interview, a middle manager expressed this general feeling of accumulated fatigue that was widely shared by members of the two coalitions:

> The team and I are very tired and discouraged. We have worked very hard, but the results are slow in coming, especially because we do not have the same interpretations of the strategic directions .... It is very difficult.

The tension was so high that TM/MMs began expressing serious concerns about their mental and physical health. To illustrate, one informant privately shared with us in March 2016:

> It is really extremely painful. There are people who will suffer, it is a mental health issue. We will not be able to do it. The past eight months have been extremely heavy on us. It is very difficult emotionally, in terms of mental health, quality of life. It was very difficult.

A middle manager expressed the same concern in a private interview:

> I am afraid for the health of some colleagues. I don't want them to be personally affected to the point that it affects their physical and mental health. I had already shared my concerns with a senior manager ... and he became very aware of this.

Reappraising and shifting toward internal wellbeing. The two coalitions beckoned the higher authority of the CEO for a third time. They agreed during a meeting that it was impossible to reach a common understanding within the 2020 committee because of the hardening of the positions, and decided to call upon the CEO. This time, rather than defending their respective entrenched ideology, each camp shifted its focus towards restoring a healthy climate among the teams to avert significant harm to their health. One senior manager explained how the negative climate around the 2020 committee affected coalition members and how this contributed to change their decision criterion:

> The 2020 committee was a monumental flop. Between November and February, it was not mobilizing, it created even cynicism in the teams, then disarray. By cynicism, I mean "people have landed, mentally" [i.e. they decided to stop focusing on ideological conflict and turn to recovery].

In March 2016, the 2020 committee was suspended. The CEO again took the leadership for a new proposal. She presented a third version of the "One pager" to the TM/MMs. This time, the TM/MMs accepted the CEO's proposal. Surprisingly, TM/MMs of both opposing camps expressed satisfaction with the CEO's proposal, even if the ideology conflicts remained. In fact, members of both coalitions admitted to us that they did not perceive any significant difference between this "One pager 3" and the previous proposals 1 and 2. To illustrate, a VP noted that the CEO changed some wording but the core ideas remained the same as previously:

> There was nothing new, it was the same thing that was expressed [in the CEO's prior proposals] ... There was nothing new… It is like saying "it is the communities that will decide the priorities of the community because they are in the best position" So, the same discourse as before ... There is nothing new in [the strategic direction].

In April 2016, just after the CEO's third proposal was accepted by both camps, we surveyed the level of satisfaction of some members of both coalitions, by asking the following question: "What is your level of satisfaction with the new strategic direction ?" We noted that satisfaction was high. For example, a pro-change senior manager replied:

> I would probably tell you 7/10. For me, there are not so many new things in there. I am satisfied by the refinement, the clarity and the precision of the message ... [...] I feel that it has brought a good climate around that ... it allows everyone to go back to action. So it is a more positive [internal climate].

Similar feelings were shared by pro-continuity managers, who expressed 7 or 8 out of 10 in their level of satisfaction. This satisfaction stemmed from the fact that members of both camps perceived relief from the ongoing tensions and emotional fatigue. Thus, the acceptance of the CEO's proposal was more related to members' desire to reduce tension in the organizational climate, and escape emotional fatigue, and address their heath concerns. For example, in April 2016, one informant observed this change of attitude in one of the pro-change senior managers:

> At one point, the [pro-change] VP let go. He said, "Okay, they want educational success? It is going to be educational success. It is over!" It was clear that this VP's speech was changing. Before that, he shouted community development, community development, now it is all the time educational success, educational success ... I understood that there had been a change [at this VP level]. With the tensions, at one point, he said to himself: "it is better to take this direction [educational success] because the [internal] climate is becoming too toxic". He became more concerned in re-establishing internal harmony as the best choice for the organization.

A pro-continuity manager offered a similar explanation about accepting the CEO's proposal:

> My key concern is how to rally the troops. Because there are serious [psychological] wounds. There are many injured people in the organization ... Not everyone is hurt, but some have "scrapes". This situation is not healthy. We must heal these wounds.

Second, TM/MMs were now willing to accept the CEO's third proposal as they felt it would stop prolonged time-wastage. As described earlier, members of both camps perceived time lost on non-productive work as one key factor increasing their emotional fatigue. Managers realized that the final proposal was "not perfect" but had the advantage of ending the wastage of time and allowing them to move to more productive action. A manager shared with us: "We are happy to be in action now ... The debate has been too long, we have to move to action, we have to be in action." Another emphasized:

> In a strategic deliberation, it is normal to spend 6 months, 12 months to debate. It is normal. But we have spent two years, two years to debate ... It doesn't make sense.

Through this acceptance, managers seemed no longer keen to have their desired ideology taking a central place in the CEO proposal. This emotional detachment seemed to enable them to restore their emotional balance and recover a satisfying state of functioning in the organization. As one VP explained to us in April:

> On an emotional level, I moved on. I gave myself a reason. I let go of the intellectual arguments that drove me previously, and refocused my level of satisfaction on my own area of activity. I concentrate my energy on making things happen, on mobilizing partners, etc., and for the rest, I remain totally dedicated and available for what it is asked of me ... .I am not attached to a particular tactic or to a strategy .... My way of surviving emotionally is to focus on what I believe is meaningful.

Contextual factors

Our findings also reveal two key contextual factors: (1) equal coalitions' power and (2) members' failure to regulate emotions.

Equal coalitions' power. Our data indicate that the two coalitions had equal power throughout the three periods. On the one hand, the pro-change coalition was led by a Vice President who was implicitly acting as the number 2 of the organization. He therefore had a significant weight in the decisions to be made for the organization. In a private interview, several informants told us that the latter was a potential successor to the CEO. On the other hand, the pro-continuity coalition was led by a Vice President who also had a power of influence on the organizational decision. He was recognized for his expertise and was the secretary of the board of directors. Thus, his weight

was also very important, since he had the confidence of the board of directors, as one of our informants explained:

> [This Vice President] is a pragmatic person who asks good questions of consistency and impact. He is an important pillar of the organization. Among the members of the management committee, he is the secretary of the board of directors… he manages the finances of the organization, and he is very competent.

These two actors were the ones whom the CEO relied on most closely in managing the organization. Thus the CEO had an interest in maintaining this balance under him by giving room to the expression of the two vice presidents and their relative coalitions. This balance of forces of the two coalitions was important because without it, we would certainly have seen the domination of a frame as suggested by the literature (Kaplan, 2008). In period 2 of the deliberations, some actors who had a rather neutral position switched to the pro-change position, but it did not really affect the weight of the two coalitions, and the frame battle continued. This context of balance of power was also the factor that made the coalitions appeal to the CEO's mediation because they perceived that they could not easily dominate their opponent coalition.

Members' failure to regulate emotions. At various times, some members took actions to reduce inter-coalition tensions but failed to do so. For example, in April 2015, during the first period of deliberation, one of the actors confided to us in a private interview:

> [During a meeting] I put on the table problems that were a source of tension between us because there are people around the table who came to talk to me, personally, about this concern, and there were discussions in the corridor about that. I said: if we do not bring it to the table, we will not get along. Everyone agreed with what I said ... everyone thought about it, but no one dared bring it to the table. But here I did it, and I'm very happy ...

These kinds of approaches were also made in the second period, but the divergence of frames made the coalitions incapable of reducing tensions and focusing on a purely cognitive debate. In the third period, the inability to regulate emotions resulted in personal attacks between certain actors, creating a deeply unhealthy climate in the team. This inability of coalition members to effectively regulate emotions was a contextual factor that contributed to emotional fatigue.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Our study aimed to understand how leaders handle frame battles of coalitions under their authority when defining new strategic direction. We summarize in figure 2 the conceptual model

that emerged from these findings. This model links the framing contests to the CEO's temporal strategies, which in turn influence outcome of the frame battle through the pacifying mechanism of emotional fatigue. It also offers some boundary conditions. In this section we discuss these findings, in particular by emphasizing new mechanisms that emerge and how they enrich existing theories and practices. We illustrate our arguments with examples from the literature to show how the emergent themes from the case of BigFound can be relevant in other organizational contexts. We conclude with limits and future research.

Insert Figure 2 About Here

Impact of Leaders on Frame Battle Outcomes in Strategy-making

This study enriches the literature by highlighting the impact of leaders on the process and outcomes of frame battles. The battle of frames has become a major topic in recent organization research through diverse perspectives such as competing logics (e.g., (Besharov & Smith, 2014; Jakob-Sadeh & Zilber, 2018; Pache & Santos, 2010), organizational duality (Ashforth & Reingen, 2014), and paradoxical tensions (e.g. (Jarzabkowski, Lê, & Van de Ven, 2013; Jay, 2012; Smets, Jarzabkowski, Burke, & Spee, 2014; Smith, 2014). In strategy making processes, frame divergence tends to give rise to coalitions when actors have strong interest in the issues (March, 1962; Pettigrew, 1973). To illustrate, Kaplan's (2008) study of framing contests explores the political game between coalitions and suggests that the frame battle ends only when a frame wins over the other. The frame battle in the case we studied shows a qualitatively different outcome. It ended with no party triumphing over the other. Our analysis reveals that the CEO played a key yet subtle moderator role during the frame battle, ensuring that diverse competing groups agreed without one frame dominating over the other. This frame battle outcome seems not unique to the organization under study, however. Recent studies of different organizational contexts (Jay, 2012; Smith, 2014) on organizational paradoxes suggests that leaders have several options in their attempt to resolve frame battles, in particular maintaining the co-existence of both frames (Smith, 2014). However, these approaches risk exacerbating tensions when the protagonists are unaware of their paradoxical nature or fail to appreciate their inherent value (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013).

Likewise, our study shows how the CEO of BigFound used a similar frame-coexistence approach, and then used temporal strategies to get the two warring coalitions to accept his later decision. Thus, an organization leader could influence significantly the outcome of a frame battle by preventing one frame from prevailing over another. These intriguing actions and outcomes invite future research to pay more attention to the agentic role of leaders in the process and outcome of frame battles. More generally, our study contributes to organizational leadership and change (Oreg & Berson, 2018) by exploring in depth how leaders influence change initiation outcomes both at the process and organizational level.

CEO's Temporal Strategies

Our study enriches the literature on how CEOs' specific actions—ratter than more generic attributes such as personal psychology or demographic characteristics—influence the process and outcomes of frame battles in organizations (e.g., Kaplan, 2008; Smith, 2014). In particular, our research reveals the under-explored time-based influencing tactics that are used by CEOs in frame battles between coalitions. Recent studies have begun to show how CEOs can influence the outcome of strategic processes through their "temporal leadership" (Chen & Nadkarni, 2017). More specifically, when there is a divergence among members of the top team, the CEO can intervene by optimizing the use of time to achieve the outcomes expected (Mohammed & Nadkarni, 2011). For example, the CEO can coordinate the team to finish the decision in time. These types of actions have been described as purly task-oriented (Chen & Nadkarni, 2017). Our research extends prior studies by showing a rich set of under-researched temporal strategies that are distinct from optimal time management, and which are more political in nature than task-oriented.

It is not surprising that competing coalitions try to leverage a CEO's authority to tip the balance of power in their favor and thus win with their preferred frame (Kaplan, 2018). However, the CEO can "fear backlash" if s/he were to be seen as taking sides (Zhao et al., 2018). Using formal authority to impose a decision can exacerbate tensions and create a political dynamic that leads both coalitions to turn against the CEO (Eisenhart & Bourgois, 1988). For these reasons, the

CEO may decide to remain a patient strategic observer (Zhao et al., 2018) and leverage time to resolve the frame battle. Our analysis reveals such a "wait-and-observe" stance being adopted by BigFound's CEO. Instead of taking the lead in coordinating activities and pronouncing a clear position in the beginning, the CEO temporarily delegated her decision making authority to collective deliberation among the lower level groups, creating what these groups perceived as a "leadership void". At the same time, the CEO influenced the deliberation process by setting short deadlines, thereby forcing the parties to reach an agreement quickly. When the parties could not agree within the time limit, they called on the CEO's higher authority. But instead of imposing a decision by formal authority, she extended the time for deliberation, essentially enabling both parties to pursue their frame battle, and, in the process, gradually creating a context that nudges the warring parties to accept her later proposal.

The case of BigFound does not seem to be unique. For example, when there was a frame battle between two camps on microprocessor technologies (RISC versus CISC) at Intel, the authority of the senior management —team—especially the CEO—was key to solving the problem. The CEO intervened to tilt the choice towards one of the technologies (Burgelman & Grove, 2007). Andy Grove (the CEO) calls this decision process a Darwinian process that consists of "wait to see who wins and then rearticulates the strategy" (Burgelman, 2002: 332). Even if this case suggests that one frame has prevailed over the other, it reflects a behavior in which the CEO makes strategic use of time in the strategy-making process to handle warring coalitions.

Collective Emotional Fatigue as a Pacifying Mechanism

Our research contributes to the literature by revealing a rather intriguing finding, in that emotional fatigue could facilitate strategic decision-making in some circumstances. These findings highlight two key elements which remain under-investigated in the organizational change literature: the emotion-eliciting role of time and the impact of emotional fatigue on cognitive processes.

Emotional fatigue-eliciting role of the CEO's temporal strategies. Empirical research that examines how temporal factors and emotions influence the process and outcome of major organizational change remains scarce, yet recent reviews have reiterated the importance of studying

this interaction (Kunisch et al., 2017). Our study responds to this call by showing how the CEO's temporal strategies shape emotional fatigue among strategy makers. Our research extends studies that rely on cognitive perspectives such as the attention-based view (Ocasio, 1997) to explain the temporal behavior of the CEO (e.g. (Gamache & McNamara, 2018). Our study suggests that the CEO's temporal strategies, which combine leadership void, shortening at times and extending at othersthe time allocated for framing battles could deplete the emotional resources (e.g. energy, time, relationships) of individuals involved. Like any normal human being, actors involved in the frame battle experience emotional fatigue because of the depletion of emotional resources (Maslach, 1982, Hobfoll, 1989). Our analysis indicates that this fatigue has a significant impact on the strategy process when it becomes collective, that is to say, shared by the actors of various competing coalitions (Sanchez-Burks & Huy, 2009) and reaches high levels. The link between time duration and emotional fatigue is likely to be observed in many other contexts, because frame battles are often intergroup conflicts that can arouse uncomfortable emotions such as frustration, anger, anxiety (Jehn, 1997; Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004). When this battle is prolonged over time, it is thus likely to increase people's psychological fatigue.

Impact of emotional fatigue on cognitive processes. Our study contributes to the literature on emotional fatigue (also known as emotional exhaustion) by showing how it affects the outcome of a collective decision-making process in the context of frame battles. Taking a "dramatical perspective", previous studies on emotional fatigue focused on its negative effects at the individual level (Grandey, 2003; Maslach, 1982; Trougakos et al., 2015), and under-investigated its effect on collective behavior, such as in strategic decision-making. Our analysis suggests that although emotional fatigue has a negative effect for some individuals, it contributes at a collective level by facilitating a "peaceful" outcome of the frame battle between coalitions.

Our study shows how emotional fatigue changes the criteria that actors use to accept the decision from "external service" to "internal well-being". This shift of decision frame appears to be a manifestation of emotional regulation via a reappraisal of the situation (Gross, 1998; Hobfolll, 1989). The emergence of pathological symptoms related to fatigue was perceived as a "threat" to

people's well-being. This produces a shift in the decision criteria from concern about societal wellbeing to a more narrow focus on concerns for their own social-psychological well-being. Coalitions put aside their "old battle" of frames (Maslach, 1982) to focus on regaining resources– energy, health and time (Hobfolll, 1989).

Thus, emotional regulation at the group level has the intriguing effect of facilitating the outcome of a contentious issue and bringing the warring factions to accept the later proposal of the CEO. The process whereby emotional conditions constrain cognitive processes is not unique to the organization under study. For example, in the so-called "bad cop, good cop" technique, the targeted people can acquiesce to the demand for compliance in order to escape the negative emotions created in them by the bad cop, that is for the sake of "tension release" (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1991). The interrogators obtain a positive outcome from the target persons because they modify their compliance criteria as a result of the need for emotional regulation. Similarly, the CEO's temporal strategies forced a shift in decision frame because of the need for emotional regulation caused by extreme emotional fatigue (Gross, 1998). Our study suggests that future research could reveal novel insights if they focus on specific (rather than broad) emotional and cognitive processes and their interactions and how they influence organizational processes of decision-making and change.

Challenges in Strategizing for Poverty Reduction

The context of our study, that is, the formulation of a strategy for poverty reduction, has provided a rare opportunity to explore how organizations make strategy for societal grand-challenges. Previous studies suggest that frame conflicts are common in organizations working for the reduction of poverty (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Mair et al., 2011), and more generally for societal grand-challenges (Jarzabkowski, Bednarek, Chalkias, & Cacciatori, 2018; Nyberg et al., 2018). However, few studies have explored empirically how this is occurs in regard to the strategy formulation process. We illustrated the kind of frame battles that emerged in such a context, such as "educational success" versus "community development", which are driven by competing ideologies: "focusing on the individuals" versus "focusing on the system." Our study has explored in depth this tension in strategizing by observing on a daily basis how managers navigate within it. The case of

BigFound highlights the fact that defining collectively a strategy for this type of issue could be significant challenge for leaders caught between multiple competing options. More generally, our study shows that the interaction of cognitive, emotional and temporal microprocesses could enhance significantly scholarly understanding of formulating strategy for poverty reduction and similar major social challenges.

Future research

Our study raises important questions for future research. First, to what extent can our findings be relevant for other contexts? The study of a single case can produce an insightful emerging theory (Huy et al., 2014), but must be extended to other contexts. For example, we identified two boundary conditions: equal coalitions power and failure of emotional regulation. It may be interesting to see what the outcome of a frame battle process would be if these two conditions are not met in other contexts. Future research could explore questions such as how does the CEO's political behavior influence a framing contest in a context in which the power of coalitions is unbalanced? Do diverse groups regulate their emotions in a framing contest, and if so, how? What would the outcome of a framing contest be if the coalitions displayed high emotion regulation ability from the start?

Second, it may be fruitful to examine the outcome of a framing contest in other contexts whereby the CEO adopts a different strategy of engagement to moderate the frame battle. In our study the CEO adopted the position of strategic observer, that is, she stayed above the fray and allowed the fire to burn itself out, so to speak. Another option identified in the conflict-leadership literature is active engagement (Zhao et al., 2018). What would happen if the CEO had adopted such an approach?

Third, we reveal that the CEO uses temporal strategies to deal with this frame battle. It may be fruitful to continue exploring the CEO’s impact on framing contests by investigating other factors. For example, managerial discretion has been suggested as an important factor that influences the CEO's effect on strategic decisions (Li & Tang, 2010). In the context of our study,

the CEO had a high degree of discretion, which strengthened her role as a moderator. What would have happened if her discretion was weak?

Finally, we identified the intriguing effect—that is, the facilitating role—of emotional fatigue in frame contests. It may be fruitful to explore its effect in other strategic contexts such as inter-organizational negotiation in which managers are often subject to pressure, or in the context of strategic changes which involve a lot of intense interactions among actors (Huy, 2001, 2002). How does emotional fatigue occur in these contexts and what are its consequences?

To conclude, our research represents one of the few rare empirical studies that examine in detail how some time-based actions and emotional processes interact with one another to influence the circuitous process of strategy formulation. We reveal fresh insights into some of the micro-mechanisms of time and emotion in framing contests, and shows the subtle role of organization leaders using time-based strategies to pacify warring coalitions and nudge them towards acceptance of the leader's later decision with little resistance. We hope our study opens new pathways to illuminate ill-understood strategy processes and practices that occur in organizations.

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Table 1: Chronology of Key Events

Date	Key Events Related to BigFound's New Strategic Directions
Early 2000	Creation of BigFound with the aim of poverty prevention. The founder chooses "child development" as the key strategic target.
2006	The foundation changes its target to the "educational success of children," with a focus on children, family and schools.
2006 – 2009	Partnership with the government around the target of educational success, resulting in the creation of 3 NGOs as joint-venture (nearly 300 employees, one billion dollars investment in poverty prevention).
2011 – 2013	Several reports criticize the target and the partnership. This leads he foundation to consider different strategic directions, by giving greater importance to the living conditions and community.
Nov. 2013 – Oct. 2014	The foundation begins negotiations with the partner for a renewal of the strategic directions (more focus on the living conditions). In October, BigFound's managers conclude that they could not bring the partner to accept the desired change, and then suggest the end of the partnership [Data collection starts during this period].
Nov. 2014	The Board of directors agrees to end the partnership and asks the managers for new strategic directions that will help BigFound achieve its goal of poverty alleviation.
Nov. – April 2015	Beginning of the debates on the new orientation, within the executive committee now transformed into a strategic committee. Emergence of tensions around these strategic directions. First proposal on the strategic direction by the CEO, which was rejected.
Oct. – Nov. 2015	Establishment of the 2020 committee (a new strategic committee), after the failure of a second proposal to reconcile the positions on the target of the foundation.
Mars – Avril 2016	Dissolution of the 2020 committee after failure. The CEO presents a third proposal of new strategic directions, which is accepted. This brings to an end the discussions ofthe new strategic directions [Data collection ended in July 2016, with a restrospective interview with the CEO in July 2018].

Table 2: Interviews and observations

	Year 1 (June 2014-May 2015)	Year 2 (June 2015-July 2016)	Total

Interview with			
CEO	4	3	7
Senior Managers	18	15	33
Middle Managers & Others	29	16	45
Total interviews	51	34	85
Observation of			
Strategic Committees *(The CEO is present)*	23	14	37
Strategic Committees *(The CEO is absent)*	1	6	7
Total observations	24	20	44

Table 3: Core Concepts, second-order themes, and representative quotes

Framing Contests	
• *"Senior Manager A*: There is something important. Poverty factors can be a determinant of educational success... Hence my question is how global [community development] processes will coexist with specific educational success processes. *Senior Manager B*: If I understand correctly, is this a question about the importance of community development versus educational success? *CEO*: I feel that there are premises which we must discuss further. We have to have a special meeting on that." *(Obs., Nov. 2014)*. • "We are not talking about the same thing. There are various ideologies, and everyone use these meetings to defend his/her ideology. This creates a lot of confusion. It does not make sense, you know..." *(Int. SM, April 2015)*.	Frame battle articulating
• "Given that there is tension, others avoid associating .... We had a first meeting in January where they [the pro-change camp] came to present us their guidelines for the new strategic direction... Then, there was no communication until March. We [pro-continuity] were expected to be associated with the strategic reflection, but they did not do it." *(Int. SM, April 2015)* • *"*The idea is to influence the decision… If things are going in the wrong direction, I am going to act ... It is not necessarily resistance; it is an attempt to influence" (*Int., MM, Dec. 2015)*. • "The actions taken in the committee are all in the direction of community development ideology... and not in that of educational success. We can't just bring their [camp] back into this steering committee to present only the community component. My [camp] is very upset by this." *(Inter., SM, Feb. 2016)*	Coalitions' political bargaining
CEO's Temporal Strategies	
• "Normally this kind of strategic direction exercise is initiated and managed by the CEO. Here, the [leadership] was delegated to the VP strategy…" *(Int. SM, April 2015)* • "There is no leadership here. You [the CEO] can't delegate leadership to teams. We have ideologies and visions that are extremely different, divergent. If, in this situation, at the head of the organization do not take a clear direction, it is not teams, at the bottom, which will take a clear direction because they will have divergence on the direction..." *(Int., MM, March 2016)* • "I had voluntarily put myself a little too far away from the [decision] process by delegating to the Vice President Strategy... this delegation has created for the team some confusion of roles…" (*Retrospective Int. CEO, July 2018)*	Creating temporary leadership void
• *Three short deadlines allocated by the CEO*: the first is a three-month period from January to March 2015; the second is a four-month period from May to August 2016; the third is a three- month period from October 2015 to December 2015 *(Arch., internal meeting calendars)* • "The CEO put pressure on us. For example, he told to the VP strategy, "I give you two weeks to do something". So, the VP Strategy did a strategic direction paper. He presented it to the steering committee. It did not succeed ... there were people [the other camp] who disagree with the contents of this document." *(Int., MM, April 2016)*	Shortening time for framing contests
• "We prepared the CEO for this important meeting [in September 2015], which was supposed to end our discussions .... She seemed to understand and said: 'The ball is in my camp, I understand that it is up to me to decide'. Then people [from both coalitions] were expected a clear direction [from the CEO] and the end… But the CEO had a discomfort to decide... and obviously this opened the door to new debates [among the two coalitions]... I was surprised, angry and discouraged. .. the CEO doesn't want to decide, she doesn't want to choose [one camp among the two coalitions]." *(Int. SM, September 2015)* • *"Question [Interviewer]:* I observed that the decision process and the deadline were shorter than what I observed elsewhere. But at the same time, you were extending time at other periods. *CEO's response:* Yes ... it was a difficult process ... so I adjusted [the time allocated to the team] according to how it goes in the decision process..." *(Retrospective Int. CEO, July 2018)*	Extending time for framing contests

Coalitions' Accumulating Emotional Fatigue	
• *Emotional tensions in the team that cause fatigue*: "The atmosphere is rotten... Everyone has his/her dream and everyone defends his ideology. People defend their ideology and, given these polarities, there are a lot of tensions." *(Int. SM, Sept. 2015)* • "The VP was tired and angry for all this .... but, he calmed down. He will continue to converse with others [to convince them]." *(Int. MM, March 2015)* • "I realize that we do not understand each other. It is irritating, because at some point, we will stop "playing ostrich", you know! It makes me angry…" *(Int. SM, Sept. 2015)*	Emerging team climate-related fatigue
• "I feel tired and frustrated. I am going through a tough time. For three weeks we have been writing a specific document [related to the strategic direction]. We are in endless discussions instead of encouraging each other and going in the same direction." *(Int. MM, March 2015)* • "I feel tired ... What tires me is to always repeat the same things ... it has been a long time since we discussed the same case [on the strategic direction] ... We always come back to the discussions that are over. So that is the aspect that sometimes weighs me down. *(Int. SM, April 2015)"*	Emerging time-related fatigue
• "The team and I are tired and discouraged. We have worked very hard, but the results are slow in coming, especially because we do not have the same interpretations of the strategic directions .... It is very difficult." *(Int. MM, March 2016)* • "We have a colleague who had a burnout, which is diagnosed as an anxiety disorder with adaptation problem. It is difficult for this person." [The whole atmosphere of the organization contributes to this]. *(Int. MM, Feb. 2016)* • "I hope it [this situation] will not last too long... It is pathological... People are under a lot of pressure ... so I think people will suffer more" *(Int. MM, March 2016)*	Accumulated disabling fatigue
Coalitions' Change in Decision Frame	
• *Call to the CEO authority:* "People went to express their concern to the CEO in the following terms: 'We have a problem, there is this, there is that.' So the CEO has taken that document back and worked with certain people to release a one-pager that is supposed to give the new [more precise] directions." *(Int. SM, April 2015)* • *Decision acceptance criteria focused on the desire of both coalitions to properly address the societal well-being problem (poverty prevention), which we call 'external service'*: "The CEO affirmed that the educational success of young people must be included in a community development approach... But colleagues [who advocate for educational success as a focus of strategic direction] do not want that. They don't accept that first place is given to community development." *(Int. MM, June. 2015)*	Focusing on external service
• *Decision acceptance criteria shift towards the desire of both coalitions to address the team and internal well-being problem*: "Given the current atmosphere, the priority is to rebuild trust. I think it is going to be by the gestures and actions that we will arrive there [to rebuild this trust…All the teams are entrenched in their corners to avoid [emotional] tensions. They work together when they have no choice, but there is no real cohesion, you know. So, there is a lot of work to be done to revitalize our organization." *(Int. SM, July 2016)* • *Comments from a pro-change manager after acceptance:* "I think everyone is happy that finally, we move on to this step to action. You know, I saw it yesterday, just in their body language, people were saying, "Ahhh! Yes we can see that we are moving forward!" *(Int. SM, April 2016)* • *Comments from a pro-continuity manager after acceptance:* "The CEO's position is clear… I have no problem with that. It is just that I would like us to be in an organization that is more concerned about educational success ... But it seems to be settled, in the sense that he [officially] says the major focus [of our strategic direction focus] is educational success… I think that this gives us nothing with which to continue the debate. You know, it gives us nothing to discuss, discuss, discuss." *(Int. SM, July 2016)*	Reappraisal and shifting toward internal wellbeing

Figure 1: Data structure

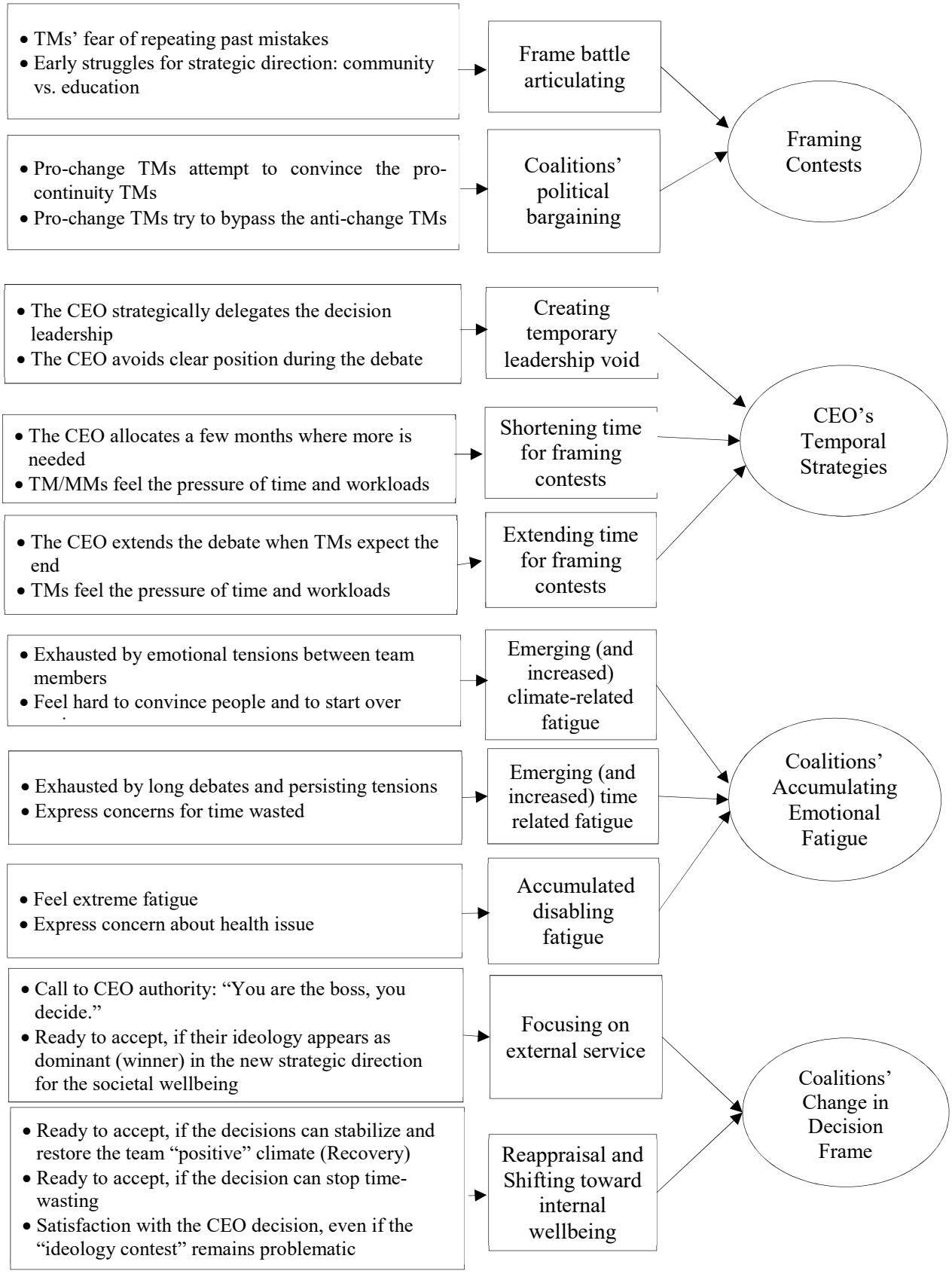
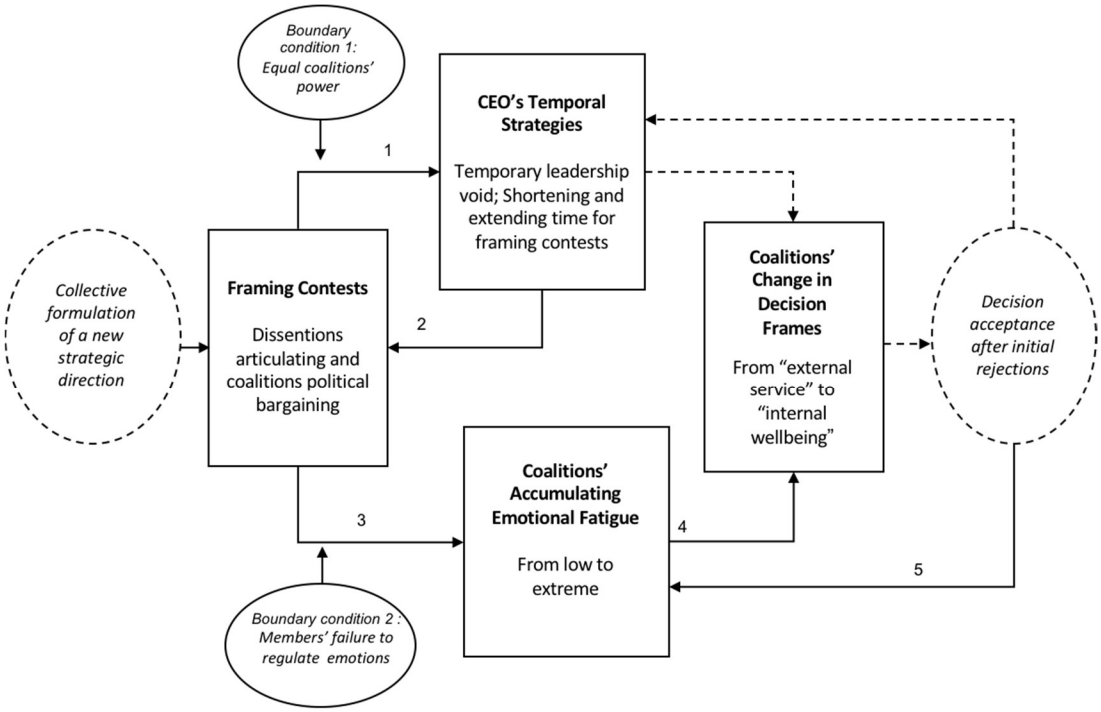
Figure 2: Emergent theoretical model