



Effecting strategic change:

The work of strategic champions in shaping narrative infrastructure

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Abstract

Organisations are under pressure to expand the boundaries of strategic management to better account for socio-ecological dependencies, and to shape the principles that guide decision-making accordingly. Prior research on strategic change focusses on the role of leadership to sensegive, and the response of organisational members. Within a strategy-as-narrative perspective, narrative infrastructure has been identified as a valuable but underexplored theory to explain how narrative guides the decisions and actions of organisational members and how leaders use narrative infrastructure to sensegive strategic change to the organisation. Yet, we know less on how narrative infrastructure is shifted, and the work of others than leaders to do this.

I undertake a grounded study of how strategic champions (individuals working to influence strategic issues) support leadership in initiating and adopting a shift in narrative infrastructure. My analysis reveals that strategic champions undertake six different stages of narrative work: prompting, enrolling, underpinning, reinforcing, reconstituting and revisiting. Across these stages, strategic champions draw on discursive competences to sensegive the new master story to both leaders, and the organisation more broadly.

I make two contributions to the research conversation on narrative within strategy-as-practice. First, I extend the metaphor of narrative infrastructure as a set of rails that guide decision-making, and present a more fulsome picture of narrative infrastructure as a rail network – made up of several master stories which may have different, and at times competing, organisational or institutional logics underpinning them. Second, I identify the work of strategic champions to support leadership in prompting, initiating and revisiting a shift in the narrative infrastructure of an organisation, and demonstrate how they build master story legitimacy, understanding and ownership. My thesis also lends insights to practice, identifying the tactics employed and competences to be developed by strategic champions undertaking to expand the boundaries of strategic management and shift the principles that guide decision-making in their organisations.

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Whilst I could go on endeavouring to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisors through dolphin cheers, beaver analogies or a tremendous *lelelelele*, I will give parsimony one last attempt. Thank you for teaching me how to do research that matters, and for never stopping to believe that I will understand what a *gerund* is. Ralph, thank you for walking this long journey from the very start, for your insights and perspective, and your commitment to collaborative processes for positive change that are so needed in this country, and beyond. Steph, words fail on the gratitude I have for your wisdom, guidance and friendship. Thank you for making the journey so enjoyable, even when it was tough, and for all the great lessons along the way.

Dedication

To my parents, who taught us to do what is necessary - even when it is not easy.

To Steph, who has shown me the true value of research.

To all the champions out there.

*Be like the fox
who makes more tracks than necessary,
some in the wrong direction.
Practice resurrection.*

Wendell Berry, Mad Farmer Liberation Front

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Companies are under pressure to adapt their strategic processes and decision-making to better account for key environmental and social megatrends (World Economic Forum, 2017). It has been argued that to do so, companies will need to explicitly consider their social-ecological contexts as part of their core strategy process (Bertels & Dobson, 2017; Whiteman, Walker, & Perego, 2013). To accommodate these expanded strategic boundaries and address the practical challenge of shifting organisational decision-making to recognise social-ecological dependency, companies will also need to adjust the principles that guide their decision-making.

Several authors have pointed to the role of narrative in shaping the practice of strategy in organisations (Brown & Thompson, 2013; Fenton & Langley, 2011; Hendry, 2000; Mantere, 2014). In particular, an organisation's narrative infrastructure is thought to provide the "overall thrust and direction for the organisation [...] channelling the activities of organisation members" (Fenton & Langley, 2011, p. 1185). Prior studies establish how leaders use narrative infrastructure to sensegive strategic change to the organisation (Deuten & Rip, 2000; Holstein, Starkey, & Wright, 2016; Llewellyn, 2001) and how politically-able middle managers respond to leader sensegiving (Balogun, 2003; Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Westley, 1990). In contrast, we know less about the micro-level narrative practices that shape organisational level narratives (Hardy & Thomas, 2014; Laine & Vaara, 2007) or the role of others, beyond leaders, in shifting narrative infrastructure. Strategic champions have been identified as those working to influence strategic matters beyond their operational responsibilities (Mantere, 2005), often adopting discursive practices to achieve this (Hardy & Thomas, 2014; Mantere, 2005; Whittington, 2006), yet we know little about their work to shift narrative infrastructure. My research therefore focuses primarily on how strategic champions effect strategic change through their sensegiving efforts and, in doing so, explores the work they undertake to shift an organisation's narrative infrastructure.

To address this, I undertook a grounded study of the work of strategic champions to embed the logic of social-ecological dependency into their companies' strategies (Bertels & Dobson, 2017; Marcus, Kurucz, & Colbert, 2010). My analysis revealed that strategic

champions support leaders in shifting the narrative infrastructure of the organisation through *prompting, enrolling, underpinning, reinforcing, reconstituting* and *revisiting*. *Prompting* establishes the proposed shift in narrative infrastructure as relevant for consideration by leadership, while *enrolling* builds leaders' understanding and ownership thereof. Strategic champions *underpin* by supporting leaders to sensegive the shift in narrative infrastructure to the organisation and *reinforce* by drawing on organisational polyphony to legitimise back to leaders their decision to shift the organisation's narrative infrastructure. *Reconstituting* is the work of strategic champions to sustain the shifted narrative infrastructure over time. I also identified further episodes in which strategic champions guide key decision-makers to *revisit* the current narrative infrastructure to question whether it was still fit for purpose.

I am therefore able to contribute to calls for studies on how micro-level strategic and narrative practices can culminate into organisational level changes (Hardy & Thomas, 2014; Laine & Vaara, 2007), and on the role of others beyond leaders to effect strategic change (Balogun, Jacobs, Jarzabkowski, Mantere, & Vaara, 2014; Belmondo & Sargis-Roussel, 2015). Specifically, I make two contributions to the research conversation on narrative within strategy-as-practice. First, I extend the metaphor of narrative infrastructure as a set of rails that guide decision-making, to instead conceptualize narrative infrastructure as a rail network – made up of several master stories which may have different, and at times competing, organisational or institutional logics underpinning them. In so doing, I offer a framework of understanding how organisational level narratives arise, interact and can be shaped. Second, I identify the narrative work of strategic champions to support leaders in shifting the organisation's narrative infrastructure to effect strategic change, and demonstrate how they work to build legitimacy, understanding, and ownership for the shifted narrative infrastructure. My findings in turn contribute to the research agenda on how the logic of social-ecological dependency can be embedded into organisational decision-making (Whiteman & Cooper, 2011; Winn & Pogutz, 2013).

My dissertation proceeds as follows. In chapter two, I begin with the need to bring context into strategy and review existing research on narrative based approaches to strategy. Specifically, I discuss the role of sensegiving within strategic change and what we know about integrative narrative frameworks as a departure point for exploring how narrative

infrastructure can be shifted over time. In chapter three, I outline my research design, data collection and analysis, and strategies to improve research rigour. In chapter four, I present my findings, beginning with an introduction to the narrative infrastructure of the case study companies in this study. While this was an inductive study, I use the process model derived from my study to structure my findings, and I conclude with an overview of the cross-cutting narrative work of strategic champions. In chapter five, I extend the concept of narrative infrastructure and situate my findings in the broader conversation on sensegiving in strategic change, discussing the contributions made to our understanding of how the principles that guide strategic decision-making can be shifted over time. I also discuss the practical implications of my findings and limitations of my study. Finally, in chapter six, I conclude my thesis with directions for future research.

Chapter 2 Theoretical background

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide the theoretical background that guided my grounded study. I begin with why context, specifically social-ecological context, needs to be brought into strategic decision-making processes and why this presents a challenge to many organisations today. I see this as a profound example of why and how organisations need to expand the scope and content of their strategies. Next, I review the literature on the role of sensegiving in strategic change and introduce the concept of narrative infrastructure as a meaningful integrative narrative framework for understanding the organisational parameters that guide decision-making. I conclude with a review of our understanding of the role of strategic champions in these processes and set out the research questions that informed my study.

2.2 Bringing context into strategy

“The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise - with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew.” (Lincoln, 1862)

The context in which companies operate has become increasingly complex and uncertain over the past two decades. The World Economic Forum 2017 Global Risks Report identifies global megatrends (such as climate change, environmental degradation and rising income disparity) and the resulting most significant long-term risks worldwide, including profound social instability, interstate conflict and water crises. As shown in Figure 1 below, these risks are interconnected with cascading negative impacts of increasingly global reach (World Economic Forum, 2017) which will have tangible impacts on business and society at large. Increasingly, companies are experiencing these megatrends and risks as grand challenges or wicked problems – defined as complex and uncertain challenges without easy solution which are profoundly affecting large numbers of individuals (Eisenhardt, Graebner, & Sonenshein, 2016; Ferraro, Etzion, & Gehman, 2015).

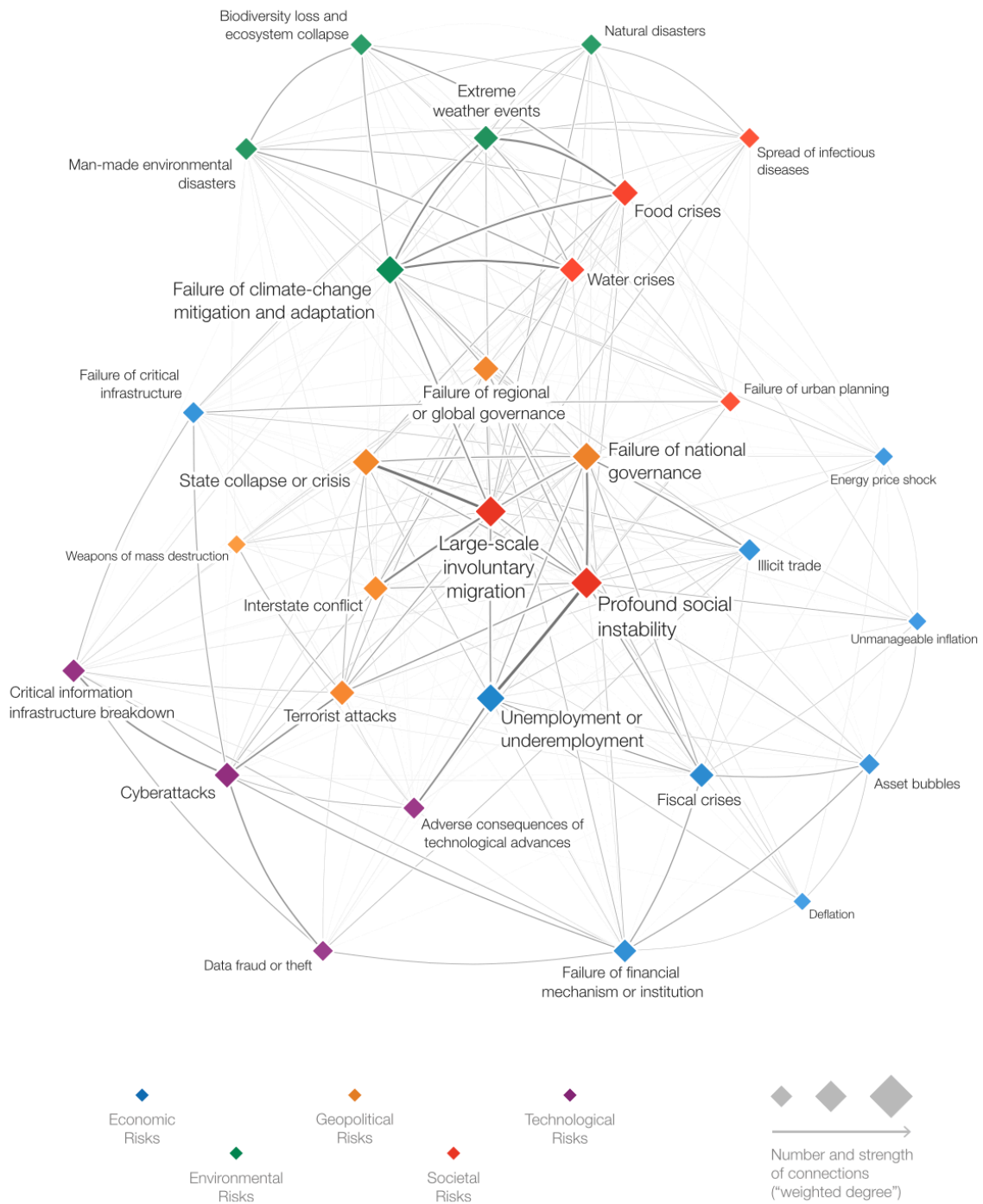


Figure 1: The Global Risks 2017 Interconnections Map (World Economic Forum, 2017, p. 6)

A defining feature of such wicked problems is the complex interactions between diverse social and environmental dynamics, which is why scholars focus attention on social-

ecological systems to explore the spatial and temporal implications of context for management practice (Guthey et al., 2014; Williams, Kennedy, Philipp, & Whiteman, 2017). Social-ecological systems provide the spatially specific context in which companies operate, as well as the resource and customer base upon which companies depend to operate. Social-ecological systems are defined as “an integrated system of people and nature with reciprocal feedback and interdependence” – emphasising the “humans-in-nature perspective and that delineation between the social and ecological is artificial and arbitrary” (Moberg & Simonsen, 2014, p. 18). From a nested systems perspective, business activities are fully embedded within society, which itself is fully embedded within the natural environment. Applying this “logic of existential dependency” implies that the long term survival of business is wholly dependent on the supporting social-ecological systems in which it is embedded (Marcus et al., 2010, p. 22). This has become all the more vital as we recognise that critical planetary boundaries are being breached, increasing “the risk that human activities could inadvertently drive the Earth System into a much less hospitable state, damaging efforts to reduce poverty and leading to a deterioration of human wellbeing in many parts of the world, including wealthy countries” (Steffen, 2015, p. 1; see also Whiteman et al., 2013).

Yet, management theory and practice tend to reinforce the notion that firms can exist independently of the natural environment (Bansal & Knox-Hayes, 2013; Sharma & Ruud, 2003; Shrivastava, 1994), inhibiting the capacity of scholars and practitioners alike to integrate social-ecological context into their research and decision-making, respectively (Hahn, Kolk, & Winn, 2010; Starik, Rands, Marcus, & Clark, 2010). As illustrated in Figure 2 below, this calls for a shift from disparate or intertwined views to a nested view of business within its social-ecological context.

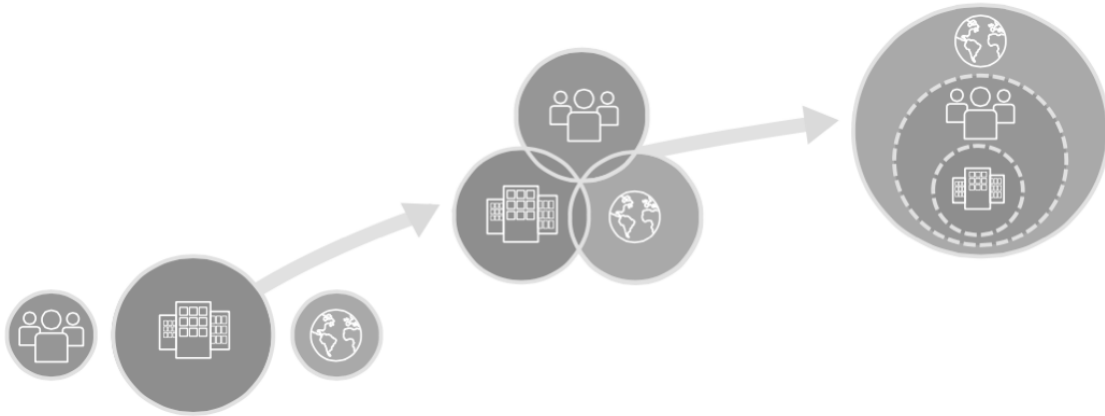


Figure 2: From a disparate to intertwined to nested view of business within social-ecological context (Bertels & Dobson, 2017, p. 5)

To realise collective societal stability and avoid the risks and challenges associated with operating outside of the “safe and just space for humanity” (Raworth, 2012), companies will need to incorporate an understanding of nested social-ecological dependencies and thresholds into their strategic decision-making. For ease of reference, and building on Marcus and colleagues (2010), I refer to this as the *logic of social-ecological dependency* in this study.

Many companies have not yet begun to incorporate the logic of social-ecological dependency into their strategy making processes (Marcus et al., 2010; Whiteman et al., 2013). This may be owing in part to the complexity and ambiguity facing organisational decision-makers. As recognised by Hahn and colleagues (2014, p. 463), “Decision makers operate in turbulent organizational contexts with complex and ambiguous signals”. Making sense of social-ecological context is inherently complex given that causes are near impossible to trace directly (Reinecke & Ansari, 2016) and requires “widely diverging but interconnected concerns for the natural environment, social welfare, and economic prosperity” to be addressed simultaneously (Hahn et al., 2014, p. 463). This results in uncertainty on the best path of action going forward for executive decision-makers who “face a great deal of ambiguity in understanding the issues, the implications of these issues for their organizations, and ways to respond to these issues” (Sharma, 2000, p. 683).

The failure to incorporate the logic of social-ecological dependency into strategic decision-making leaves organisations vulnerable to the unfolding risks associated with grand challenges (Ferraro et al., 2015; Reinecke & Ansari, 2016). Marcus and colleagues (2010, p. 24) advocate that adopting a nested view of an organisation “does not negate the business case but establishes a broader context within which that case can be considered” and that under “a holarchical conception and the limiting condition of systemic dependency, the business case is actually seen to be commensurate with both the societal case and the case for nature”. There is a small but growing number of companies who are considering how to incorporate the logic of social-ecological dependency into their organisational strategy and goals (Dobson & Bertels, 2017).

If adopting a nested view is in the long term best interests of both the organisation and the social-ecological systems on which it depends, traditional management theories need to be extended to better explain how organisations can transition towards a nested view of the organisation within its social-ecological context (Hahn et al., 2010; Starik & Kanashiro, 2013). Whiteman and colleagues (2013) explicitly identified the importance of integrating planetary boundaries in management scholarship while Winn and Pogutz (2013) advocate for new research agendas to understand how businesses can operate within social-ecological systems. Whiteman and Cooper (2011) broaden the management scholarship lens in calling for greater ecological embeddedness (i.e., a deep physical and cultural rootedness to place) to enable sensemaking and reduce vulnerability. These contributions remain at the level of what needs to change, and provide little support to decision-makers on how this change could be facilitated.

To address this need, and to support the contribution of organisational scholarship to addressing grand challenges, I turn to the literature on strategy-as-practice and specifically, the role of narrative.

2.3 Strategy, strategic change, and sensegiving

The boundaries of strategic management need to be expanded to situate organisations within the social-ecological systems on which they depend and to better respond to

complex and ambiguous issues (Gao & Bansal, 2012). Processes are required to support strategic decision-makers in expanding what they consider relevant to the strategy of the organisation (Seidl & Whittington, 2014), with the implication that the principles that guide strategic decision-making need to shift accordingly.

Strategy as a field of management scholarship has undergone noticeable shifts over the past several decades, two of which are relevant to this study. The first was the popular contribution made by Porter (1980) to widen the lens of strategy from more than what a company does, to something that is affected by a company's industry and environment which built on the earlier work of Ansoff (1957) and Selznick (1957) to recognise the influence of environmental factors. The definition of environment in Porter's five forces model was, however, limited. Originally termed as the micro-environment (referring to forces close to a company that affect its ability to conduct business), globalisation soon made the overly simplified and static model insufficient for anticipating forces that would affect and inform the development of a meaningful organisational strategy. Given the unfolding impacts of global megatrends and risks already impacting business viability today (World Economic Forum, 2017), the next big shift in strategy will need to incorporate not only megatrends, but also the planetary boundaries and social foundations which underpin the resilience of the global, regional, and local social-ecological systems in which companies are embedded. The logic of social-ecological dependency needs to be integrated into strategic processes.

The second shift in strategy scholarship relevant to this study is from strategy as the top-down determination of basic long-term goals and objectives resulting in an output in the form of a strategy (or something a company 'has') to an activity-based view of strategy as what individuals 'do' (Whittington, 2006; Wilson & Jarzabkowski, 2004). This shift has formed part of a broader turn towards practice-based theorising in contemporary social theory since the 1980s.

Strategy-as-practice moves beyond economic theory to focus on what people actually do (as opposed to what they rationally should do based on economy theory) (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). For example, Porter's five forces model of industry influences has been

estimated to account only for a small proportion of overall variance in firm profitability (Misangyi, Elms, Greckhamer, & Lepine, 2006). In focusing on the actual strategy practices undertaken by individuals within organisations, this variance can begin to be better explained.

A strategy-as-practice perspective seeks to “explain, with recourse to various social theoretical resources, how skilled and knowledgeable strategic actors constitute and reconstitute a system of shared strategic practice that they also draw upon as a set of resources in the everyday activities of strategising” (Wilson & Jarzabkowski, 2004, p. 15). In this way, strategy is understood as a lived and embodied experience (Samra-Fredericks, 2003). Furthermore, strategy-as-practice builds on earlier work in strategic management research to recognise the roles of organisational actors other than leaders, such as middle managers (Burgelman, 1983; Wooldridge, Schmid, & Floyd, 2008) and other organisational members (Laine & Vaara, 2007; Mantere, 2005). Strategy-as-practice scholars also extend their analysis beyond organisation-level decision-making to explore the work of strategists as individuals and how strategic management shapes industries and broader field-level phenomena (Whittington, 2006).

Within strategy scholarship, research on strategic change explores how organisations respond to complexity and turbulence in the contexts in which they operate, so as to remain competitive and viable (Gioia, Thomas, Clark, & Chittipeddi, 1994). Defined as “an alteration in an organization's alignment with its external environment” (Fiss & Zajac, 2006, p. 1173), strategic change encompasses a shift in the organisational norms, processes and goals as well as an underlying and “fundamental alteration in the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckman 1967)” by the organisation (Gioia et al., 1994, p. 363). In this way, strategic change calls for a “cognitive reorientation of existing interpretive schemas” (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 444), and of the organisation itself (Fiss & Zajac, 2006). Prior research on strategic change has focussed on “the role of intertwined cycles of sensemaking and sensegiving, organizational discourse and identity, and deliberate and emergent outcomes” (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016, p. 22).

Language is integral to the process of strategic change (Dunford & Jones, 2000), with

narrativity in the broader sense emphasising “the simultaneous presence of multiple, interlinked realities” - positioning narrative as a meaningful lens for “capturing the diversity and complexity present in strategic discourse” (Barry & Elmes, 1997, p. 430). In particular, the choice of language and discourse have been established as critical in legitimising strategic change initiatives (Hardy & Thomas, 2014; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2003; Sonenshein, 2010). For example, studies have shown how failure to align strategic change initiatives with established organisational discourse and identity leads to resistance to change (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2003). Constructions of the past, present and future are also critical in the practice of strategy (Foster, Coraiola, Suddaby, Kroezen, & Chandler, 2016; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013). Narrative is considered to play a vital role in the practice of strategy (Fenton & Langley, 2011), given that “organizational narratives are temporal, discursive constructions that provide a means for individual, social and organizational sensemaking and sensegiving” (Vaara, Sonenshein, & Boje, 2016, p. 6). I explore sensemaking and sensegiving in strategic change next, before exploring further the role of narrative in the practice of strategy.

Sensemaking can be understood as “the discursive process of constructing and interpreting the world” (Gephart, 1993, p. 1485) and broadly supports the processes of meaning-making and understanding of issues or events considered novel or confusing (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Sensegiving has largely been defined in relation to how leaders influence the sensemaking of others in the organisation (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). In this way, sensemaking and sensegiving are critical to an organisation’s ongoing activities to reduce chaos and direct the activities of the organisation (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005).

Sensemaking and sensegiving have been established as central to a strategic change in an organisation’s alignment with its external environment (Balogun, Bartunek, & Do, 2015; Fiss & Zajac, 2006; Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) presented the initiation of strategic change by the CEO as a linear progression involving successive stages of sensemaking and sensegiving. Sensegiving is thus the process through which the CEO influences the sensemaking and meaning construction of others “toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality” (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 442). They identified four phases in the sensemaking and sensegiving cycle (envisioning, signaling, re-visioning

and energizing) which they viewed as corresponding with “instances or periods of understanding and influence, or alternatively, as cycles typified by cognition and action, respectively” (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 445). The model they presented, shown in Figure 3 below, describes the role of CEOs in sensemaking and sensegiving during the initiation of strategic change and provides a departure point for exploring the role of other organisational actors in this process.

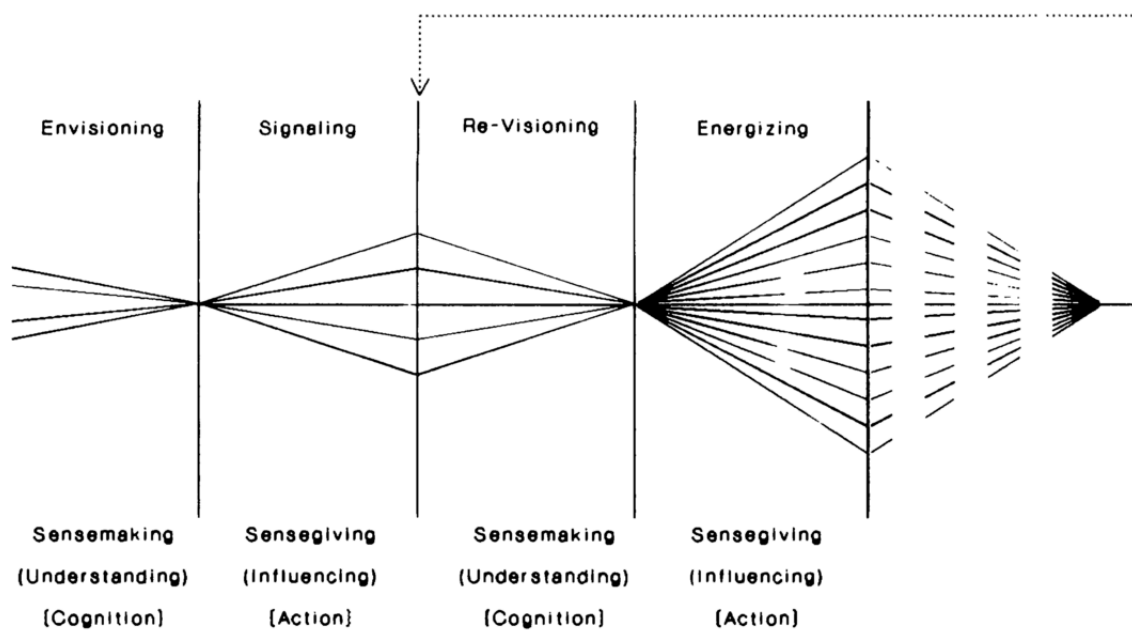


Figure 3: Processes involved in the initiation of strategic change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 444)

To date, most studies on sensegiving strategic change have focused on how leaders shape meaning for the organisation (Bartunek, Krim, Necochea, Humphries, & Wagner, 1999; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Maitlis, 2005), including an explicit focus on the role of leaders’ narratives in strategic change (Brown & Humphreys, 2003; Dunford & Jones, 2000). A limited number of studies have explored the interplay between the sensegiving of leaders and other organisational actors. Maitlis (2005) found sensemaking of both leaders and stakeholders to vary under different conditions of control (associated with leader sensegiving) and animation (associated with stakeholder sensegiving) and presented a model outlining how these different contexts may give rise to different accounts and

action outcomes. Her study sheds insight into the heterogeneous nature of sensemaking and subsequent organisational outcomes, and the importance of organisational stakeholders sensegiving in response to leaders sensegiving. Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) studied the triggers and enablers of sensegiving by leaders and stakeholders respectively, to find that perceived or anticipated gaps in organisational sensemaking trigger sensemaking. They also found that sensegiving is enabled by discursive ability (which enabled actors to present persuasive accounts) and process facilitators (who could draw on organisational routines, practices and performances). Their work on triggers and enablers lays the foundations to study the processes by which organisational actors, beyond leaders, sensemake and sensegive strategic change.

In an early study on middle manager sensegiving, Westley (1990) found that middle managers attempt to influence strategic processes by engaging with leaders in strategic conversations. She also identified that inclusion of middle managers in strategic processes varies by organisation, creating the possibility for middle managers to play a greater role in influencing strategic processes. Subsequent research on the role of politically-able middle managers (or strategic champions) in sensegiving strategic change has largely focused on their responses to leader sensegiving (Balogun, 2003; Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005). Middle managers have been found to interpret and sell strategic change to others outside of the organisation, such as clients, (Rouleau, 2005) and can be leveraged as change intermediaries to facilitate and support the adoption of strategic change internally (Balogun, 2003).

Within sensegiving, issue-selling research has explored how middle managers gain the attention of executive leadership (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998; Bansal, 2003; Dutton & Ashford, 1993) and this helps to explain in part how strategic champions can direct the attention of leaders. Issue selling is well established as the processes by which individuals draw attention to strategic issues presented as affecting organisational performance (Dutton & Ashford, 1993) and is considered an important manner in which sensegiving occurs. Dutton and Ashford (1993) theorised that packaging, involvement, choice-of-channel and formality are key issue-selling moves, while Dutton and colleagues (2001) elaborated on the earlier study to put forward packaging, involvement and timing as

key issue-selling tactics. Their findings offer insights into the micro-processes of strategic change and underscore the importance of “relational, normative and strategic contextual knowledge in this process” (Dutton et al., 2001, p. 733). Building on prior issue-selling work, Howard-Grenville (2007) identifies resourcing as a practical accomplishment through which those seeking to sell issues connect to key schemas held by those they are attempting to issue sell to, in order to trigger their attention and action on the issue. She further found that issue sellers adapt their tactics over time, as they both build up and draw on their accumulating experience and credibility. Sonenshein (2016) theorizes that social change agents employ different meaning-making tactics (namely framing, labelling, maintaining or importing) depending on the type of social issue that they are seeking to advance. These studies provide insights into the tactics of strategic champions seeking to influence organisational sensegiving and sensemaking.

It is also through language that issues become integrated into dominant organisational narratives, in order to increase the perceived legitimacy of the claims made (Sonenshein, 2006). As such, issue selling often adopts a ‘business case’ approach to align with the dominant economic logic prevailing in many work organisations (Dutton et al., 2001; Sonenshein, 2012), and this has been prevalent also in the scholarship and practice of addressing social-ecological concerns in corporations (Marcus et al., 2010; Whiteman et al., 2013). Bansal (2003) argued that advocating personal concerns established the issue seller as an issue champion, whilst aligning with organisational values presented the issue as strategic.

Yet, we know relatively little about how sensegiving (including issue-selling) informs strategic change to ultimately shape the overarching principles that guide decision-making in an organisation. And beyond the role of leadership in sensegiving for the organisation, we have limited understanding of how strategic champions sensegive to alter the organisation’s alignment with its external environment. A focus on narrative provides an opportunity to address these needs, given the informing role of narrative in the practice of strategy.

2.4 A narrative approach to strategy

"Strategy is up there. Right up there. At the top. And, above all, the language that it mobilizes, and is mobilized by it, is what puts it there" (Lilley, 2001, p. 66).

An organisation's strategy is both guided and constrained by the narratives of the organisation (Balogun et al., 2014; Mantere, 2014; Vaara, 2010). As recognized by Hendry (2000, p. 957), "strategic decisions can be identified as part of an organizational *discourse* or body of language-based communications that operates both at the structural and at the communicative levels, and that constitutes a central feature of the strategy process."

Discourse plays a prominent role in strategy making, including through the use of "narrative (Vaara and Tienari, 2011), rhetoric (Erkama and Vaara, 2010; Mantere and Sillince, 2007), and metaphor (Cornelissen et al., 2011); or by discursive activities such as justifying, legitimating, and naturalizing (Vaara and Tienari, 2002)" (Hardy & Thomas, 2014, p. 322). Studies range in their focus, from the use of specific words in strategy workshops at the micro-level (Küpers, Mantere, & Statler, 2013), through to organisational or meso-level strategic narratives that guide organisational action (Barry & Elmes, 1997), to meta-level views of strategy as a body of knowledge (Vaara, 2010). I follow the work of Fenton and Langley (2011, p. 1176) to view narrative as "a paradigm or lens for examining how strategy is practiced and produced, accepting that narrativity is a matter of degree, and that narrative elements may be detected in multiple forms", including both structural and communicative (Barry & Elmes, 1997; Brown & Thompson, 2013).

Strategic narratives focus on the communicated strategy of an organisation and provide a starting point for analysing strategic management from a narrative perspective, operating at the organisational level (Barry & Elmes, 1997; Küpers et al., 2013). Previous research establishes strategic narratives as setting a 'discourse of direction' to orientate the organisation in its context, and its members in their response (Fenton & Langley, 2011). Yet how do strategic narratives emerge, which ones inform strategic decision-making, how are they held together, and which endure over time? Indeed, as recognised by Mantere (2014, p. 1410):

"One of the most enduring and perplexing problems of strategic management

is: what makes for a collective strategy in organizations? While strategies are written on pieces of paper and in power point files, organizational strategies are not pieces of paper. Organizational strategies take place in collective actions by organizational members. Strategies are achieved in work, conducted by organizational members, in coherence with each other, and over time (Mintzberg and McHugh, 1985)”

We know that multiple strategic narratives may co-exist (Barry & Elmes, 1997) and are often competing in their struggle for dominance in the organisation (Jarzabkowski & Sillince, 2007), but this offers less insight into how multiple master stories come together over time to form an enduring framework of guidance that organisational members draw on in their decision-making processes. In seeking out an integrative narrative framework (Fenton & Langley, 2011), the concepts of intertextuality (Holstein et al., 2016) and meta-conversations (Robichaud, Giroux, & Taylor, 2004) provide insight into the composite nature of organisational narratives and how individuals resonate with these, yet provide less guidance on how organisational narratives guide and constrain organisational action.

A promising yet underexplored approach to understanding integrative narrative frameworks is the concept of narrative infrastructure. Narrative infrastructure is defined as “the evolving aggregation of actors/narratives in their material and social settings that enables and constrains the possible stories, actions and interactions by actors” (Deuten & Rip, 2000, p. 74). Originally defined in a study of innovation in product development processes (Deuten & Rip, 2000), Fenton and Langley (2011, p. 1185) recognise that the concept is worth exploring “as a contribution to the development of an integrated narrative approach to strategy as practice” that can help to explain how stories give rise to “an overall thrust and direction for the organization... channelling the activities of organization members”. Considered as the ‘rails that guide’ strategic decision-making and action in an organisation (Deuten & Rip, 2000), narrative infrastructure can be understood as a critical set of informing parameters which guide and constrain the potential for strategic narratives to shift (Fenton & Langley, 2011).

Deuten and Rip (2000) present the process of building narrative infrastructure as beginning with a start out story followed by a project plan (or prospective story), ultimately culminating in a master story that becomes the narrative infrastructure of the organisation. They define a

master story as the culmination of a multi-authored mosaic of stories (or narrative building blocks) that have been taken up by the organisation. While the terms 'organisational narratives', 'strategic narratives' and 'master stories' are used throughout the literature as relatively interchangeable terms, I adopt the term 'master story' in this study to represent organisational level narratives that are broadly accepted, composite narratives capturing collective meaning in the organisation (Deuten & Rip, 2000; Vaara et al., 2016). I also adopt the term 'antenarrative' (Boje, 2001) to represent story fragments, which may both precede the formation of a coherent master story and / or represent the narrative building blocks making up an accepted master story.

Another key concept within narrative infrastructure is the notion of lamination, building on work by Boden (1994) and Taylor and Van Every (2000). Lamination is defined as the process by which a master story can emerge from multiple levels of storytelling from multiple actors over time (Seidl & Whittington, 2014). "When these stories are exchanged with other internal and external stakeholders, they engender mutual commitments to which subsequent storytelling becomes entrained, generating an ongoing thrust and direction that embeds elements from multiple levels" (Fenton & Langley, 2011, pp. 1185–1186). Importantly, what emerges is a "dominant thread that becomes taken for granted and incorporated into subsequent interactions" (Fenton & Langley, 2011, p. 1186). In this way, strategy becomes a lived and narrated experience through the telling of stories that provides organisational actors with a mechanism for building understanding, negotiating meaning and establishing legitimacy in the organisation (Belmondo & Sargis-Roussel, 2015; Brown & Thompson, 2013; Küpers et al., 2013; Sonenshein, 2016). Deuten and Rip (2000, p. 85) term this "telling yourself forward", underscoring the power of narrative in the practice of strategy.

Subsequent studies have drawn on the theory of narrative infrastructure to extend our understanding of how strategic change processes unfold. Bartel and Garud (2009) found that an innovation master story served as a cultural mechanism to coordinate the efforts of many actors and enable the implementation of an innovation initiative. Similarly, Llewellyn (2001) showed how leaders drew on a master story of modernisation to 'tell the organisation forward' through a change initiative in local government. In the context of higher education,

Holstein and colleagues (2016) found that strategy can be guided by both historical and new narratives that can be integrated by leaders through an appeal to emotions and values, thereby maintaining strategic direction and a synthesis of societal values. These studies help us to understand how organisational actors, most often leaders, can draw on narrative infrastructure to guide organisational change processes.

Yet, we know less about how the narrative infrastructure itself can be shaped or shifted. To shift what is considered strategic to an organisation, the narrative infrastructure that guides and directs the activities of strategic decision-makers needs to shift accordingly. Research has tended to focus on “meanings negotiated in micro communicative practices” but the linking of these local activities to strategy on an organisational level is under-studied (Hardy & Thomas, 2014, p. 323). There is a call for studies on how certain meanings take hold at the organisational level, while others do not (Laine & Vaara, 2007).

2.5 The work of strategic champions

The role of strategic champions has been identified as critical for giving expression and power to emerging master stories (Hardy & Thomas, 2014; Mantere, 2005; Whittington, 2006). Strategic champions are defined as “individuals trying to influence strategic issues larger than their own immediate operational responsibilities” (Mantere, 2005, p. 157). Prior research recognises the role of strategic champions in sensegiving to leadership (as explored in a previous section), yet focuses largely on the role of strategic champions in issue selling. How strategic champions support leaders to initiate and guide strategic change over time remains under-explored.

Shifting narrative infrastructure is anticipated to involve a range of organisational work. Given that narratives are part of actors’ social-symbolic context, I am attending to actors’ social-symbolic work, which Phillips and Lawrence (Phillips & Lawrence, 2012, p. 1) defined as “individuals and organizations purposefully and strategically expending effort to affect their social-symbolic context” and in which they identify several forms of work that could be considered relevant to this study. They contend, however, that strategy-as-practice, with a focus on the study of strategy as “recognised forms of activity in and around organizations”,

is distinct from the forms of work they discuss which are “goal-directed effort on the part of the actor (individual or collective) to manipulate some aspect of their social-symbolic context” (Phillips & Lawrence, 2012, p. 227). Jarzabkowski (2004), however, recognizes the strategic motivations and outcomes orientation of tacit and symbolic practices, such as narrative and discourse, within an expanded conception of practice - offering a view on strategy-as-practice that would accommodate the goal-oriented and social-symbolic nature of work and thereby possibly alleviate these tensions. In this study, I broadly adopt the term ‘narrative work’ as a form of work focussed on the purposeful efforts by organisational members to shift the narrative infrastructure of an organisation.

Deuten and Rip (2000) find that actors working to build narrative infrastructure purposely engage in multifaceted storytelling to reduce uncertainty and complexity in the product innovation process. The importance of crafting a ‘mosaic of stories’, ranging from social to technical, internal to external, micro to macro level, and short- to long-term (Deuten & Rip, 2000), also echoes earlier work on the role of fragmented and multi-level storytelling in strategy praxis (Boje, 1991). Underpinning this narrative work are discursive competences, such as the ability to prepare the environment for conversation to unfold and host conversation (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011) or the ability to frame strategic change (Cornelissen, Holt, & Zundel, 2011), which enable strategic champions to perform their work.

2.6 Research question

My research question was defined in an iterative process as I aligned my emerging understanding of the study phenomena with identified gaps in the relevant literature. My research began with the practical enquiry of how organisational decision-making can be shifted to recognise social-ecological dependency and through my grounded study of this phenomena, I came to recognise the central role of strategic champions in this process.

From a strategic change and sensegiving perspective, there is a gap in our understanding of strategic champions’ role beyond strategic change initiation and the processes by which they can shift the principles that guide decision-making in an organisation, or narrative infrastructure. While a narrative perspective on strategy-as-practice has received growing

attention in organisational scholarship, the role of narrative in strategy remains underexplored empirically and underdeveloped theoretically (Balogun et al., 2014). There is a gap in our understanding of the linking of local activities to strategy on an organisational level (Hardy & Thomas, 2014, p. 323) and how meanings 'take' over time (Laine & Vaara, 2007). Fenton and Langley (2011, p. 1186) call for studies that examine "how a narrative infrastructure may emerge from the interaction of stories at multiple levels forming an overall thrust and direction for the organization and channelling the activities of organization members".

To address these inter-related research needs, I sought to understand and contribute theoretically to our understanding of how strategic champions effect strategic change through their sensegiving efforts to shift an organisation's narrative infrastructure.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Research design

My research approach and methods were guided by a subjectivist approach, with an appreciation for the role of symbolic interpretivism in social sciences research (Morgalm & Burrell, 1979). As such, I view organisations as “continually constructed and reconstructed by their members through symbolically mediated interaction” (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, p. 14). The initial goal of my study was to understand the processes by which firms shift their decision-making to recognise social-ecological dependency. I found that prior management scholarship paid little attention to how new principles to guide decision-making are introduced into organisational processes. I therefore considered an inductive and explorative research design appropriate for exploring ideas and processes that are beyond current scholarly attention and theorizing (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Shrivastava, 1995), especially with regard to making progress on grand challenges by, among others, generating novel ideas and revealing effective processes (Eisenhardt et al., 2016).

From a social constructivist perspective, there is no universal explanation for social behaviour but rather the “ongoing interpretation of meaning produced by individuals engaged in a common project of observation” (Suddaby, 2006, p. 633). Grounded theory is particularly well suited to inductive work exploring questions of how and why, given the focus on data to explain relevant causal relationships and provide insights of practical relevance to the phenomena of study (Egan, 2002). The constructivist approach to grounded theory advocated by Charmaz (2000, 2006, 2008) emphasises the emergent nature of not just the outcomes of grounded theory, but the process itself - placing importance on “how data, analysis, and methodological strategies become constructed, and tak[ing] into account the research contexts and the researcher’s position, perspective, priorities and interactions” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 10). Embracing a subjectivist position, constructivist grounded theory views research as interpretive and researchers as “embedded in the research process rather than as distanced observers of empirical phenomena” (Charmaz, 2008, p. 160). I considered this approach appropriate and generative for my chosen phenomena of study.

I sought to understand *how* strategic champions effect strategic change and therefore chose to undertake a study of process. Process studies are considered appropriate for researching the evolving progressions of activities within complex social phenomena (van de Ven, 2007) and valuable for offering insights into non-linear and non-incremental changes in organisational environments, as well as how such changes are initiated (Hahn et al., 2010). In process research, theory is built by inferring a general theoretical phenomenon from the observed data and thereby 'climbing the ladder of abstraction' as the researcher moves from description to explanation (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, & van de Ven, 2013; van de Ven, 2007). The dynamic social constructivist view of this approach is complimentary with grounded theory methodology I adopt in this study.

The gaps between theory and practice to date are well recognised (Bansal, Bertels, Ewart, MacConnachie, & O'Brien, 2012) and potentially dangerous (Ghoshal, 2005), and stem from more than a lack of knowledge transfer between scholarly and practitioner communities (van de Ven, 2007; van de Ven & Johnson, 2006). Under-appreciating the continuous production of knowledge and experiences by practitioners misses the opportunity to deepen our understanding of, and to address, complex phenomena (van de Ven, 2007). Engaged scholarship emerged in response to the theory-practice gap in management literature and is defined as "a collaborative form of enquiry in which academics and practitioners leverage their different perspectives and competencies to coproduce knowledge about a complex problem or phenomenon that exists under conditions of uncertainty found in the world" (van de Ven & Johnson, 2006, p. 803). I considered engaged scholarship an appropriate and valuable approach given the active role of practitioners in producing new knowledge on how to develop contextual strategy-making processes.

Specifically, I felt that this choice of action-research methodology was well suited to answering my research question which sought to understand a complex phenomena (i.e., effecting strategic change in an organisation) that exists under conditions of uncertainty (i.e., disruptive socio-ecological mega-trends). Engaged scholarship offers a meaningful research strategy through collaborative research addressing real-world problems that are too complex to be captured by any one investigator or perspective (van de Ven & Johnson, 2006), and is congruent with a constructivist approach to grounded theory which

underscores the importance of researchers being embedded in the research process (Charmaz, 2008) as they engage in ongoing interpretation of meaning produced with individuals engaged in shared observation (Suddaby, 2006). I therefore worked closely with practitioners throughout the study to inform, test and validate the research findings, which I detail in the following sections in this chapter. Informed by my paradigmatic lens and complimentary to my chosen research design, I anchored my dissertation in the strategy-as-practice literature, with a focus on the narrative work of practitioners in organisational change processes (Whittington & Jarzabkowski, 2008).

3.2 Research ethics

All research was conducted in accordance with University of Cape Town Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Policy. I gave the option for all participants to remain anonymous for part or all of the interview, to have any part of the interview considered 'off the record' and / or to exit the interview at any point. No perceived risk to the participants in the study was recorded as part of the ethics application. I ensured confidentiality of participating individuals and firms through rigorous protocols regarding the secure handling and disposal of research data. The research protocol was approved by the Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee for the University of Cape Town on 6 February 2014. I provided all interview participants with background to the research and a letter of consent that was signed prior to the commencement of any interviews.

3.3 Data collection

When I commenced my research in 2013 as a PhD student at the Graduate School of Business at the University of Cape Town, I wanted to explore the practical research problem of how organisations shift their decision-making to recognise social-ecological dependency. This research question was informed by my experiences working as a researcher in the corporate sector at the time and my engagements with practitioners who were undertaking this work.

Initially, I gave attention to firms engaging in initiatives which recognised their social-ecological dependence and were therefore illustrative of the phenomena of study, in order to advance the theoretical understanding of the phenomena (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007;

Zollo et al., 2013). Theoretical sampling is considered appropriate for inductive research (Eisenhardt et al., 2016) and justifies the selection of cases which are “particularly suitable for illuminating and extending relationships and logic among constructs” (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, p. 27). My initial sampling approach was to identify firms with an explicit commitment to sustainability oriented practices within their business and sufficient evidence that elements of this had been achieved in practice through publicly available reports, to be matched by similarly sized firms from the same sectors with less explicit commitment to sustainability evidenced in publicly available reports. In particular, I sought evidence of language in publicly available reports that made reference to the logic of socio-ecological dependency. I had hoped to study the variance in the processes unfolding across these two groups of companies (with three ‘leader’ and three ‘laggard’ case study companies identified). I approached three matched large corporates in retail, banking and insurance (three large and presentative industries in South Africa) and was able to secure access with all of these companies for the research.

Before commencing with interviews within each of these companies, I approached Dr Stephanie Bertels, founder and lead researcher for what began as part of the Embedding Sustainability Working Group of the Network for Business Sustainability and, during my study, became formalised as the Embedding Project. At the time, Dr Bertels, had completed a comprehensive study on embedding sustainability into organisational practice and was leading a research enquiry with a group of strategic champions from companies engaging in processes to embed a contextualised understanding of sustainability into business practice to both determine and explore research to support their practice. I joined her broader research programme at this point and the six South African companies who agreed to participate in my study became a part of this global research initiative. I undertook comprehensive assessments in each of the six companies to understand the processes that they were undertaking to advance the logic of socio-ecological dependency in their decision-making through a series of interviews and analysis of reports for each company, detailed in Phase I Interviews below.

During this first phase of research, I found that an organisational commitment to sustainability did not equate to the logic of social-ecological dependency being integrated

into the principles that guide organisational decision-making. In some cases, the perceived 'leaders' were struggling to integrate sustainability into strategic decision-making, while, in other cases, the 'laggards' had leveraged an opportunity to leap frog the advancement of sustainability into the strategy processes. I found that companies making the most progress to integrate the logic of social-ecological dependency into organisational decision-making were being guided by strategic champions undertaking work to support leaders in achieving this. Hence, I did away with the notion of a variance study and focussed on the work of strategic champions to integrate these logics into the principles that guide organisational decision-making. I describe the sampling approach and interviews undertaken in this second phase in Phase II Interviews below.

Phase I Interviews

In the first phase of my research, I undertook a series of interviews in each company, detailed as Phase I Interviews in below, to explore the processes and practices by which organisations shift their decision-making to recognise social-ecological dependency. To better understand this, I interviewed key individuals within the sustainability departments as well as with representatives primarily from human resources, finance, strategy and risk functions. In some companies, I also conducted interviews with ethics, innovation, reporting and corporate social responsibility function representatives.

In my interviews, I drew on a baseline assessment questionnaire, which was developed with the Embedding Project and a version of which is now available to the public (Bertels, 2014) with a supporting guideline document (Bertels & Schulschenk, 2015). I did this to establish the extent to which a contextualised understanding of sustainability was embedded in the organisation's practices, and how this had been achieved. I additionally asked questions regarding processes and sequencing, and undertook to understand critical practices that helped supported the integration of the logic of socio-ecological dependency. A description of all interviews undertaken during this phase is presented in and summarised in

Table 2: Summary of phase I interviews below. In the first phase of my research, I interviewed 78 individuals through a total of 73 interviews.

For the purposes of data analysis, I transcribed 47 of the 73 interviews undertaken in the first

phase of interviews. While the 26 interviews that were not transcribed broadly informed my understanding of the research phenomena, most of these interviews were within one company and were largely repetitive of the findings from other interviews in the organisation. To avoid a bias towards the one organisation, I chose not to transcribe and code these interviews. In the cases of other interviews that were not transcribed from other organisations, this was due to recording quality of the audio file.

Table 1: Phase I interviews

Inter view #	Interview Date	Company Pseudonym	Position	Role	Transcribed [Y/N]
1	2014/03/06	RetailCo	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y
2	2014/03/07	RetailCo	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y
3	2014/03/13	RetailCo	Head of HR	Strategic Champion	Y
4	2014/03/17	RetailCo	Earlier Strategic Champion	Strategic Champion	Y
5	2014/03/18	RetailCo	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y
6	2014/03/24	RetailCo	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
7	2014/03/24	RetailCo	Head of Training	Organisational Member	Y
8	2014/03/25	ExternalOrg1	Consultant	External Change Agent	N
9	2014/03/26	RetailCo	Product Design	Organisational Member	N
10	2014/03/26	RetailCo	Internal Communications Manager	Organisational Member	Y
11	2014/04/22	InsureCo	Head of Strategy	Strategic Champion	Y
12	2014/04/24	InsureCo	Head of Stakeholder Engagement	Strategic Champion	Y
13	2014/04/29	InsureCo	Strategy Team Member	Organisational Member	Y
14	2014/04/29	InsureCo	Head of Sustainability	Organisational Member	Y
15	2014/06/03	BankCo	Head of Ethics	Strategic Champion	Y
16	2014/06/03	BankCo	Culture Manager	Organisational Member	Y
17	2014/06/03	BankCo	Head of Training	Organisational Member	Y
18	2014/06/05	InsureCo	Business Manager	Organisational Member	N
19	2014/06/05	InsureCo	Business Manager	Organisational Member	N
20	2014/06/05	InsureCo	Business Leader	Executive Leader	N
21	2014/06/05	InsureCo	Senior Director	Executive Leader	N
22	2014/06/17	BankCo	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y
23	2014/06/17	InsureCo	Senior Director	Executive Leader	N
24	2014/06/18	InsureCo	Business Manager	Organisational Member	N
25	2014/06/18	InsureCo	CEO	Executive Leader	N
26	2014/06/19	InsureCo	Managers	Organisational Member	N
27	2014/06/19	BankCo	Head of Innovation	Organisational Member	Y

28	2014/06/20	BankCo	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y
29	2014/06/23	InsureCo	Product Development	Organisational Member	N
30	2014/06/23	InsureCo	Strategy Team Member	Organisational Member	N
31	2014/06/24	InsureCo	Chief Financial Officer	Executive Leader	Y
32	2014/06/24	InsureCo	Senior Director	Executive Leader	N
33	2014/06/24	InsureCo	Senior Director	Executive Leader	N
34	2014/06/25	InsureCo	Financial Manager	Organisational Member	N
35	2014/06/25	InsureCo	Investment Manager	Strategic Champion	N
36	2014/06/26	InsureCo	Risk Manager	Organisational Member	Y
37	2014/06/26	InsureCo	Business Manager	Organisational Member	N
38	2014/06/27	InsureCo	Head of Risk	Executive Leader / Strategic Champion	Y
39	2014/06/30	InsureCo	Investment Specialist	Organisational Member	N
40	2014/07/01	InsureCo	Senior Manager	Organisational Member	N
41	2014/07/02	InsureCo	Integrated Reporting Manager	Organisational Member	N
42	2014/07/02	InsureCo	Executive team	Executive Leader	N
43	2014/07/03	InsureCo	Business Manager	Organisational Member	N
44	2014/07/07	BankCo	Head of Sustainability / Sustainability Team Member	Strategic Champion / Organisational Member	Y
45	2014/07/07	InsureCo	CEO	Executive Leader	N
46	2014/07/08	BankCo	Group HR Communications Manager	Organisational Member	Y
47	2014/07/08	InsureCo	CEO	Executive Leader	N
48	2014/07/08	BankCo	HR Team	Organisational Member	Y
49	2014/07/09	BankCo	HR Team, Wellbeing Manager	Organisational Member	Y
50	2014/07/09	InsureCo	Senior Director	Executive Leader	N
51	2014/07/09	BankCo	Culture Manager	Organisational Member	Y
52	2014/07/10	BankCo	Head of HR	Strategic Champion	Y
53	2014/07/14	BankCo	Green Building Expert	Organisational Member	Y
54	2014/07/15	BankCo	HR Team	Organisational Member	Y
55	2014/07/15	BankCo	Director of Operations	Executive Leader	Y
56	2014/07/16	InsureCo	Head of Training	Organisational Member	Y
57	2014/07/16	InsureCo	HR Team	Organisational Member	Y
58	2014/07/22	InsureCo	Head of Sustainability	Organisational Member	Y
59	2014/08/11	Belnsure	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
60	2014/08/11	Belnsure	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
61	2014/08/11	Belnsure	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
62	2014/08/25	Belnsure	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
63	2014/08/25	RetailCo	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
64	2014/08/27	InsureCo	Sustainability Team	Strategic Champion / Organisational Member	Y
65	2014/09/05	Belnsure	Director of HR	Executive Leader	Y

66	2014/09/05	BankCo	Sustainability Team	Strategic Champion / Organisational Member	Y
67	2014/09/10	OtherCo1	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	N
68	2014/09/15	BankCo	Sustainability Team	Strategic Champion / Organisational Member	Y
69	2014/09/30	Bankers	Strategic Champion	Strategic Champion	Y
70	2014/10/01	RetailWay	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y
71	2014/10/08	RetailWay	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y
72	2014/10/10	RetailWay	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y
73	2014/10/13	RetailWay	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y

Table 2: Summary of phase I interviews

Summary of Phase I Interviews		
Interview Type	Number of Interviews	Notes
Organisational Member	43	- Semi-structured interviews, lasting between 20 minutes and four hours (approx. 600 pages of text - verbatim transcriptions from digital recordings of relevant interviews) Focus was on the processes by which organisations shift their decision-making to recognise social-ecological dependency.
Strategic Champion	20	
Executive Leader	14	
External Experts	1	
Total number of people interviewed	78	

I supplemented my interviews with secondary data, including company internal reports, website articles, and integrated and sustainability reports published by the companies. Each company received a summary report of their practices and recommendations for next steps. In line with an engaged scholarship approach, I presented the findings of this phase of the research to one or more representatives from the case study companies to provide feedback on the findings, address areas requiring further clarification and compare their experiences against the research findings.

Phase II Interviews

After a preliminary analysis of my interview data, I refined my research question to focus on the work of strategic champions to shape what is considered strategic to the organisation. Strategic champions are defined as those working “to influence strategic issues larger than their own immediate operational responsibilities” (Mantere, 2005, p. 157). In my second phase of interviews, I therefore sought out additional interviews with strategic champions I had identified from within the companies I had studied (where no strategic champion was identified, interviews were suspended for that company). By definition, not all organisational members are strategic champions and from what I observed, very few are. I identified organisational actors as strategic champions when I observed them and was retold stories (by them and others) of their work to position sustainability as a strategic imperative for the organisation. Specifically, others (including both leadership and organisational members) would refer to these individuals as influencing their thinking, decision-making and actions towards the incorporation of the logic of socio-ecological dependency in the organisation.

From what I observed of strategic champions in the first phase of research, I found that strategic champions employed largely narrative-based work to influence what I would come to identify as the narrative infrastructure of the organisation. They often employed tactics to transfer ownership of ideas, initiatives and successes to others to distribute the uptake of the new master story. Much of the work by strategic champions that I observed and that I was told about is informal, opportunistic and conversational, and underplayed the purposeful and effortful nature of what they were doing. Capturing and distilling the essence of strategic champion work called for further interviews and observations to better understand the fluid and embedded nature of their daily organisational work.

The strategic champions I studied equally held the role of sustainability manager or director formally, or roles such as the head of human relations, strategy, risk and core business units. In the organisations where I found strategic champions at work, I observed at least one, but sometimes two or three, strategic champion(s) working to advance sustainability as a master story for the organisation. In some cases, I did not consider the formally appointed sustainability managers to be strategic champions as their work was more compliance

oriented and failed to position their work as strategically relevant to the organisation. All of the strategic champions I studied held relatively senior positions or higher within the organisations. In my interviews with strategic champions, I included questions on how they broadly worked to influence strategic processes and specifically on the tactics that they employed when engaging with leaders.

I additionally undertook interviews with other organisational actors to better understand how they perceived the work of strategic champions. Given my finding that the work of strategic champions was to influence and support leaders, I focussed on interviewing leaders across multiple companies to gain insight into their perspectives on the traits of successful strategic champions. I employed a snowball technique in which I identified and interviewed strategic champions and leaders from a further 14 companies that were referred to by their peers for their work in integrating the logic of social-ecological dependency into strategic decision-making.

During my interview gathering period in the second phase of my research, I had the opportunity to be part of a research team from the Embedding Project who were commissioned to undertake a study on CEO Decision Making for Sustainability (Bertels, Schulschenk, Ferry, Otto-Mentz, & Speck, 2016), which focussed on how strategic champions can influence and support the decision-making of executive leadership. This granted me access to interview further strategic champions and organisational leaders which I included as part of the second phase of research interviews.

I undertook further interviews with external change agents who were observing these organisational changes from an external perspective - including academics (predominantly in business schools), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and consultants. I undertook these additional interviews as part of a validity check to test whether my findings resonated with external change agents who observed similar changes across the organisations that they worked with.

In all the interviews I undertook in the second phase of research, I sought to understand the practices and craft of strategic champions to introduce new principles to guiding decision-making within the organisation. In total, I interviewed 32 individuals in a total of 31

interviews, detailed in **Error! Reference source not found.** and summarised in **Error! Reference source not found.** below. I chose to transcribe 18 of these interviews for coding. The 13 interviews that were not transcribed for coding due to quality of the audio recording, where the interview was largely repetitive of already identified constructs or in instances where the interviewee failed to provide meaningful insight into the phenomena of study.

Table 3: Phase II interviews

Interview #	Interview Date	Company Pseudonym	Position	Role	Transcribed [Y/N]
1	2015/03/09	BankCo	ex CEO	Executive Leader	Y
2	2015/03/09	InsureD	Investment Manager	Strategic Champion	N
3	2015/03/09	ExternalOrg2	Professor	External Change Agent	N
4	2015/03/09	ExternalOrg3	ex Executive Director	External Change Agent	N
5	2015/03/10	ExternalOrg4	CEO	External Change Agent	Y
6	2015/03/11	ExternalOrg5	Consultant	External Change Agent	N
7	2015/03/16	Bankers	Programme director	Strategic Champion	N
8	2015/03/16	BankCo	CEO	Executive Leader	Y
9	2015/03/16	Bankers	Head of Sustainability	Organisational Member	Y
10	2015/03/16	Bankers	Company Secretary	Strategic Champion	Y
11	2015/03/16	InsureD	Board Member	Executive Leader	Y
12	2015/03/17	OtherCo2	ex CEO	Executive Leader	Y
13	2015/03/17	NewInsure	CEO	Executive Leader	Y
14	2015/03/17	ExternalOrg8	CEO	External Change Agent	N
15	2015/03/17	NewInsure	Executive team	Executive Leader	N
16	2015/03/18	OtherCo4	Investment Manager	Strategic Champion	N
17	2015/03/18	NewInsure	Previous Head of HR	Strategic Champion	Y
18	2015/03/19	OtherCo4	CEO	Executive Leader	Y
19	2015/03/19	ExternalOrg4	Head of Fisheries programme	External Change Agent	N
20	2015/03/19	OtherCo6	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	N
21	2015/03/20	MineCo	Head of Strategy and Stakeholder Engagement	Strategic Champion	Y
22	2015/03/20	OtherCo10	Head of Sustainability / Director	Strategic Champion / Executive Leader	N
23	2015/03/27	RetailCo	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
24	2015/06/10	RetailWay	Head of Sustainability	Organisational Member	Y
25	2015/07/27	InsureD	CEO	Executive Leader	Y
26	2015/07/27	RetailCo	ex-CEO / Chairman	Executive Leader	Y

27	2015/07/29	OtherCo11	CEO	Executive Leader	N
28	2015/07/29	OtherCo12	CEO	Executive Leader	N
29	2015/10/13	RetailCo	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
30	2015/10/13	RetailCo	National CEO	Executive Leader	Y
31	2015/10/27	RetailCo	Global CEO	Executive Leader	Y

Table 4: Summary of phase II interviews

Summary of Phase II Interviews		
Interview Type	Number of Interviews	Notes
Organisational Member	2	- Semi-structured interviews, lasting between 20 minutes and four hours (approx. 600 pages of text - verbatim transcriptions from digital recordings of relevant interviews) Focus was on the work of strategic champions to introduce a new principle for guiding decision-making within the organisation
Strategic Champion	10	
Executive Leader	14	
External Experts	6	
Total number of people interviewed	32	

Summary of Interviews

My interviews spanned across a period from March 2014 to October 2015, totalling 104 interviews with 110 individuals from 20 companies. My complete interview schedule included a total of 30 strategic champions, 28 executive leaders, 45 organisational community members and 7 external change agents – summarised in below and included in full in Appendix A – Summary of Interviews. The interviews were semi-structured in approach and part of the interviews were always open ended to avoid predetermining the outcomes of the interview or guiding the interviewee to the researcher’s potential bias (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). I commenced all interviews with a review and signing of the informed consent form approved by the University of Cape Town Ethics Committee.

Further Data Collection

I drew on secondary data to supplement my interview transcripts, summarised in below. These included publicly available reports and internal company documents that were made available under the confidentiality of the research programme. My research additionally drew on the findings of a larger corpus of work by the research group that my study formed part of, whereby I accessed transcripts and participated in review sessions of my research findings with strategic champions from companies outside of my selected cases as part of the earlier Embedding Sustainability Working Group case study company transcripts.

Additionally, given the access that the CEO study granted, the broader research team (also covered by the initial ethical clearance) conducted interviews with strategic champions, organisational leaders and members, and external experts that I did not personally participate in (largely due to interviews being conducted simultaneously during a short time period). In these instances, I accessed relevant interview transcripts and included these transcripts in the study as secondary data sources. These interviews are detailed in **Error! Reference source not found.** and summarised in **Error! Reference source not found.** below.

Table 5: Interview transcripts accessed as secondary data

Interview #	Interview Date	Company Pseudonym	Position	Role	Transcribed [Y/N]
1	2015/02/03	NewInsure	Head of Training	Organisational Member	Y
2	2015/03/09	TransportCo	ex CEO	Executive Leader	Y
3	2015/03/09	InsureCo	CEO	Executive Leader	Y
4	2015/03/09	InsureCo	Head of Risk	Executive Leader / Strategic Champion	Y
5	2015/03/09	InsureD	Head of Brand and People	Strategic Champion	Y
6	2015/03/11	InsureD	Head of CSI	Organisational Member	N
7	2015/03/11	InsureD	Company Secretary	Executive Leader	N
8	2015/03/16	BankCo	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
9	2015/03/16	ExternalOrg6	Programme managers	External Change Agent	N
10	2015/03/16	ExternalOrg6	CEO	External Change Agent	N
11	2015/03/17	ExternalOrg7	CEO	Executive Leader	N

12	2015/03/17	OtherCo3	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	N
13	2015/03/17	ExternalOrg9	Change Agent	External Change Agent	N
14	2015/03/18	InsureCo	Financial Director / Manager	Executive Leader / Strategic Champion	N
15	2015/03/18	ExternalOrg10	Head of SRI Index	External Change Agent	N
16	2015/03/18	ExternalOrg1	Consultant	External Change Agent	N
17	2015/03/19	Bankers	ex Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
18	2015/03/19	OtherCo5	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	N
19	2015/03/19	OtherCo7	CEO	Executive Leader	N
20	2015/03/19	OtherCo7	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	N
21	2015/03/20	InsureCo	CEO	Executive Leader	N
22	2015/03/20	ExternalOrg11	Change Agent	External Change Agent	N
23	2015/03/20	OtherCo8	CEO	Executive Leader	N
24	2015/03/20	OtherCo9	Head of Climate Change	Strategic Champion	N

Table 6: Summary of interview transcripts accessed

Summary of interview transcripts accessed		
Interview Type	Number of Interviews	Notes
Organisational Member	2	- Semi-structured interviews, lasting between 20 minutes and four hours (approx. 600 pages of text - verbatim transcriptions from digital recordings of relevant interviews) Focus was on the work of strategic champions to introduce a new principle for guiding decision-making within the organisation
Strategic Champion	8	
Executive Leader	9	
External Experts	5	
Total number of people interviewed	24	

I additionally engaged in observation, note taking and peer debriefing throughout the research process, also summarised in below. I took extensive notes throughout the research process and engaged in many informal discussions both within the organisations and the research group as part of an ongoing engaged scholarship approach. Throughout the

research period, I had both regular in-person meetings and Skype calls with the lead researcher for the Embedding Project and often other members of the research team. These in-person discussions and calls took place over a four-year period, for an estimated minimum of four hours per month and a maximum of 12 hours per day during intense collaboration periods. Over the course of the interviews, I took available opportunities to observe within the organisations studied (ranging from a few hours at a time to a two-week internship in one of the organisations), which granted me opportunities to observe the informal culture – through the behaviours and artefacts visible in the organisation.

The note taking, or memo writing, process can be described as “the narrated records of a theorist’s analytical conversations with himself/herself about the research data” and is acknowledged in grounded theory for supporting the development of theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 247). I took notes on key issues arising, new questions and unresolved tensions during the interviews, on reflection after each of the interviews, during discussions with the research group and during the coding and writing process. While these may have been useful as typed notes for the coding process, my personal preference was handwritten notes and diagrams as this allowed me to freely map out connections between emerging themes and constructs, highlight and / or reiterate important points. The use of visual diagrams and mapping is not universally supported in grounded theory, but it has been argued to support grounded theory development by guiding the organisation of data and the patterns of relationships therein (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). As acknowledged by Langley and colleagues. (2013, p. 8) in a review of process studies, “diagrammatic representations are nevertheless often crucial in describing and communicating dynamic process theorizations”. Through note-taking and visual mapping, my thought experiments began to be integrated into the research process, following which I began to test emerging ideas and constructs through further interviews and discussions.

The Embedding Project launched a global community of practice on Contextual Strategy-Making for Sustainability towards the end of my research study and participating in the early stages of this community of practice of researchers and practitioners undertaking engaged scholarship helped to further inform and develop the ideas presented in this study. I presented my emerging findings for discussion at several meetings with practitioners

throughout my study to improve the rigour of the research outcomes, and the practical relevance to organisational actors. I consider the feedback gained informally through these sessions a valuable further source of data and validation for this study.

Table 7: Summary of data

Primary Data			
<i>Interview Type</i>	<i>Total Number</i>	<i>Number transcribed and coded</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Organisational Member	45		- Semi-structured interviews, lasting between 20 minutes and four hours (approx. 600 pages of text - verbatim transcriptions from digital recordings of relevant interviews) Focus began as a study of organisations incorporating the logic of socio-ecological dependency to focus specifically on the work of strategic champions to introduce a new principle for guiding decision-making within the organisation
Strategic Champion	30		
Executive Leader	28		
External Experts	7		
Total	110		
Secondary Data			
<i>Data type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Transcripts from interviews with original Embedding Sustainability Working Group case study companies undertaken by Research Group	Approximate total of 1,440 pages	8 companies with approximately 6 transcripts each, which are on average 30 pages long	Insight into other companies' practices to embed sustainability
Transcripts from interviews by other research team members	Approximate total of 200 pages	8 transcripts each, which are on average 25 pages long	Insight into the work of strategic champions from interviews

participating in the CEO Study			undertaken by other researchers participating in the study
Internal Reports of case study companies	Approximate total of 60 internal reports	Internal strategy documents, policies and reports – approximately 10 per case study company	Insight into companies' approach to sustainability and shifting strategic narratives over time.
Integrated / Sustainability Reports of case study companies	Approximate total of 40 reports	Annual integrated and / or sustainability report by company for period of study, 2013 – 2016, for all case study companies and additionally for other companies included in study	Insight into companies' approach to sustainability
Websites of case study companies	Approximate total of 20 websites reviewed		Insight into companies' approach to sustainability
Observations and note-taking			
<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Observations inside of case study companies	Estimated 200 hours in-company observation across all case study companies, predominantly taking place in the two cornerstone cases	Ranging from waiting periods for interviews (20 minutes), post-interview informal discussions (15 – 30 minutes on average) and waiting in-between interviews (several	Insights into organisational culture and organisational dynamics across the case study companies being studied

		hours at a time), through to a two-week internship in one company, over the 18-month interview period.	
Notes I took during the research process	Approximate total 2,600 pages of notes	18 A5 note books with double sided writing, 200 pages per note book	Analytical review and personal reflections of key issues arising, new questions and unresolved tensions during the interviews, on reflection after each of the interviews, during discussions with the research group and during the coding and writing process.
Research group discussions	Estimated total of 450 engagement hours	Calls and in person discussions over a four year period, for a minimum of four hours per month and a maximum of 12 hours per day during intense collaboration periods	Peer debriefing to surface my biases and provide support measures for interrogating the logic of the emerging constructs and theories, and considering alternatives
Presentation of findings to practitioners from within the case study companies and outside of the case study companies	Total of 9 presentations	Presentations ranging from 20 minutes to two hours, for total of 9 presentations	Member checking with study participants to enhance the validity of the study, including strategic champions who had formed part of the study and

			strategic champions who had not participated in the study, to ensure my interpretations reflected their experiences and understanding
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3.4 Data analysis

I undertook the analysis of data through the core grounded theory methods of constant comparison (i.e., the ongoing collection and analysis of data) and theoretical sampling (i.e., the deliberate selection of data) (Suddaby, 2006). I realised this iterative process through the coding and sorting of data, note taking and modelling. My research approach was informed by a constructivist grounded theory methodology, which allowed for a more flexible and dynamic application of the grounded theory methodology. Charmaz (2008) asserts that adopting a procedurally rigid approach to grounded theory can suppress emergent theory. She encourages scholars to embrace an emergent methodology: “Learning to tolerate ambiguity permits the researcher to become receptive to creating emergent categories and strategies” (Charmaz, 2008, p. 168).

I undertook all coding of data using Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis and research software. For the first phase of the research, the interview transcripts and supporting secondary data for each case study company were reviewed by myself and a research assistant who had several years’ experience working with similar case study companies and content analysis. This provided for a beneficial peer debriefing process, whereby the research assistant interrogated assumptions I may have made and identified areas which lacked substantiation (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012). The outcome of the first phase of coding was a summary report for each case study company and the identified work of strategic champions to support leaders in their strategic processes to shift the narrative infrastructure of the organisation.

Following a review of the transcripts from the second phase of interviews which focussed on the work of strategic champions, I began coding all my interviews across both phases of research afresh for what appeared to be interesting to the emerging theoretical research question that guided my study (Glaser, 1992) – namely, how do strategic champions shift their organisation’s narrative infrastructure to effect strategic change? I coded the data to capture instances, in which interviewees described the work undertaken by strategic champions. These began to give rise to first-order concepts (Gioia et al., 2012) which I identified and labelled to maintain high fidelity with the ideas and language used by informants. I then compared and clustered these first-order concepts across the interviews to develop second-order themes with labels that I defined to cover a coherent set of activities by strategic champions. I continually refined second-order themes based on similarities and differences, at times having to revise or discard them. These were then further consolidated into aggregate dimensions, that is, overarching forms of work by strategic champions that include a set of more specific activities. An example of my data structure is included as Table 8: Sample data structure for aggregated dimension ‘Prompting’ below, highlighting my progression from the instances to first-order concepts, the resultant second-order themes and final, aggregating theme of ‘Prompting’. This pivotal step of building a data structure, according to Gioia and colleagues (2012), allows data to be configured into a visual representation that shows the progression from raw data to terms and themes.

I then began to develop a preliminary process model based on the nature of the relationships between the second order themes. The model allowed me to not only refine the emerging concepts, themes and dimensions, but also the dynamic interrelationship between them (Gioia et al., 2012) – recognised as “crucial in describing and communicating dynamic process theorizations” (Langley et al., 2013, p. 8). The ongoing process of model development included extensive refinement and, at times, the abandoning of versions that could not communicate the interrelationships sufficiently clearly. The outcome that I worked towards was a “dynamic inductive model that describes or explains the processes and phenomena under investigation” (Gioia et al., 2012, p. 24), which can represent both ‘deep structure’ and ‘deep processes’ in the interrelationship of the concepts and themes.

As I refined the themes, I sought further examples (through further interviews and archival document analysis) as well as through further theoretical sampling with specific interviewees who could shed light on the work of strategic champions to shift narrative infrastructure. I worked to identify where themes arising from my coding had already been defined in the literature and where my findings might be novel or previously undefined. I mapped extant literature to my emerging process model, to identify relevant theoretical conversations (and gaps) that my analysis could contribute to. At this point, I drew on relevant literature (both supporting and conflicting) to deepen the understanding of the emerging themes and support the generalisability of the findings. For example, I reviewed the extant literature on organisational culture and found that it did not sufficiently support the findings I was exploring on the work of strategic champions to shift what was considered strategic to the organisation. As I reviewed the literature on strategic change and a narrative perspective on strategy-as-practice, I considered whether the literature on framing and issue-selling would offer suitable insights into themes that were emerging; however, I found it to only explain partially what I was observing.

Within studies that explored organisational narratives, I found that narrative infrastructure offered a meaningful lens through which to understand the themes that were emerging from the data. Here, I was able to make sense of where I had coded for story fragments, or what I came to define in as antenarratives (Boje, 2001), and what I would come to define as master stories that form part of an overarching narrative infrastructure. In this way, my findings also offered insights that appeared conflicting with the extant literature on narrative infrastructure and I identified these as potential theoretical contributions.

I recorded notes throughout this process, with visual diagrams and mapping used as tools to remain active and reflective in the theory development process. Regular biweekly Skype calls with the lead researcher, and often with several members of the research group, were constructive for discussing the emerging constructs and process model. The language we used began to evolve and constructs started gaining clarity as they were tested and extended through further research interviews. I discussed the emerging themes through informal discussions with, and formal presentations to, both academic and practitioner audiences throughout the process to incorporate their reviews and ensure that the research

findings were grounded in experience and informed by research that would be relevant to the work of the practitioners.

I felt that saturation was reached when I began to identify the same key concepts repeated across my data, following which I began the writing process. Throughout the writing process, I continued to develop and refine the process model and subsequent theoretical models I present in chapters four and five respectively.

Table 8: Sample data structure for aggregated dimension 'Prompting'

Supporting data providing illustrative instances	First-order concepts	Second-order theme	Aggregated dimension
<p>"She was saying to me 'Simon, it's about our value system', so she was the one who was saying 'Everything should be values-based, value system,' and we started to think about what values we were applying or what values we wanted to apply and they were very old, old words when we actually created it - quality, value for money, integrity... borrowing old words... seven of them... including sustainability" (Previous CEO, RetailCo - RA7.1)</p> <p>"Even our sustainability, we want to do it in a way that we're proud of that is quality, that is good, that we feel like we're making a difference, that we feel like we've got a purpose" (National CEO, RetailCo -RA8.1)</p> <p>"You can see then that people are also very concerned of anything that might endanger their stability. You have to be respectful about that. [...] Let's not venture too far from the important things. [...] I think we'll get there and I think we definitely have the foundation to have that line of conversation." (Strategic cchampion, InsureD - FC1.1)</p>	<p>Drawing on old language</p> <p>Connecting to accepted values</p> <p>Building on stable foundations</p>	<p>Naturalising</p> <p>Definition: Recasting the new master story using the language of an existing master story, creating an attachment between the two.</p>	<p>Prompting</p> <p>Definition: framing the new master story as relevant for leadership to consider in their strategic processes.</p>

<p>“The only time I've seen anything like that [a catalytic moment where mindsets shifted] is where somebody from another industry came to speak to us. I think it's only when you can take yourself out of the industry, put yourself into something else, and suddenly you see the burning platform they face.” (Board Member, InsureD – FC2.1).</p> <p>“[He] painted the conceptual picture there of how these things were going to link into each other and that penny dropped with business people are well. The big picture penny dropped that not only that’s going to be good for their own businesses (...) but also the big picture of how it’s going to affect nations. When that picture penny drops with guys it makes a very big difference because they are big picture people we’re talking about. That penny dropped [...]. Can’t unsee it, you get it.” (Board member, InsureCo - FA10.1)</p> <p>“What I do know from my experience is that unless I connect the outside world to the inside world in terminology that people understand and can relate to what they’re doing now nothing happens because it’s not relevant. [...] I believe there’s a greater chance that future decisions will be more valid because it’s got the internal and the external and it shows the connections but in a very simple way.” (Strategic champion, InsureCo - FA1.1)</p>	<p>Peer influencing mindset on need for change</p> <p>Showing the linkages of business within their systems</p> <p>Connecting business to context in relatable language</p>	<p>Contextualising</p> <p>Definition: Supporting leadership in making sense of complex current and future scenarios by providing key pieces of information that would illuminate the need to integrate the underlying logic of the new master story.</p>	
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3.5 Strategies to improve rigour

In this section, I discuss the measures I took to ensure and evaluate the rigour of my study. In assessing the contributions made by qualitative research, validity is a “contingent construct, inescapably grounded in the processes and intentions of particular research methodologies and projects” (Winter, 2000, p. 1). The rigour and quality of inductive studies have been attributed to three fundamental criteria, namely that: (i) the emergent theory is internally coherent and parsimonious, (ii) the constructs and themes are grounded in compelling data and (iii) the research provides rich and unexpected insights (Eisenhardt et al., 2016). Yet, procedures for assessing the rigour of qualitative work remain unstandardised (Pratt, 2008), despite sustained discussion on the matter (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002; Whitemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001).

In response, Gibbert and Ruigrok (2010) adopt an evidence based approach to assessing rigour and present a series of strategies adopted in published studies in high-ranking general management journals. They found that successful inductive studies focus on transparency in the research actions taken, rather than research paradigm specific prescriptions, to afford the reader the opportunity to “appreciate the logic and purpose of these actions in the context of the specific case study” (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010, p. 29). I follow their advice to describe the strategies I followed to ensure rigour in my study. Morse and colleagues (2002) caution against strategies to establish trustworthiness at the end of a study and, as such, I took active measures throughout the research to advance the rigour of this study.

Construct validity refers to the extent to which the research procedures enable the researcher to accurately observe the reality which the study aims to investigate (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). To promote construct validity and reduce potential bias, I triangulated a variety of primary and secondary data sources, including direct interviews, observation and secondary data analysis (Leedy & Ormond, 2013; Maxwell, 2008), to support the development of more reliable and valid constructions of reality (Golafshani, 2003). I undertook in person interviews to gain rich and varied data for my study (Langley et al.,

2013), enabling me to provide thick and rich descriptions of the phenomena being studied and to provide context, create verisimilitude and, thereby, establish credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I actively sought opportunities for prolonged and deep engagement with the case study companies I was studying, to ensure credibility and trustworthiness within this study of process (Langley et al., 2013).

I extended this triangulation by engaging other researchers in the study, including working alongside a research assistant who had several years' experience working with similar research content as part of the Embedding Project research team to ensure a rigorous review of my findings in the first phase of the research. I also benefitted from the research team providing peer review of my interview transcripts throughout the research process, whereby they would offer feedback on and insights into both my interview style and the data contained within the transcripts. I further provide a clear chain of evidence and overview of data collection circumstances (with transparent accounts of variation from the intended course of action) to offer full transparency on the progression from my initial research question to my final conclusions (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010).

Internal validity refers to presence of causal relationships between variables and results as determined during data collection and analysis phases (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). As detailed in my data analysis section above, I undertook constant comparison (Charmaz, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and worked to develop a clear research framework that integrated my emergent theoretical findings with extant literature (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Gioia et al., 2012). **External validity** refers to the extent to which theories can be generalised to other settings. I adopted a cross-case analysis, studying the work of strategic champions across a number of organisations, to achieve analytical generalisation (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Reliability is established through consistency of category assignment that enables readers to come to the same conclusions as the researcher, and relies on transparency and replication in the research process (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). To advance reliability, I undertook careful documentation and extensive note-taking throughout my study. The peer debriefing process surfaced my own biases, and working as part of a research group provided me with

strong support measures for interrogating the logic of the emerging constructs and theories, and considering alternatives.

Furthermore, I undertook member checking with the study participants to enhance the validity of the study, given the central role they played in this study. In each of the case study companies, I conducted feedback sessions structured as focus groups and presentation sessions to discuss and confirm the credibility of the themes emerging from the study. Discussing my findings with study participants increased my ability to test my logical reasoning, consider alternatives and increase the generalisability of this study. This was especially the case with the presentation sessions to groups of practitioners (including strategic champions who had formed part of the study and strategic champions who had not participated in the study) who provided a valuable sounding board for the concepts being tested and helped to ensure that my interpretations reflected their experiences and understanding.

A note on reflexivity

I endeavoured to be reflexive (i.e., self-disclosure of personal assumptions, beliefs and biases) throughout my study, with the support and coaching of my supervisors.

Constructivist grounded theory and engaged scholarship both recognise that the research context influences the researcher and that the researcher influences the research context (Charmaz, 2008; van de Ven, 2007; van de Ven & Johnson, 2006). Balancing immersed engagement with researcher reflexivity became critical, insofar as bias may have influenced the rigour of my study (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Maxwell, 2008).

As such, during the interview process, I would purposefully question interviewees about their perspectives and the language they were using to ensure that I built reflexivity into the data that I would be drawing on in my analysis. Alvesson (2003, p. 25) describes this as a “conscious and consistent effort [... to] avoid or strongly a priori privilege a single, favoured angle and vocabulary”. As I became immersed in my research context, I guarded against becoming too close and losing sight of the necessary abstracted perspectives (Gioia et al., 2012). At first, I relied on my research colleagues who would bring to my attention when they noticed signs of me ‘going native’ (Gioia et al., 2012). For example, when I attempted

to generalise isolated examples as indicative of an organisational pattern of decision-making, I was cautioned against viewing all initiatives by the organisation in only a favourable light. Later, I developed the ability to distance and abstract from the research context myself. This became critical when transitioning from a study of the micro-practices of strategic champions to theorising on how these bundled, socially complex practices come together as a process (Chia & Mackay, 2007; Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007). In this way, my reflexivity progressed from maintaining reflexive pragmatism in my interviews (Alvesson, 2003), through to adopting critical reflexivity in my analysis and theorising in a study of process (Abdallah & Langley, 2014; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).

Chapter 4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

My study was guided by the research question: how do strategic champions shift their organisation's narrative infrastructure to effect strategic change? To address this, I studied strategic champions working to broaden organisational strategy to incorporate social-ecological constraints, thereby shaping what is considered strategic to the organisation. While my findings were inductively derived from interviews and archival data, I present them in this chapter as a process model. I begin by describing the research context of the key firms in which I found ample evidence of strategic champions working to shift narrative infrastructure. I then define and describe each of the six stages in the process model that explains how strategic champions work to shape their organisation's narrative infrastructure, providing insights into challenges experienced and important outcomes to be realised for each stage.

4.2 Research Context

In this section, I describe the narrative infrastructure of the key firms in which I studied the work of strategic champions, in order to illustrate the concept of narrative infrastructure in practice and situate the findings that follow in the rest of this chapter.

A values oriented bank that is considering social-ecological dependencies

With an almost 200-year-old history, the BankCo Group operates as one of South Africa's largest banking groups with growing business in the rest of Africa. In 2003, the business was in "deep crisis" following a series of "bad strategic decisions" and a poor leadership response that resulted in share prices dropping dramatically (Previous CEO, BankCo – BA17.1). With a new CEO coming in, a master story emerged in the organisation around recovery from failure, with story fragments being told about being "vision led and values driven" and investing into "shared values [to] create cohesion", and how this enabled the organisation to "journey back to the top" (Previous CEO, BankCo - BA17.1). The strategy

associated with the *recovery from failure* master story was captured in a one page visual strategy roadmap, telling BankCo forward as a values driven bank in which employees began to identify themselves as 'leading for deep green'. The stories told about the bank's turnaround, and the boundary objects created during that process, are forms of antenarratives that have been taken up as part of the *recovery from failure* master story.

Tied to the master story of *recovery from failure* is a *sustainability* master story that BankCo "cares about the environment", owing in part to charitable conservation work and partnerships that began in the early 1990s and, during the recovery from crisis in 2003, this became an important element of the "journey back to the top" – intentionally leveraged as "one little bit of high ground" that the company held at the time (Previous CEO, BankCo – BA17.1). Over time, BankCo became known for being the 'green and caring' bank beyond their conservation work, evidenced through the commitments they made and recognition received for progress on issues such as climate change, water and biodiversity but also employee wellbeing and community investments. Employees viewed sustainability as part of BankCo's vision and values to being a caring and responsible bank, thereby connecting the *sustainability* master story to the *recovery from failure* master story. The Head of Ethics, for example, articulated this by saying: "What we learned the hard way a couple of years ago is that if business is not sustainable, then it's not worth doing" (Head of Ethics, BankCo – BA1.1).

An emerging master story in the organisation at the time of this study was that sustainability was moving from a philanthropic and marketing positioning to a strategic imperative necessary for the bank to be successful in a complex and uncertain future. In 2009, ahead of the upcoming Conference of Parties (COP) 17 on climate change taking place in South Africa (where the business would have a prominent presence), the CEO of the organisation reflected the sense that their "strategic differentiation was going to get smaller and smaller unless [they] figured out, 'Well, what is the next thing?'" (CEO, BankCo – BA18.1). This questioning process was guided by a strategic champion and her team, resulting in a multi-year process to set a strategic agenda for considering the logic of social-ecological dependency in the bank's strategic decision-making processes. At the time of this study, the bank found itself in the process of a narrative infrastructure reshaping – with the culmination

of existing master stories and shifting external conditions bringing into question the principles that were guiding their decision-making.

A retailer with a long history of commitment to product quality through partnership

The first RetailCo retail store opened in the early 1900s and from the organisation's inception, it positioned itself as a leader in product quality, innovation and value. The organisation has global operations spanning several countries across the Southern hemisphere and, at the time of this study, was pursuing growth within existing and new markets. There were enduring master stories within this organisation, and an emerging dynamic of an *expansion* master story that was making the conversation on limits a tough one to begin.

Throughout its long history, the organisation had built an enduring master story of values based decision-making - starting with treating others well. Leaders in the organisation would tell stories about going the extra mile to look after their employees in their early stores - "If you didn't have a healthy, well-fed, motivated workforce, the business was going to be threatened" - or the progressive commitments by the firm to transformation during the *Apartheid* years - "We broke all of those rules, we had black people managing white people when it was illegal" (Previous CEO and Current Chair, RetailCo – RA7.1). The sentiment underpinning this master story was reflected in the statement that: "Deep in the DNA of RetailCo is this sense that [...] if others around you are doing well, [...] then your business will do well. That's the deep context" (Previous CEO and Current Chair, RetailCo – RA7.1). These are examples of powerful antenarratives that give expression to the organisation's *values based decision-making* master story.

A second and defining master story in the organisation was one of building trusting partnerships with suppliers for the long term. Building on the belief that treating others well is in the best interests of the organisation, leadership in the organisation viewed "supplier[s] of goods as a partner not as an enemy to be screwed, [but rather] as somebody who is going to invest on your behalf" (Previous CEO and Current Chair, RetailCo – RA7.1). There were many stories about long term supplier partnerships that were spoken about in the

organisation, and drawn on as antenarratives to this master story. The organisation believed it had established trust with its suppliers that “starts with the heritage that we've built over more than eighty years now as an organisation” (National CEO, RetailCo – RA8.1).

Strongly underpinning both of these master stories was a third and enduring master story in RetailCo that “Ultimately, the biggest thing that differentiates us is our quality” (National CEO, RetailCo – RA8.1). *Values based decision-making, partnering for the long term* and delivering on *quality* products lie deep in the ‘organisational DNA’ of the company and were guiding master stories for RetailCo.

As early as the 1990s, an emerging master story began to develop around how these all formed part of ‘the way forward’, where investing in sustainability was congruent with these accepted master stories. A watershed moment for the previous CEO laid one of the early seeds for the way forward narrative and typifies how such an incoming master story can be cumulative and emergent, rather than new and contesting:

“In San Francisco, I was taken [...] to a very early Whole Foods store [where] they had a lot of signage on the [organic] products and on the walls about looking after the land and being good to nature and therefore, the flavours were stronger. Whether that was true or not true, I didn’t know, but I looked at this and saw [...] this is relevant to us. Came back to South Africa where we had a very powerful Marketing Director at that time, I said “Carol, I need three quarters of an hour of your time,” the only problem is I need it in San Francisco, and that same day, we get on a plane [and] we went back into that Whole Foods. We talked and talked and talked and talked and talked and out of that, came the Good Food Journey, so we started to position the food business not just then on delicious food and new food varieties, more flavour but on something more holistic [...]. We thought we could make organic more successful at the time and a much more sort of sense of food legacy, where does your food come from and how good is it” (Previous CEO and Current Chair, RetailCo – RA7.1).

Combined, these guiding master stories were formalized in 2006 into a Values Statement as a mechanism to “express the business philosophy” (RA7.1), in which sustainability was intentionally added as the seventh value statement and shortly thereafter, formalised as the Way Forward in 2007. Over the years following, the company became recognised as a

sustainability leader and make good progress on the over 200 targets set to embed sustainability across their operations. At the time of this research, sustainability was an accepted master story in the organisation.

With global expansion underway, the organisation was challenged with balancing growth (“the message from the top is profit, profit, profit” – Strategic champion, RetailCo - RA4.4) and a commitment to their enduring master stories around *quality*, *long term partnerships* and *sustainability*. As their national CEO reflected, “Our challenge now as we've become such a big global business, is how do we operate across everywhere, and every sort of system that we do now in a consistent way, but keeping that heritage of values and behaviours as the heart of what we do” (National CEO, RetailCo – RA8.1). And the conversation on social-ecological limits was an uncomfortable one in the business. The organisation was reviewing the many targets it had set for integrating sustainability across their operations as part of a larger questioning of the future of what sustainability means to the company. The narrative infrastructure of the company was being shaped to accommodate the drive to expand globally and incorporate all the associated complex social-ecological dynamics, with staying true to their historical and deep narratives on values-based decision-making.

Insurance firms working to incorporate context into strategy

InsureCo opened its doors as a short-term insurer just under a century ago, with InsureD launching shortly thereafter as a sister company to provide life assurance. The two organisations are separate but share directors on their respective boards and own shares in each other. Both companies control large segments of the South African market and, at the time of this study, were expanding into other geographic regions. When a series of significant weather related claims hit InsureCo's earnings between 2003 and 2008, the company undertook a number of studies, commitments and partnerships to begin to address their risk and resilience. The companies both had long standing master stories as quality insurers - InsureCo doing insurance that ‘*supports our customers*’ and InsureD revitalising their brand around ‘*wealth stewards*’. Profound societal and climate instability were leading the organisations, under the guidance of strategic champions, to question

whether their accepted master stories and business models are sufficient as they navigate increasingly complex and interconnected risks.

A financial services company committed to systems thinking and social purpose

NewInsure was established in 1980 and is South Africa's largest privately-owned insurance group, providing a diverse offering of insurance and investment products. With a CEO personally committed to systems thinking and a strong master story of *social purpose* coming from both the board and executive leadership, the company undertook a multi-year training on systems thinking that culminated in the 'NewInsure Way' – a set of guiding principles that inform decision-making in the organisation. Following the family's philosophy of inclusive growth, at the time of this study, the company's performance was evaluated on both shareholder contributions and social dividends. Strategic champions in the organisation were revisiting the relevance of the 'NewInsure Way' in the context of societal challenges unfolding in the country at the time, and supporting the organisation to consider how these principles could be consistently translated into action.

I further interviewed strategic champions, executive leadership and other organisational actors from companies in sectors including financial services, retail, the extractives and primary production. Some of these companies are not discussed in detail as I found limited evidence of a strategic champion in the organisation or the strategic champion left shortly after my first interview (taking with her access to the rest of the organisation). Others are mentioned only briefly as the strategic champions had recently joined the organisation (and had not yet had time to start engaging with the organisation's narrative infrastructure).

4.3 The work of strategic champions

It has been established that introducing and shaping new narratives is undertaken by a range of organisational agents – from executive leadership through to employees of the organisational community, and even external agents (Sonenshein, 2012) - but the role of strategic champions in shaping master stories is underexplored (Balogun et al., 2014; Belmondo & Sargis-Roussel, 2015). Across all the firms studied, I observed strategic champions working to not only introduce new master stories, but also undertake work to

have the organisation adopt and integrate these master stories as part of the organisation's narrative infrastructure. To illustrate, I next provide two examples of strategic champions working to shift the narrative infrastructure in their respective organisations.

In BankCo, the Head of Sustainability was one of their key strategic champions who had worked for years to position sustainability as relevant to the organisation. With her team, she had evolved the organisation's master story on sustainability from a focus on charitable conservation work to a story about sustainability as a leadership and accountability imperative. She had earned the trust of leadership over time, by providing meaningful information on pertinent issues and delivering wins for the organisation. When the bank was going to be involved in a large, international event on climate change, she leveraged the window of opportunity to revisit the organisation's sustainability master story with executive leadership. She presented leadership with a provocation - that the business's future was dependent on the social-ecological systems in which they operated – which led them to discuss the strategic relevance of sustainability issues to the bank. She then helped to guide the executive team in a process of identifying and committing to long term goals relevant for a 'thriving bank in a thriving society', articulated as *FutureCommitted 2030*. At the time of this study, a core team led by this strategic champion were working in house to embed this commitment across the organisation and into the bank's core products and services. Yet, shifting the acceptance of sustainability from a value of the organisation to a strategic imperative to be integrated into the company's core products and services, and therefore a dominant master story within the organisation's narrative infrastructure, was proving a long and challenging road.

In RetailCo, by comparison, as the Way Forward gained momentum and the "business got energized" by this new master story, a Head of Sustainability was appointed who would become a strategic champion on sustainability issues for the organisation (Previous CEO, RetailCo - RA7.1). In reflecting on the role of strategic champions, their former CEO and current Board Chair acknowledged that "You do need a [strategic champion]. You cannot do it without a skilled, and I say skilled in a couple of senses, architect driver" (Previous CEO and Current Chair, RetailCo – RA7.1). As 'architect driver' for the master story on sustainability, the strategic champion began by putting in place measurement systems and

targets to make tangible the organisation's commitments, and championed the introduction of new programmes that would evidence this new master story in action. He simultaneously worked to build trust with the organisation, and leadership, that the Way Forward was delivering on their shared and accepted master stories of *quality* and *values based decision-making* by positioning sustainability as the approach through which these would be realised. This foundation of trust afforded him the position to advocate for more progressive sustainability commitments and initiatives by the firm, which helped to establish the firm as a global sustainability leader in retail. A combination of the trust and the leadership positioning built allowed him to open a window into a collective questioning process of what shape their sustainability master story should take going into the future.

In the sections that follow, I describe in detail the work of these and other strategic champions to position sustainability as strategic to the organisation and a master story that guides decision-making.

4.4 A process model of how strategic champions shift narrative infrastructure

The process model I present below describes how strategic champions work to support leaders in shifting the narrative infrastructure of the organisation, depicted in six stages in Figure 4, summarised in Table 9: Summary of types of work below and summarised further in Appendix B. In practice, strategic champions may be undertaking the work depicted in these stages simultaneously, but I delineate these stages to highlight how the work sequentially builds on each of the previous stages over time. Only the final stage of revisiting appears to happen at specific intervals and is described accordingly. Below I define and describe the work undertaken for each of these stages by drawing on a series of examples from the cases.

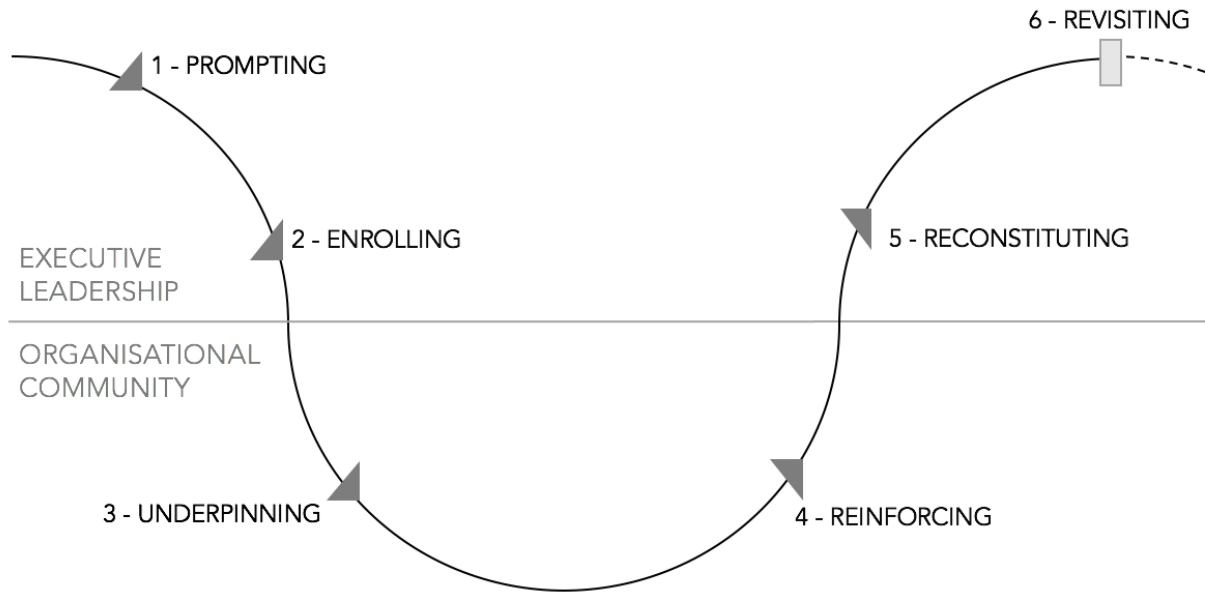


Figure 4: A strategic champion's work to shift narrative infrastructure

Table 9: Summary of types of work

Type of work	Description
Prompting	Framing the new master story as relevant for leadership to consider in their strategic processes.
Enrolling	Creating a provisional environment in which the new master story can be explored, discussed and better understood in order to be integrated into the strategy processes.
Underpinning	Supporting executive leaders in sensegiving the new master story to the organisation.
Reinforcing	Sensegiving to leaders that the new master story is being adopted by the organisation.
Reconstituting	Supporting the organisation in adopting the accepted master story as part of the narrative infrastructure
Revisiting	Supporting the organisation in reviewing the relevance of their current narrative infrastructure.

(1) Prompting the leadership forward

I found that in the early stages of shaping narrative infrastructure, strategic champions engaged in prompting work, which I define as framing the new master story as relevant for leadership to consider in their strategic processes. This sensegiving was undertaken to prompt leadership (i.e., those who 'tell the organisation forward') with an intervention "for this concept to get into [their] system" (Board member, InsureCo - FA10.1). In my analysis, I identified two forms of prompting work undertaken by strategic champions to frame the new master story as relevant to leadership for consideration in strategic processes: naturalising and contextualising - shown in Figure 5 below and described next in further detail.

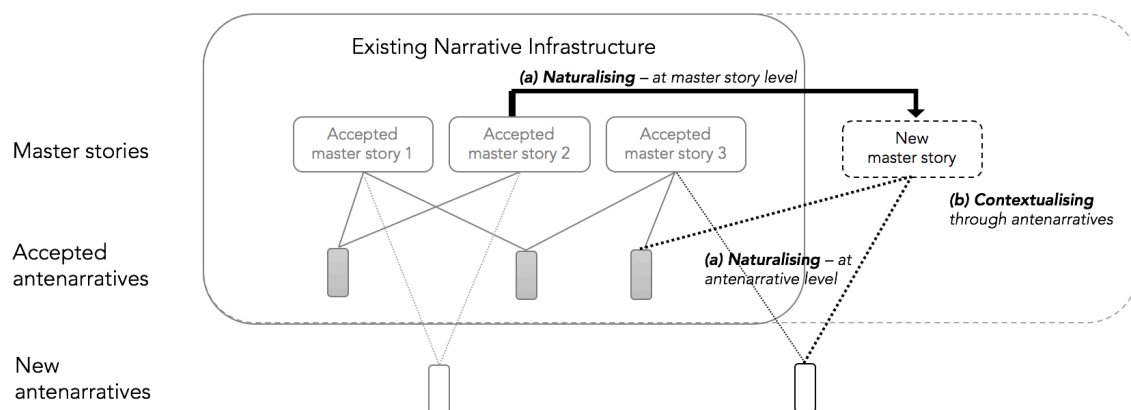


Figure 5: Prompting leadership to introduce a new narrative

(a) Prompting - Naturalising

The first form of prompting work I identified I define as naturalising by recasting the new master story, depicted by the arrow (a) in Figure 5 above. Strategic champions engaged in work to attach the new master story to one or more accepted master stories in the organisation, recasting the new master story using the language of an existing master story to show how the new master story was an extension of an accepted master story. This I observed to be at the level of either a master story or an antenarrative.

For instance, at InsureD, the strategic champion (the brand manager), intentionally accessed the long standing, slightly dusty and, until then, un-labelled master story of the company as creating intergenerational wealth for their clients.

“Although a lot has changed in the last 97 years of our being, the one thing that [we have] remained confident of is our founding purpose - we were actually founded to create a better life for people at that time” (Head of Brand and Strategic champion, InsureD – FC1.1).

Connecting her work to the organisation’s past was a purposeful tactic to “start with the things that are easier, which we all share, [to] get people in a common vision and a common standpoint where we need to go - and we can articulate that” (Strategic champion, InsureD - FC1.1). She sought to simplify and energise this master story by invoking the concept of being a *wealth steward* for their clients. Getting others to buy into the concept of *wealth stewards* started by influencing people around the key decision-maker (in this case, the CEO to whom she recognised consensus was important), such that “when people around him like it, then he also likes it” (Strategic champion, InsureD - FC1.1). While she recognised that at “different times, there are different strategies”, she stressed that it was important to position the new master story as congruent with accepted master stories in the organisation. The strategic champion intentionally identified and framed a historical master story that would provide her with a platform from which she could drive organisational change - “Pick the few things that you see are critical to developing and creating momentum in the organisation for change” (Strategic champion, InsureD - FC1.1). Before she could initiate change processes, she purposefully gained support from executive leadership for the framing she had applied to the historical master story and made sure to “not venture too far from the important things” to build the foundation from which to “start having the right conversations” (Strategic champion, InsureD - FC1.1).

Similarly, at RetailCo, individuals close to the CEO at the time that the Way Forward began encouraged him to translate his vision and “find a mechanism to express the business philosophy” (Previous CEO and Current Chair, RetailCo – RA7.1). An earlier strategic champion (and Head of HR at the time) recalls: “I remember having a conversation with him about reconnecting with those values and not taking them for granted as leaders, because

we think we got it, but [we need to] constantly reconnect people with company's values" (Earlier strategic champion, RetailCo - RA8.1). The CEO also reflected on these conversations:

She was saying to me "It's about our value system", so she was the one who was saying "Everything should be values-based, value system," and we started to think about what values we were applying or what values we wanted to apply and they were very old, old words when we actually created it - quality, value for money, integrity... borrowing old words... seven of them... including sustainability" (Previous CEO, RetailCo - RA7.1)

Through informal conversations, often outside of board meetings and other strategic discussions, the CEO was supported by this strategic champion to access the historical master story of the firm and to articulate it as the organisation's foundation by drawing on the 'very old, old words' such as quality and integrity, and formalising them into a values statement. When sustainability was later added as a seventh value (at the directive of the CEO) and positioned alongside these old and accepted organisational 'words', this signalled sustainability as a further, guiding narrative in the organisation. In doing so, sustainability was elevated to the same status and seen to be part of the organisation's driving purpose: "Even our sustainability, we want to do it in a way that we're proud of - that is quality, that is good, that we feel like we're making a difference, that we feel like we've got a purpose" (National CEO, RetailCo - RA8.1). In this way, the strategic champion's work was to prompt the CEO into co-articulating the historical master story as a foundation for the organisation's purpose and to which the emerging master story of sustainability was later able to be attached. While this may not have been as intentional as in the first case of prompting work I presented (whereby a strategic champion intentionally drew on the past to establish future organisational change), the articulation of historical master stories was still undertaken purposefully by this strategic champion and resulted in the same foundation from which new master stories could find congruence.

More recently at RetailCo, strategic champions working to introduce sustainability (originating in the fresh food division) intentionally framed the new master story (originally on environmental stewardship) as an extension of their already accepted commitments to quality and partnerships for the long term. Even though the new master story was

underpinned by a different, emerging logic (of nested dependencies), it was considered legitimate because it built on the accepted master stories in the organisation.

I also identified that strategic champions would prompt by naturalising through antenarratives that connected the new master story with an accepted master story, depicted in Figure 5 above. This work is done at the level of an antenarrative, as opposed to at the level of the master story itself. In the early stages of prompting at Bankers, the strategic champion would intentionally leverage antenarratives to build a bridge between accepted and proposed master stories, by using both “the language that is being used” and introducing new concepts (Head of Sustainability and strategic champion, Bankers - BB1.1). She illustrates this in the example:

“Many of my early conversations with my senior colleagues in banking, including a CEO, and he would say, “I don't know if we're doing that under the Charter¹?” I'd say, “Yes, but we would recognize that as part of a sustainable future” (Head of Sustainability and strategic champion, Bankers - BB1.1).

In this way, she worked with what was already accepted in the organisation and frame it as congruent with the new master story, recognising that “you don't ever start at a zero base” (Head of sustainability and strategic champion, Bankers - BB1.1). Indeed, she drew on multiple antenarratives in the organisation (from corporate philanthropy and investment in education through to accessible and affordable financial services for those previously excluded) to show how they also connected to a new master story on “delivering a sustainable future” (Head of sustainability and strategic champion, Bankers - BB1.1).

In other cases, I found that strategic champions referenced an antenarrative about the organisation's past to highlight why the new master story was important – by drawing on previous failures or ‘scars’ in the organisation that forebode the importance of not repeating these mistakes. The story of the turnaround is a key antenarrative from BankCo's history about avoiding the kinds of decision-making that led the organisation into crisis in the early 2000's. This antenarrative gets drawn upon because “when you tell the story, all of a sudden

¹ Referencing the Financial Sector Charter to “actively promoting a transformed, vibrant, and globally competitive financial sector that reflects the demographics of South Africa, and contributes to the establishment of an equitable society by effectively providing accessible financial services to black people and by directing investment into targeted sectors of the economy”.

people sit up, because there is this thing that you've committed to BankCo" (HR manager, BankCo – BA2.1). The story is so alive that even "if you're new to BankCo, (...) when you tell the story to people, there's an ah-ha moment for people" (HR manager, BankCo – BA2.1). For example, in an interview with the Head of Ethics, she drew on this antenarrative without even mentioning the story itself – evidencing how well established the reference is for the organisation: "What we learned the hard way a couple of years ago is that if business is not sustainable, then its not worth doing" (Head of Ethics, BankCo – BA1.1). In these cases, the turnaround story was intentionally referenced to position the emerging master story on sustainability as congruent with the values arising from the recovery from failure master story told in the organisation.

When strategic champions used naturalising to prompt leadership, I found that referencing accepted master stories appears to reduce the cognitive distance of a new potential master story. Strategic champions achieved this at times by borrowing the language of an existing master story to create an attachment between the two stories. This work of strategic champions to extend an existing master story is akin to what Douglas (1986) identified as naturalising analogies that draw comparison to accepted domains of understanding. Working with antenarratives that consistently connected the new master story to accepted master stories also appeared to increase the chances of the new master story being considered as strategically relevant. Building on the issue-selling work of Dutton and colleagues (2001), strategic champions in this setting package issues by tying them to accepted 'valued goals' in the organisation and new 'valued goals', and use the selling of issues (or drawing on antenarratives) in this way as a mechanism for establishing legitimacy of the new master story.

(b) Prompting - Contextualising

Strategic champions also worked to position information relating to the new master story that would support leaders in 'connecting the dots' of how the organisation's broader operating context functions, revealing why the new master story makes strategic sense to the organisation. They worked to support leadership in making sense of complex current and future operating context scenarios by providing key pieces of information translated

into compelling narratives that would illuminate the need to integrate the underlying logic of the new master story. I term this contextualising, shown as (b) in Figure 5 above.

Strategic champions would employ relating tactics to present information (mostly through internal presentations and reports, often requested as business intelligence to inform strategic processes) that would help broaden the boundaries of what is considered relevant to strategic processes. As recognised by a senior leader, this also includes providing “the right information so that [leaders] start getting an understanding of how this complex system works” (Executive director, InsureCo - FA7.2). Strategic champions often did this through use of external references and comparisons to establish the ‘safety’ that the proposed master story was valid and acceptable by the organisation’s industry and leadership peers. I found the strategic champion at RetailCo to be particularly skilled at using benchmarking to highlight to leaders both the risk of not addressing issues and the leadership opportunity in addressing issues.

“I think the competitive space is important, always just show that other companies are taking this seriously and making progress out of it. Or on the other side of it, getting huge pressure for not doing it, is often quite a powerful space. [Leveraging the] competitive nature, people tend to get behind it” (Strategic champion, RetailCo – RA4.2).

Most often, contextualising took the form of presenting the business case for the proposed master story in the context of the organisation’s current operating environment. A strategic champion in Bankers, for example, shared how he worked with the existing narrative infrastructure and what was signalled to matter in that organisation, while bringing in context for the key decision-makers to incorporate into their decision-making:

“The answer is pretty simple, which is don't be sappy. Quantify, model, make the case as hard as you can make it and care about what we are. We're a commercial enterprise, we want to maximize our long term shareholder value. [...] There are trusses around everything - it must be about that. We must think carefully about our social and environmental and economic context, both immediately and in the long term. We must make the case in a quantifiable way to the extent that we can.” (Strategic champion, Bankers - BB2.1)

Within this form of prompting work, strategic champions also organised situations in which respected peers (from other industries) would share with leadership the importance of a systems perspective to social-ecological issues from their own experiences.

“The only time I've seen anything like that [a catalytic moment where mindsets shifted] is where somebody from another industry came to speak to us. I think it's only when you can take yourself out of the industry, put yourself into something else, and suddenly you see the burning platform they face. The whole thing of why revolutions happen, it's very difficult for you to really believe that much is going to change. You don't want to change too much. You're on this winning streak and you got your share options and you got a good formula. It's only when you look, I think, at other people you respect” (Board Member, InsureD – FC2.1).

In a telling example from another company, the quote below illustrates not only the power of respected peers presenting the relevance of the issues, but also the critical insight that once the boundaries (and interdependencies) of a system have been enlarged, the impact of this cannot be reversed:

“[The CEO of an established NGO] painted the conceptual picture there of how these things were going to link into each other and that penny dropped with business people are well. The big picture penny dropped that not only that's going to be good for their own businesses (...) but also the big picture of how it's going to affect nations. When that picture penny drops with guys it makes a very big difference because they are big picture people we're talking about. That penny dropped, so I think after that day that unifying principle just got a momentum of its own. They didn't even have to be discussed anymore. It did get discussed but it just happened automatically because they got it. Can't unsee it, you get it.” (Board member, InsureCo - FA10.1)

In these instances, the work of the strategic champion is not to paint the conceptual picture, but rather to orchestrate the situation in which respected peers share with leadership the strategic relevance, from their own experiences, of adopting a systems thinking perspective and enlarging the boundaries of what they consider strategic to their organisation. In this way, it is not about the selling of specific issues, but rather creating a situation whereby sensegiving can occur through peers discussing how issues are connected and how they are relevant to the organisation.

Complex social-ecological challenges, and especially social-ecological thresholds, are challenging topics for strategic champions to position within their organisations – not only because they can be complex and ambiguous, but because there are limited examples of organisations taking a leadership position on these issues. With specific regard to limits and systems thinking, at least four of the case study companies studied worked in partnership with credible research institutions for their expertise and scientific backgrounds to provide support through capacity building, facilitating internal conversations and providing informing research. Despite these partnerships and ongoing dialogue based work, strategic champions, such as the one at RetailCo, recognised that “Conversations around a limit puts people on edge [and that there is] still a lot of work to be done around that space” (Strategic champion, RetailCo – RA4.2).

I found that an important aspect of this work is for strategic champions to continuously show connection and relevance to the organisation.

“What I do know from my experience is that unless I connect the outside world to the inside world in terminology that people understand and can relate to what they’re doing now nothing happens because it’s not relevant. [...] I believe there’s a greater chance that future decisions will be more valid because it’s got the internal and the external and it shows the connections but in a very simple way.” (Strategic champion, InsureCo - FA1.1)

The strategic champion at Bankers achieved this in part by literally drawing the connections for the organisation – using a series of inset circles that highlights dependencies as well as boundaries of control and influence. She reflects on the approach and the message it conveyed to strategic decision-makers in the organisation: “That’s how we’ve approached it to say, ‘This is us within a context and us with a decreasing amount of ability to change,’ so we can’t change global climate change, but we could contribute or influence” (Head of sustainability, Bankers - BB1.1) and thereby helping to overcome only addressing what is immediate and measurable.

Less commonly employed prompting work was to relate to antenarratives associated with the new master story to the leader’s personal position. In some situations, this was referred to as understanding what ‘mode’ the leader(s) were in and what might be current drivers of

their decision-making criteria. In South Africa, many felt that leadership are not connected to the reality of the context in which their businesses operate in that “there can be a real disconnect with what’s actually happening in reality. Or what’s even happening with your current and potential future customer base. I suppose the opportunity to try and show context in which you operating in a different way, I think is quite important” (Strategic champion, RetailCo – RA4.2). Whilst tangible experiences of the issues that would help show the relevance of the new master story were often cited as powerful means of enlisting leadership’s awareness on the issues, there was little practical advice from strategic champions on how to create these experiences other than to be opportunistic and considered with their limited time and access to leadership.

Strategic champions also presented metaphors and other discursive prompts for leadership to reimagine the future and help trigger shifts in the narrative infrastructure. While strategic champions recognise that “it helps if you understand how to paint that final destination picture for them”, they also recognise that this needs to be done in a manner that “resonates with where they are at” (Strategic champion, BankCo - BA7.2). Leadership articulated clearly that sense of stewardship they felt towards the organisation, and that this informed what they considered in their strategic decision-making regarding the future.

“This is a 97 year old company. It’s not like something you and I started to do yesterday. You have to have that responsibility and you have to see it that way. You have to make sure its here standing up in 97 years’ time. Its just inherent in my... it just makes sense” (CEO, InsureD – FC3.1).

I found that while stewardship may inform leadership’s view on decision-making going forward, there was no indication that this is a feasible entry point for discussion, and therefore prompting, by strategic champions. Also, it was challenging for strategic champions to provide tangible evidence for future scenarios given the lack of future oriented data that could support and guide decision-making, and a lack of certainty on what the future would look like. “When you’re asking for long-term, forward-looking decision-making, there actually are very few, if any, data points. Then the default is what other companies have done this” (Strategic champion, BankCo - BA7.2). With only a handful of companies globally engaging in contextual strategy making processes at the time of this

study, it was challenging for strategic champions to employ tactics of relating to other businesses and / or relevant data points.

Given the shortcomings of future-oriented data and the small number of other firms to point to, strategic champions provided antenarratives through sensegiving tactics such as provocations, metaphors, scenario planning and visioning simulations. In the case of BankCo, the strategic champion brought in external consultants who wrote a provocation to present a view of the future business context that the firm would be operating in and undertook a series of one on one interviews with executive leaders to present the logic of social-ecological dependencies. The consultants “told [leadership] not what you can do but what the science says or the literature says is required” and, that “whether they like it or not, they submit to the laws of gravity” (Sustainability team member, BankCo - BA4.1). They also acknowledged that they wanted to present information that “whilst you might philosophically disagree that its anything to do with you, you can’t argue with it” (Sustainability team member, BankCo - BA4.1). For instance, the metaphor of a moonshot was employed as “a device demonstrating the power of visionary leadership” and whereby the “point was not to downplay that there will be other benefits. It was to up-play it” (Sustainability team member, BankCo - BA4.1). From researching the company over a three-year period following the presentation of this provocation and subsequent metaphor, the strategic champion reflected in retrospect that they may not have taken enough time to create an environment for deeper understanding of the issues presented in the provocation to be established. This will be explored further in the following stage, enrolling. The metaphor, however, appeared to take traction because of the positive framing (and the congruence of the organisation’s dominant master story on being vision-led and values driven), and the sense of potential stemming from engaging with this proposed new master story.

Akin to what Deuten and Rip (2000) recognised as ‘start-out stories’, strategic champions did not just list arguments but worked to arrange them with robust linkages in a story about the new master story in a manner that illuminated the strategic relevance of the underlying concept. The antenarratives presented had to support the leader in making sense of their own reality and lead to them achieving their own insights to foster ownership of the new

master story. Importantly, strategic champions did not present full strategies, but rather worked to identify and bring to the attention of leadership key antenarratives that help to position the master story as worthy of strategic consideration.

A review of prompting

I identified underlying characteristics of how strategic champions approached prompting that align with prior research. I found that the information presented needed to be well researched, reviewed and presented – which would be the case for presenting any business argument and issue selling in general. I observed that strategic champions enacted tactics that most closely reflected the findings of Dutton and colleagues (2001) in that they continuously were cognisant of packaging, involvement and timing. Most importantly, I found that aligning the new master story with the existing narrative infrastructure positioned it as relevant for consideration as strategic to the organisation in the same way that Bansal (2003) found that issue selling that aligned with organisation values (defined as "socially shared cognitive representations of institutional goals and demands" (Rokeach 1979, p. 50 in Bansal, 2003)) were more likely to be considered strategic.

The overarching outcome of prompting work was that antenarratives that would support shifting the narrative infrastructure were identified and recognised as important by leadership, thereby establishing the new master story as relevant for consideration. I found that naturalising efforts by strategic champions which retold and connected the proposed master story to accepted master stories improved the chances of the new master story being seen as congruent, and therefore acceptable. This builds on the work of Foster and colleagues (2016) to show how historical narratives are drawn on for the purposes of shaping narrative infrastructure. I also saw evidence of metaphors and other discursive work to draw out leadership into imagining possible futures relied on up-playing the benefits of engaging in this perceived 'risky' exploration of uncertain futures and thereby increased the potential of leadership to step into dialogue to consider future oriented antenarratives relevant to shaping the narrative infrastructure of the organisation. Importantly, antenarratives needed to be presented sufficiently simply and not as complete strategies – they needed to be intentionally accessible but still provisional. Ideally, antenarratives were

presented in such a way that the issues were perceived not only as relevant and situated, but also addressable.

Successful prompting work resulted in leadership recognising the relevance of the new master story to their strategic decision-making, but it is not sufficient to simply prompt. Strategic champions then needed to work to support leadership in enrolling this new master story – the next stage in the work of shaping narrative infrastructure. As recognised by one strategic champion: “Then the real challenge ultimately is to get people to understand why and to feel like they own it. Even though you’re behind it and you drive it” (Strategic champion, InsureD - FC1.1).

(2) Enrolling the emerging strategy

After engaging in prompting, strategic champions would support leadership in enrolling the new master story into their strategy processes. I define enrolling as the work of strategic champions to create a provisional environment in which the new master story can be explored, discussed and better understood in order to be integrated into the strategy. Importantly, strategic champions did not necessarily integrate the new master story into the strategy themselves, but rather created the conditions in which leadership could integrate the new master story into their strategy processes and strategic decision-making. Within enrolling, I identified two approaches that strategic champions used to foster a provisional state for enrolment to occur: convening conversations and co-crafting boundary objects.

(a) Enrolling - Convening conversations

I found that it took time for strategic champions to build trust and establish authority, both formal and informal, to convene conversations with leadership and that formalising the conversation through routine strategy meetings supported strategic champions in maintaining the conversation. In some instances, such as RetailCo, this “work over time” was to position sustainability as “a key pillar”, which resulted in dedicated time allocations for the sustainability programme within the normal executive committee and board strategy processes; and once these conversations are formalised in routine strategy meetings, it

ensures a space for the new master story to become “pretty well entrenched as a result” (Strategic champion, RetailCo - RA4.2).

“We have slights in all the strategy processes, so [the CEO] and the team are very supportive in having [and] pushing our sustainability strategy forward. In our board committee, he is there as well, together with non-execs [...]. There is a good level of understanding and support and he’s been quite good over the last while in terms of really being open to saying ‘well, here we are’. We’ve been discussing a lot of things around water over the last while in particular, so what else do you need? What else can we do? Come back to me with ideas and budgets and what’s required.” (Strategic champion, RetailCo - RA4.2)

As highlighted above, the discussion and debate were critical to building an understanding of the issues that characterised the new master story. Strategic champions intentionally found opportunities to initiate these conversations to bring to light the tensions and complexity of the issues. Through initiating and holding “a lot of tough discussions and a lot of difficult questions coming onto the table”, understanding was built and sustained commitment enabled – “I think as the team behind this, we’re going to have to keep that pressure on [our CEO] and on the strategy and in front of our COO to say, ‘We have to have these conversations and we’re not going to go away’.” (Strategic Champion, BankCo – BA7.2).

I found similar examples in other organisations where the enrolment of a new master story happened through dialogue. A strategic champion from a large financial services firm shared that it is through ongoing conversation that leadership “really start making the links to how important it is and how it can add value” (Strategic champion, InvestCo - FE1.1). A former executive director and strategic champion from NewInsure stressed how the right environment for a meeting “where voices are heard” should be created and that there are specific measures taken to how the agenda is setup, the meeting is run and the conversation is convened to foster quality, ease, manage power and truly listen. A strategic champion in the organisation reflects how a conversation about business philosophy with the board gave rise to the principles that guide decision-making in the organisation today: “A very real conversation at board level about their philosophy and their philosophy about how they do business.” (Strategic champion, NewInsure - FD1.1). In the group of companies

that NewInsure forms part of, for instance, the chair of the board for the holding company shared how this continued in the organisation:

“We have these discussions at our board meetings. Are we comfortable about this product that this business sells. Or are we comfortable about this line of business? Or are we comfortable about this investment? [...] Because these are not absolute and objectively measured things, but I think everyone around the table shares a common value system where we can have those conversations and we're speaking the same language.” (Chair, NewInsure - FD3.1)

In early stages of enrolment, I found that strategic champions encourage leaders to take ownership of the new master story. This was achieved through “involvement and sign off and making sure that they do feel like they're a part of whatever key process is happening at a particular time” (Strategic champion, RetailCo - RA4.2). As the new master story began to be adopted, later stages of enrolling are characterised by increasing ownership of the master story to the extent that leadership begin to ask questions of strategic champions.

“I mean if you go to the Board, they will say ‘have you thought this through from a sustainability point of view, what does it mean’? [...] So you get that message quite strongly, so you kind of consider it [...]. Big proposals that need Board approval go through Social & Ethics and they very much look at it for that length. So there is a little bit of it is personal and a little bit of it is ‘well you know what that's kind of how we do business and best you've applied your mind because you're going to be asked the question’.” (Head of HR, RetailCo - RA2.1)

Once strategic champions had the trust with leaders to initiate tough conversations, the next challenge was bringing in the conversation around social-ecological dependencies. I only found examples of initiating this conversation after multiple iterations of the stages described in the following sections (i.e., underpinning and reinforcing).

“The difficult conversation is how do you have an honest appraisal of what is your sphere of concern and your sphere of influence? That's actually what it is. Then if you can have that conversation, then it follows. Or you may have to then, in that conversation, introduce the idea of these mega forces and these macro trends, but if you can't broach the idea or the concept of increasing your sphere of concern, then talking about driving forces and mega trends is going to fall on deaf ears anyway. It's like ‘that's fine, because we look at regulation, so why do

we need to worry? We've always been able to comply'." (Sustainability team member, BankCo – BA4.2)

For the Head of Strategy and Stakeholder Engagement, and a strategic champion, at MineCo, this was achieved in part by bringing context into the conversation. He reflected on how: "If we're developing a strategy at MineCo, what is the context within which you're developing that strategy? Everything exists within a context. It depends on how widely or narrowly you define that. This thinking for me developed from the [concept of] biomimicry and really understanding how nature works because nature works perfectly, given a specific context" (Strategic champion, MineCo – EA1.1).

(b) Enrolling - Co-crafting boundary objects

The second way in which I found strategic champions enrol was by co-crafting boundary objects that could express how the new master story could become part of the organisation's narrative infrastructure. For some organisations, this took the form of a written statement whilst in other organisations it was encapsulated in a graphic representation. The dual purpose of these boundary objects was to create both a process through which executive leaders debate and commit to a set of principles, and a set of principles that can be communicated out to the organisation to explicitly guide decision-making. The previous CEO of TransportCo reflected on this as finding a unifying set of guiding principles: "You did need to find the hook, wherever you build it in. [...] You really need to create a bell where you can ring that sound off. We found the hook with the unifying factors." (Board member, InsureCo – FA10.1).

In RetailCo, for instance, leaders and strategic champions worked to make explicit the organisational values by articulating them as a set of value statements. Two important processes were facilitated by strategic champions to achieve this – the first being an initiation of the process to articulate the values statement (through prompting questions and suggestions) and the second was coordinating a broad organisational engagement process that facilitated the values statement (or boundary object) being adopted by the organisation. Interestingly, strategic champions enlisted the organisational community's participation, which resulted in the values being viewed as the emergent outcome of a

collective listening process. Sustainability was intentionally added by the CEO as a seventh value, and whilst it was said to be emergent from the business philosophy, it also signalled to the organisation the clear emphasis being placed on sustainability as part of the values that guide the organisation's decision-making going forward. The values statements became a facilitating boundary object for the emerging narrative to develop from:

"Those deep old values we crystallized into the statements of the values that the teams use today and they just really adopt that in and support it and became the foundation for the [Way Forward]." (Previous CEO, RetailCo - RA7.1)

Another example of co-crafting a boundary object is the creation of visual artefacts that express the business strategy and philosophy (which can be thought of as the espoused narrative infrastructure) in one image. In MineCo, at an individual level, the strategic champion created a triangle to link the vision and mission with the business strategy and stakeholder engagement to create "a frame of reference in terms of how I make day-to-day decisions, about how I look at the business, and how I respond to issues." (Strategic champion, MineCo – EA1.1). At an organisational level, in BankCo, the key boundary object – a one page image depicting the strategy – was created through what was retold as a participatory process. Key to the process, however, was the intentional facilitation of participation by both leadership and the organisational community:

"People showed up in that, and when the conversation came back, people wanted to give a voice to what does this mean for us? How do we turn this ship around? What's my contribution here? Part of that journey, and what's really interesting about BankCo and our story, is really that the engagement that happened around turning this was with people in a very open and transparent way. [...] They had set up a strategy values and brand workshops. [...] it was engaging leadership levels across the bank, around what would it like the strategy to look like, we're setting in place a three-year plan to start impacting the bank and what does that mean for us? The contributions that came out of there really led to [...] our strategy map all on one page, but it emerged out of the voice of the people. The philosophy at that time was really about collective wisdom. That collective wisdom came together to form a metaphor for our strategy [...], because there really was our deeper aspirations at the top, our values at the bottom, and where were we going in between. We chose [this image]. It was the easiest to go with. Also some of the expressions around -

you'll find BankCo people saying, I'm really Deep Green. Deep Green emerged at that point because people said deep was about the investment in culture and people, and green was really our commitment to sustainability and being the green and caring bank. That's the identity we wanted to own." (Culture Manager, BankCo - BA2.1)

A similar example unfolded within NewInsure where strategic champions also facilitated a process to create a visual artefact to express the business philosophy (or espoused narrative infrastructure). This took the form of 'The NewInsure Way' tree of values and strategy objectives for the organisation. The CEO of NewInsure highlighted the importance of the message being communicated through the boundary object to be non-threatening and hard to disagree with: "I think if you create a framework that is non-threatening, within which people can think about these things and then take them into a process, most rational human being with a conscience will come to a conclusion that there needs to be a shift" (CEO, NewInsure – FD2.1).

Another example of co-crafting a visual boundary object is the context dashboard that the strategic champion and Head of Strategy at InsureCo was building with her team. The intention with the context dashboard was not necessarily to connect the business mission and values with the strategy, but rather to keep track of key drivers of organisational risk that might help to inform the organisation's strategy. This boundary object served to both prompt and enrol the emerging sustainability narrative for the organisation. The strategic champion reflected on the driving challenge that informed the development of this dashboard: "There is so much information and then when you get stuff it's either too high level or too lower level. How do you get information about this quite specific to InsureCo that they can then start using for decision-making? So, this is where I want to take the dashboard next." (Strategic champion, InsureCo – FA1.1). This was the third iteration of a dashboard for the organisation and with a series of changes that have been leveraged to support the integration of financial and non-financial drivers of performance (in this case, integrated reporting and a series of climate change related impacts on the business), the team felt more confident that the ownership of this dashboard by leadership would be greater than with earlier iterations.

A review of enrolling

I found that a consistent challenge to enrolling was the ability of strategic champions to prioritise between antenarratives that appear to be relevant to the new master story. Strategic champions in companies with larger number of stakeholders, complex supply chains and consumer facing brands found prioritising especially challenging: “where I guess it gets tricky is translating into prioritising properly which ones we should put the most work into [...], stakeholders may have a different list of priorities so we end up doing everything and maybe not always to the same kind of degree that we should” (Strategic Champion, RetailCo - RA4.1).

An underlying and more challenging to address barrier to enrolling was an identified lack of readiness or interest from leaders to adopt the new master story. While the information presenting in the prompting stage may have signalled business relevance and values alignment, the scope and scale of change called for in adopting the new master story (in this study, to incorporate the logic of social-ecological dependencies) may be greater than some wish to undertake. Especially when the prompting stage presented information that appeared impossible to address or not directly relevant to the business in the immediate term, I found it was more likely that leadership would be less likely to enrol the new master story into their strategic decision-making.

Enrolling gave rise to differing outcomes, based on how far along the organisation was in process of shifting its narrative infrastructure. The outcomes of enrolling in the early stages is that leadership have sufficient understanding of the new master story, such that they can begin to sensegive the strategic change to the organisation. In the absence of identifying the new master story as strategic and sufficiently understood, it remained in the minds of the executives (if at all), and did not transition into a principle to guide decision-making for the organisation. In InsureCo, the Head of Stakeholder Engagement and a strategic champion reflects how many still view sustainability abstractly and that it has not yet been sufficiently connected to business action: “I think sustainability it is an intellectual issue, it is in the minds of the senior executives and some senior managers cooperatively, intellectually. How that gets translated into the way we do things, our values and culture

and [...] where will the business be; I'm not sure whether that link has been made." (Head of Stakeholder Engagement, InsureCo - FA2.1). In later stages of enrolling (after one or more iterations through the stages of underpinning and reinforcing have occurred), enrolling began to give rise to reconstituting whereby the new master story was both sufficiently understood and legitimate for leadership to accept it as a principle for guiding decision-making and for the organisation to adopt as part of its narrative infrastructure.

(3) Underpinning the new narrative

Once leaders began enrolling the new master story into their strategy processes, I found that they would begin to communicate the strategic relevance of the new master story to the organisation. This form of sensegiving is established in prior research as critical for shaping strategic change initiatives (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), but the role of strategic champions in supporting the executive leadership to sensegive is less well understood. I define underpinning as the work of strategic champions to support executive leaders in sensegiving the new master story to the organisation. I found that strategic champions underpin the new master story for leadership in three ways - by leveraging opportunities for the message to be communicated with sufficiently simplified and strategic information; by formalising the communicated message for the organisation, most often through measurement systems; and by enlisting organisational participation in the acceptance of the new master story.

(a) Underpinning - Leveraging opportunities for the message to be communicated

Strategic champions intentionally leveraged or even created opportunities or leaders to communicate the new master story out in order to position it as strategic. Part of this work was to ensure that leader was well prepared and comfortable to speak on the issues.

"Where there is a more public leadership position on a personal level then it's more about me making sure that they're equipped and briefed and properly prepared for whatever presentation or speech or whatever they're doing. Obviously making sure that there is generally a good understanding of what our strategy is and our focus areas. So that they are able to communicate that both internally and externally as well" (Strategic Champion, RetailCo, RA4.2)

Strategic champions recognised the power of leader sensegiving and intentionally worked to leverage the voice of executive leaders to shift the narrative infrastructure of the organisation. For example, in RetailCo, a sustainability team member reflected on creating the opportunity for the CEO to speak at a key sustainability related event: “[Our CEO] spoke at the beginning and the end. It was very powerful. He was like: This is the right thing to do. We need to be doing it. So, we are quite good in those kind of moments and I think next year we will probably do something similar when we then launch our 2020 targets.” (Sustainability team member, RetailCo - RA1.2).

Similarly, in InvestCo, a strategic champion purposefully selected an opportunity for the CEO to present the new master story as the organisation’s strategic imperative on a global platform. In reflecting on the tactic:

“It was a brilliant opportunity for us to get him up to speed, to get him to see the scale of what we were already doing, and actually what the opportunities were for the future. That final slide of the next step, what are we going to do, when you're basically getting your CEO to commit in public to what you want to go and do the next 3 years. It was really brilliant. [...] It was a turning point for us because he then turned around and said, ‘Okay, so we've now committed to these things. I see what were doing on all of this, what more do you need from me?’ He then started to come out and say what's the next thing you need from me, what's on my to-do list, and that's amazing to have somebody who comes out at that level and says, ‘What can I do for you’, is pretty much unheard of.” (Strategic champion, InvestCo – FE1.1).

A subtle yet critical element of supporting leaders in communicating the new narrative was ensuring that the message was communicated as strategic, yet sufficiently simple. The work of the strategic champion was to lay the seeds of the right language for the leader to pick up and communicate into the organisation. For example, in BankCo, the new narrative around FutureCommitted 2030 was being connected to the CEO’s message of *Winning in 2020* as a key driver for organisational success. A key influencer in the organisation interprets the CEO’s expectation in communicated this message out is that it will “get cascaded, the leaders will take the message back to the business” (Head of Ethics, BankCo - BA1.1).

(b) Underpinning - Formalising the communicated message

The second form of work I found strategic champions to perform during the underpinning stage was to formalise the new master story that leaders were communicating to the organisation. At times, this happened by explicitly connecting the master story to actions. In BankCo, this occurred through translating each of their values into business practice. "For instance, if you look at the value of accountability, the first thing under the value of accountability is 'Transparency in reporting to all stakeholders'. What we have done is we have operationalized our values so that people can exactly connect the jobs that they are doing to the specific values." (Head of Ethics, BankCo, BA1.1)

At other times, underpinning happened through rewards and recognition that signalled the new master story as valued by the organisation. Formally winning organisational awards or informally receiving recognition in public forums, sent a strong signal to the organisation that this was valued and relevant to the organisation. The work of strategic champions was often indirect in supporting this to happen, by nominating others to receive awards or even creating the awards in the first place.

In all the companies I studied, however, establishing measurement systems was a crucial means of formalising the organisation's commitment to the new master story. In RetailCo, for example, targets became an especially important mechanism in the early years of narrative infrastructure shifting to focus attention and make clear the commitment to delivering on the new master story. An earlier strategic champion in organisation reflected that his job "was just to run around and to make sure that everybody knew that we were measuring" (Strategic champion, RetailCo - RA3.1). Part of this work includes recognising that the measures may never be perfect or absolute. In this vein, another previous strategic champion reflected: "A lot of what we set was as best we knew it in an ever-changing world, as you can imagine, and it still is like that today" (National CEO, RetailCo - RA8.1).

"It's been a combination of trying to cultivate the culture side of it, because it is a really strong positive for our business. But also at the same time trying to make there's been better integration in processes as well, so balanced score cards, strategy processes and reviews just so it is a little more formalized. So you got a

little bit of the softer and the harder side working together around it.” (Strategic Champion, RetailCo - RA4.2)

For many organisations, the next stage in formalising the communicated message was to broaden the measurement system of organisational targets to include individual scorecards. In RetailCo, this occurred when the first scorecard was created for the organisation. The previous CEO reflects on what the scorecard really meant to the organisation: “I said “Okay, fine. If we’re serious about this, we actually need to measure ourselves - [...] we created this Balanced Score Card. Indeed, what happened was the business got energized.” (Previous CEO, RetailCo - RA7.1) An earlier strategic champion and current national CEO reflects on how this process of commitment and formalisation unfolded for the organisation, an example that mirrors the experiences of other organisations:

“Once people were comfortable with it, we then put it into a scorecard and it becomes everybody's responsibility to come up with what the plan was. [...] What has been important for us from the start is we wanted traceability, we wanted evidence, we wanted accreditation, we wanted audits, we wanted all of those things that supports the journey. The first thing was, big bold step: [The Way Forward]. Second step, what do we actually want it to be? [...] Next, what are the targets? Then, into people's scorecards, let it become part of everyday life, now let's work with it. [...] . Are we completely integrated in the sense that we trace everything as we sit here today? No, we're not. We take the next step and then we take the next step and we kind of take the next step.” (National CEO, RetailCo - RA8.1)

BankCo also adopted a scorecard approach to formalising the strategic relevance of the new master story. In BankCo, the performance bonus moderator for executive leaders (and their whole cluster) was decided on by the CEO, based on areas including sustainability. As underpinning stages are repeated, I found that the new master story transitioned from being relatively new to the organisation to broader levels of awareness. In this way, the difference between underpinning and reconstituting stages was the work to raise awareness as opposed to the work to achieve adoption.

In an unusual but noteworthy example, NewInsure adopting a combination of underpinning tactics that I typically only saw in the reconstituting phase. Early on in their process of shifting narrative infrastructure, they made a series of changes to their business practices

(including measurement systems but extending well beyond these) to send a strong signal to the organisation that the new master story was strategic. A training manager at NewInsure reflects on the 'conscious decision' taken by leadership to align themselves with what they saw as being a responsible business:

"It would have to start with reviewing how we do the business reviewing strategy, reviewing and being willing to let go of business practices that do not serve that paradigm or that mindset. In our instance, we looked at products that we felt were not being socially responsible. [...] That sends a very strong message from a board level, it send a very strong message to the next level, which is the EXCO level and the senior management level about who we are and what we are doing. Then, of course, the other normal socialization programs to bring everyone else on board from a cultural perspective. [...] as part of our performance conversations, contracting conversations, we talk about how is your work being meaningful. Do you feel it's being meaningful? Do you feel like your work is related to our overall purpose and vision? We believe, as you know, meaningful work drives a sense of commitment. That people definitely do need to feel a sense of connectedness in their daily responsibilities. They need to feel a sense of connectedness to the overall purpose." (Training Manager, InsureD – FC1.1)

(c) Underpinning - Enlisting organisational participation

I found that strategic champions also worked to enlist broader organisational participation in the new master story. In the early stages, this was to create awareness and in later stages, this was to create acceptance of the new master story. I observed that strategic champions undertake ongoing, informal and discursive work to enlist this organisational support. Reflecting on his work in the early stages of shifting narrative infrastructure for the organisation, an earlier strategic champion in RetailCo reflects "a whole lot of lobbying was done to say: 'Isn't this a good idea? Isn't this a good idea?'" (Earlier strategic champion, RetailCo – RA3.1).

In BankCo, enlisting organisational participation was structured as an organisational dialogue that supported the enrolling and reinforcement of the new master story. Reflecting on the process of developing the business philosophy articulated in their visual strategy roadmap, the Head of Ethics shared that:

“We put out a list of about 40 values there to all our employees and say to our employees, “You choose which values you think must apply to us as a business.” They came up with the values and then we took on one additional value from old mutual which was I think the people centred one. When those values, our employees then voted on those values. What happened then was we put those values out there to them and we say to them, ‘Now tell us what each one of these values mean to you.’” (Head of Ethics, BankCo - BA1.1)

In response, the Manager for Culture in BankCo reflected that the process of enlisting organisational participation resulted in organisational acceptance and ownership:

“People showed up in that, and when the conversation came back, people wanted to give a voice to what does this mean for us? How do we turn this ship around? What's my contribution here? Part of that journey, and what's really interesting about BankCo and our story, is really that the engagement that happened around turning this was with people in a very open and transparent way.” (Culture Manager, BankCo - BA2.1)

A review of underpinning

The work undertaken by strategic champions in the underpinning stage included signalling the new master story as strategic (by enlisting the voice of the CEO and other leaders), communicating the message sufficiently simply (such that it can be adopted), initiating processes to formalise the message into the organisation’s systems that signal what is valued to the organisation and enlisting organisational participation in the shifting of the narrative infrastructure. The important outcomes were that the new master story is introduced to the organisational community and, in time, accepted by the organisational community such that their decision-making begins to be guided by the new master story.

When an organisation fails to incorporate the new master story into formalised measures, or when the reward systems in the organisation reinforce a competing master story, I found it unlikely that the new master story would be adopted and chosen over other, accepted master stories. I found this to impede progress to reconstituting the narrative infrastructure down the line as well. As reflected by the head of risk at InsureCo: “When it comes down to it and what people prioritize and take time on, I think that's still a bit of a challenge to get

that. Ultimately you're rewarded for profit and growth whatever the bottom line for your business." (Risk manager, InsureCo - FA6.1).

(4) Reinforcing to legitimise

I found several instances of strategic champions sensegiving to leaders that the decision to adopt the new master story was being taken up by the organisation, and therefore legitimate to integrate into the organisation's narrative infrastructure. I define this as reinforcing - the work done by strategic champions to sensegive to leaders that the new master story is being adopted by the organisation. I observed two forms of reinforcing work: the selective retelling and amplification of stories to create a sense of organisational resonance, and the considered use of data as proof points to establish credibility for the new master story.

(a) Reinforcing - Selective retelling and amplification

I identified that strategic champions would tactfully seek out, retell and, at times, amplify, stories from across the organisation that provided evidence to leaders that the new master story was being adopted. In RetailCo, for instance, an earlier strategic champion called these stories "drip-feeds" and reflects how he would intentionally "find the ten or twelve drip feeds" to report on monthly back to the organisation (Strategic champion, RetailCo – RA3.1). Sometimes these stories would be communicated directly to leaders (where access was available) and in other cases, they were communicated broadly to the organisation with the awareness that some will reach the executive offices. RetailCo has developed an organisational competency in storytelling (aligned with their brand signature) and would intentionally identify heroes of stories – often suppliers – who could tell inspiring stories about the impact RetailCo had on them personally, on society and the environment more broadly, as a result of the organisation's commitment to its values, including sustainability.

"In the supply case, it would be the supplier and [the Head of Sustainability] picked the hero, so it would be the factory that makes our bags and it would be in the factory, the factory manager. She would tell the story of why the bags are important to her and the journey that she's been on to make these bags. Then with [our nursery supplier], it would be one of the main partners and one of our

enterprise developments, so it's just a really inspiring story hearing it from her, as opposed to hearing it from RetailCo. [...] We also did a film on our greenest store at the time and we got a till operator, a store manager, the foods manager and we got the engineers to talk. We even got [the Head of Sustainability] to talk. So, it depends what type of story it is, as to who we felt are like the heroes of the story. [...] They've been around now for probably like two years, so they've been in use a lot and [our CEO] even played one or two at his Exco Talks downstairs. We get feedback, we've done little surveys to the Champs to say: What materials have you enjoyed? And we get feedback that they're inspiring and makes them so proud to be part of RetailCo." (Sustainability team member, RetailCo - RA1.2)

The personal resonance that was created through the selective retelling and amplification of these stories invoked a stronger sense of pride and commitment to the new master story than might be achieved with factual reporting on the outcomes of the project. The Internal Communications Manager for RetailCo echoes this in saying: "The human, the smile - is just huge and it seems to resonate so much" (Internal Communications Manager, RetailCo - RA6.1).

Through the selective retelling and amplification of these stories, strategic champions gained the attention of leadership and provided them with the information that supports them in legitimising their decision to adopt the new master story. In RetailCo, for instance, the value to the organisation began to articulate back over time as "starting to fatten the brand" (Chair, RetailCo – RA7.1). Leaders began to read the multi-faceted benefits to the business:

"When we start sharing those stories and we see the benefits, whether it is black farmers that have got a market, whether it is [our sustainable farming programme]. Let's work with it. How are we saving electricity? How are we getting better water? When you start telling the stories, or [the Head of Sustainability] is standing up and being Mister Sparky and getting people in their homes to actually think, our staff here, to think differently about electricity usage. We try to find just innovative ways to just get people to think about what they do, but I can honestly tell you it has only ever come with upside in most times, economic upside." (National CEO, RetailCo, RA8.1)

Another example of how selective retelling and amplification occurs is through the creation of visual artefacts that serve as organisational memory of the conversations and commitments being made within the organisation. For instance, in BankCo, a large image of a tree was hanging in the foyer to the Human Resources division at head office:

“That picture you see in the front as you walk in, there's a picture of a tree that's been framed with the leaves. That emerged as a graphic harvest out of a café conversation we had on transformation. We did that in 2013. What we normally do is get in a graphic harvester to take the words and put them into a picture. That emerged out of our transformation café.” (Culture manager, BankCo - BA2.1)

(b) Reinforcing - Use of data as proof points

The second approach that I found within reinforcing work was the considered use of data as proof points to establish credibility for the new master story. In early stages, I found that strategic champions need to establish credible proof points that showed how the new master story delivered value to the organisation. The previous CEO of RetailCo reflected that in the absence of measuring, the sensegiving provided by leadership lacks substance and integrity required for the new strategic direction to take in the organisation:

“The first thing is you must measure because there's no point making speeches, speeches help but following up from the speeches, you got to measure. If [our positive farming programme] is in 10% of your supplier base, that's no good. It's got to get to 85, 90% of the supplier base. If your electricity saving is 2%, well, that's fine, you've made a big speech and you turned off three lights, but you haven't transformed the business. You got to measure, you got to set targets and you got to measure, you got to have those targets in some form or another in the daily targets of the business, the individuals in the business. As much as the profit figures are in their targets, GBJ figure should in their targets as well. That's, I think number one.” (Previous CEO, RetailCo - RA7.1)

The strategic champion in RetailCo reflected how the measurement systems established during the underpinning stage become important for proving the value of the investments made during the reinforcing stage:

“If we look at issues like energy and water the measurement components being so, so important to really being able to sell the business case, prove the

investment back of particular projects and to be able to sort of really understand and manage the issues much better so I think there's a fair, fair understanding across the organisation how important measurements being to the programme" (Strategic champion, RetailCo - RA4.1)

As targets were met and financial gains established for the organisation, credibility built up over time. The Chair for RetailCo recognises this in saying: "The work that [the Head of Sustainability] has done over the last four, five years has proven that there is real money to be saved" (Chair, RetailCo - RA7.1). In this way, strategic champions garner "a fair amount of positive support and recognition" which helps to keep "the momentum going" – especially important for promoting a new master story, and not just antenarratives (Strategic champion, RetailCo - RA4.2). I found that strategic champions shift tactics according to the economic climate the organisation finds itself in: "irrespective of where you are from an economic cycle perspective, when trading times are tough and people aren't necessarily super innovative about new products and stuff, focusing on energy efficiency or logistics efficiency has saved a lot of money and kept momentum going" (Strategic champion, RetailCo - RA4.2). The long-term benefits are understood by leaders in the organisation as well:

"You can say yes, we can charge higher prices, but the truth is, our price-competiveness in the last 10 years has improved, not reduced. We are closer to our competitors in prices, not to be more expensive, we are closer to our competitors in price. The [Way Forward], particularly in the case of [farming programme] has given our farmers better yield and enabled them to invest more into the future." (Chair, RetailCo - RA7.1)

I found examples of staff culture surveys to be another form of reinforcing work that drawing on data points to establish credibility. Again, the act of measuring signals what is valued to the organisation. In BankCo, a commitment to being people-centred was signalled through a series of staff surveys that have uncharacteristically high participation levels compared to other organisations. The Manager for Culture in BankCo commented on this in her reflection: "There's always emotional commitment to the surveys, and therefore you'll find lots of attachment to doing trends and trended data" (Culture manager, BankCo - BA2.1).

A review of reinforcing

The important outcome of the reinforcing stage is that leadership feel supported by the organisation in adopting the new master story as part of the narrative infrastructure. Some of the companies that I studied failed to leverage opportunities to reinforce the new master story, or may simply not have successfully transitioned through enough cycles of underpinning and reinforcing the new master story. As a result, the new master story was not yet ready to be integrated into the narrative infrastructure of the organisation.

(5) Reconstituting the narrative infrastructure

The final stage of shifting narrative infrastructure consisted of work to adopt and enact the now accepted master story. I define reconstituting as the work done by strategic champion to support the organisation in adopting the accepted master story as part of the narrative infrastructure. I found the head of HR in RetailCo to be an exemplar of a strategic champion consciously working to shift the narrative infrastructure, in this case to include values based principles as a guide for decision-making.

“As the business environment we work in becomes more complicated and as we just get bigger, you want to build a culture of accountability. We’ve taken a conscious decision to say ‘we want to work with the values because we want to move towards being principle bound’ [...]. For two things, one, it frees you up a bit from all the policies and procedures. Two, it means that you can have continuity of leadership as long as people understand the values because otherwise if it’s all ruled bound and you’ve got you know very high hierarchal decision-making one person, if that person isn’t around to make a decision or whatever the whole system comes to a stop so, so that’s kind of the underlining philosophy.” (Head of HR, RetailCo, RA2.1)

Within the reconstituting stage, I found four different types of work enacted by strategic champions. The more formal work was to embed the now accepted master story into key organisational practices that would signal to the organisation that this master story is one of the principles that guide decision-making in the organisation. Informally, work was done to continuously repeat and remind the organisation of the master story. I also identified work to foster listening and reflective environments for the organisation to realise that this new

master story was now accepted and for them to consider how to adopt the new master stories into their decision-making. Finally, I identified hints of work done by strategic champions to help the organisation forget old master stories (that formed part of the narrative infrastructure) that may conflict with the now accepted master story.

(a) Reconstituting - Formally embedding into organisational practices

I identified various formal approaches to embedding the now accepted master story as part of the narrative infrastructure. For example, BankCo formalised their sustainability master story through many of their organisational practices. In BankCo's onboarding process, they presented new employees with a decision to adopt the espoused narrative infrastructure of the firm:

"When new recruits start with the company they are given the code of ethics, the code of conduct and the employee conduct pledge. We actually say to them, "This is how we are going to expect you to behave. If your personal values do not align with our values then we would recommend that you do not come and work here because then it's not going to be a pleasant working environment." (Head of Ethics, BankCo - BA1.1).

BankCo also used training to embed the master story around values based decision-making, often employing the use of stories to sensitize to incoming and existing staff the importance of the master story:

"It works like a charm, [...] storytelling is the most effective way to do it. It is. People who I've trained seven years ago, they would still come up to me and they would say to me, "I remember the story that you told me about that. Because of that I will always remember not to do that." It sticks, it sticks." (Head of Ethics, BankCo, BA1.1).

In NewInsure, this was articulated as the NewInsure Way which gave strategic champions in the organisation 'permission' to relook at all key touch points, particularly with people, in the organisation. Reflecting on these touch points, an architect in designing the NewInsure Way and a strategic champion for the organisation at the time reflects on the extent of integration in the organisation:

“How you hire people, how you onboard them, how you reward or remunerate performance, manage, how you encourage them to learn and lead. It's completely informed down your leadership development program. It's very much informing all our interactions with the senior leadership team. It's currently under construction in terms of how it eventually plays out in the brand, in going forward” (Strategic champion, NewInsure – FD4.1).

NewInsure not only formalised the commitment to the principles espoused in the NewInsure Way through these business practices, they also designed the principles as a set of guiding rules that encouraged employees to apply the principles rather than follow a prescribed set of actions.

“They're simple internal operating rules of things like decisions that you are not allowed to make. It would be decisions that have reputational damage, internal or external reputational damage and decisions that would likely put our license at risk. Another one would be, when you make a decision, ask who else could this decision impact, so we're referencing and making people aware of the interdependence of the system. It's down the line and up the line. There is just a whole lot of simple principles that are universal really, and talk again to the NewInsure Way. Interestingly, [when] we bring new managers on board, they have difficulty in understanding the simple principles. Especially if they come of large corporate where there are a lot of rules. [...] Suddenly, these Business Critical Rules place a lot onus and ownership on people to apply their minds before they act. [...] Which is very core to another principal we have in the NewInsure Way, which is our values, really, which is about being mindful. Being mindful about the fact that you are part of and you need to understand the consequences of your actions.” (Training manager, NewInsure – FD1.1).

This extended into the core decision-making processes of the organisation. For example, the investment committee posed the question to the new investment proposer: ‘What will the social environmental impact of this investment be?’ and were not prepared to accept ‘not applicable’ as an answer. Reflecting on the impact that this has had in the organisation, the CEO shared:

“Nowadays people are quite proud of being able to point to some social or environmental good that this has had. They start [...] trying to shift even the ordinary business that we do in such a way that they can report back on the social impact that they are achieving, because we asked for it. Highlighted in every opportunity. Every decision-making framework, or form, or process that we

have in this organisation incorporates the question to their effect. People are forced to think about” (CEO, NewInsure – FD2.1)

In Bankers, they took a formalised risk screening approach to embedding sustainability into business operations and decision-making. Given that many of the decision-makers in the firm don't have strong understanding of environmental and social issues, they designed the risk screening “so it had to be almost despite their lack of knowledge that we would get to a signal that it had certain risk or opportunities or problems” (Strategic champion, Bankers - BB1.1). This risk process was developed with the intention that it would endure, even when the strategic champion had left the bank and the even if the organisational strategy changed.

(b) Reconstituting - Repetition

Repetition was a continuous theme within reconstituting work by strategic champions – continuously reminding the organisation of the narrative that they adopted as part of their narrative infrastructure. In RetailCo, for instance, the national CEO reflects how:

“We have to spend an enormous amount of time, as leaders of this organisation, talking to people about not what they need to do, but why they need to do what they do. In foods right now we are actually going to be launching a movie where we started with just telling food that cares journey, and we specifically spoke about the purpose, why do we do what we do. [...] I also feel like, we as leaders, have to talk a lot, a lot, a lot more about it to just the next generation of leaders. How did we grow up and learn about it? Because we sat at tables. We saw leaders grapple with these things. We saw the decisions that they make. We understood why they made the decisions. Those things, you can't give people on a piece of paper. You have to actually stand and talk and let people grapple with it themselves and see what decisions they would make.” (National CEO, RetailCo - RA8.1)

At the time of my interviews in the company, large boards were hanging in the foyer with images of the leaders alongside the value statements of the company. The sentiment behind this was reflected by the national CEO in saying: “As we come into the entrance of the building, and you see that our values are the heart and soul of our business. We talk about it on an ongoing basis” (National CEO, RetailCo - RA8.1). The national training

manager for RetailCo also presented that repetition is key, not only for reminding but also for deepening understanding of the issues: “[For example, with] store managers, you know what is their view and how do they understand the [Way Forward] because it’s a word that’s become synonymous [with RetailCo], you know it’s spoken about such a lot but how deep do we understand it?” (Training manager, RetailCo - RA5.1). Much of this repetition and reinforcement happened informally and through conversations. The national CEO, for example, used conversations as an opportunity to reassert the organisation’s guiding principles: “I say to people, “If you have to change who you are at the turnstiles in the morning to fit in here, you're in the wrong organisation (...) If you can bring yourself to work and you have got values that's aligned to RetailCo', you will make it here.” (National CEO, RetailCo - RA8.1).

(c) Reconstituting - Fostering reflection and listening

A key approach I found within reconstituting was the work done by strategic champions to create reflection and listening opportunities within the broader organisational community for the new master story to be adopted as part of the narrative infrastructure. In this way, strategic champions did not sensegive directly but rather created the conditions for sensemaking to occur, and for key actors within the organisational community to deepen their understanding of the issues relating to their areas of responsibility.

“I think there’s generally a fair amount of alignment but in much like in any company sometimes your timeframe gets focused into too short a space - like it’s very much like what is the next six monthly results or annual results. Whereas you know inherently from a sustainability perspective we’re trying to, we must push a little bit further ahead than that. And then even from a sustainability perspective, the Business Units sometimes get a bit fixated on their sort of scoring side and less worried about what they’re doing to kind of make sure from a long-term perspective they’re going to be able to meet targets. [...] The feedback we’ve had from Business Units is that they don’t often get an opportunity to kind of step out of their daily grind and look at, it’s like longer term issues or even cross functional issues that well. So, we had a workshop at the end of Jan to feature the Business Units with [an external facilitator] facilitating and they really enjoyed it. I thought the feedback was very interesting around that exact issue and I think that’s probably a reality for most people here,

myself included, you get very stuck in sorting out the next email or the next kind of presentation or report and not maybe really creating a space to think about new things.” (Strategic champion, RetailCo - RA4.1)

I found fostering a culture of active conversations across the organisation to be an important part of this listening and reflection work within reconstituting. Strategic champions were actively trying to foster a culture of conversations that would deepen engagement and understanding of key issues for the organisation. Allowing for failure and correction appeared to be a critical element of the conversational work in the reconstituting stage. Strategic champions across the firms would position the adoption of the new master story as a journey, which allowed for course correction and movement within the narrative infrastructure that it was building into.

“You play a longer term game and you must never be afraid of the things you don't absolutely know, because if you want things crossed all the i's, dotted all the t's, I don't think we're going to move anywhere. We work with the best shape and direction of things that we have. That is specifically why we chose the word journey, because there's not a destination. We're just going to have to keep going, because when we get there we've got to do some more, and thereafter we're going to keep going. Journey means we're going to make some mistakes. [...] Not having all the answers, all the time, and then making mistakes, and admitting to your mistakes, and then course correcting, and carrying on, and not being afraid of what you sometimes don't completely know. I suppose in these senior jobs, that's what you do all the time. You work with an enormous amount of complexity that isn't absolutely defined. You just have to have a sense that something there is going to ... That's how you go.” (National CEO, RetailCo - RA8.1)

Having a sufficiently simplified master story also supported the broad adopting and continuous development of the newly adopted narrative. For example, in RetailCo, members of the sustainability team felt that: “I think for us to have that brand around [the Way Forward] and to refer to all those different projects and programmes makes a lot easier” (Sustainability team member, RetailCo - RA1.2).

In NewInsure, having conversations around reconstituting the narrative infrastructure also included an openness from leadership to ensure that the organisational community could hold them to account on delivering on the espoused narrative infrastructure. In reflecting on

the principles and values that the organisation has committed to in the 'NewInsure Way', the CEO shared that they invite people to challenge leadership if they see inconsistent behaviour and that this challenging is "an important part of really making sure that it is fully adopted by the organisation" (CEO, NewInsure – FD2.1).

Strategic champions purposefully created opportunities for the organisation to pause and reflect on the newly adopted master story. They achieved this by actively fostering listening and dialogue sessions in both one on one conversations and small, convened groups, in which key decision-makers are often intentionally engaged. Strategic champions drew on their own listening and dialogue competences to execute this work, and at times even undertake to build these competences in others in order for them to better assimilate the emergent logic of the newly adopted master story. These discussions unfolded at the level of antenarratives, master stories and underlying logic simultaneously to support decision-makers in recognising that the principles that guide decision-making under the new master story are different to those of other, accepted master stories in the organisation. In this way, reflection, enabled by listening and dialogue, appeared to be a critical experience for decision-makers in an organisation to undergo if they are to not only adopt but also sustain the strategic change.

(d) Reconstituting - Forgetting the no-longer fit for purpose master stories

Whilst many of the companies I studied had achieved relative success in having a master story that spoke to social-ecological dependency accepted by the organisation, few were able to position the master story as overriding of other master stories that tended to prioritise short term financial profit maximisation. In a few examples, individuals within the organisation felt as though there were systems in place to actively discourage behaviours that contradicted with a sustainability master story (for example, in BankCo, the Head of Ethics expressed "We strictly deal with these things [unethical behaviour to achieve financial objectives], strictly." (Head of Ethics, BankCo - BA1.1), but these did not appear to fundamentally address the tensions of short term profit maximisation master stories.

A key challenge to reconstituting work was positioning the newly adopted master story as an organisational imperative, such that it could override other principles that guide decision-making when placed as a conflict between the two.

“I think there’s a kind of commitment and a vision to being leaders in sustainability but I don’t know if you get to the sort of challenge of sustainability versus big financial issue whether we’d be totally willing to try to change our business model to do that. I mean in smaller cases in less sort of financially critical cases it’s definitely happened and again in the last hour we’ve sort taken a product off the shelf or kind of cancelled orders where there’s been an Animal Welfare policy violation because and I mean the teams have done it willingly because then our reputation it’s, value wise it’s the right thing to do but it’s been fairly small financial commitments so far. I don’t know if it would be quite strong enough to say its transformational issues necessarily where we’re going next.”
(Strategic champion, RetailCo - RA4.1)

Most of the companies in this study were struggling to reconcile two accepted master stories within their narrative infrastructure to the extent that the social-ecological dependency master story could override an existing profit maximisation master story:

“To date, we haven’t completely owned it in terms of it being core to what we do. I’ve always asked the question of this, if you have business that comes your way and it’s not good and proper, will you walk away from it even if it makes sense in the bottom line? If you’re not prepared to walk away from it then you’re not clearly living the values of ensuring what’s good in the company. There’s a lot of work to be done. It’s a difficult environment. Typical structure of this nature, you have very strong numerical fields. We have lots of CAs, lots of activities that’s sits at the top of your organisation who when they see the model that makes sense in terms of numbers [...] but they can’t deal with these, what they call the softer issues, because they can’t see its direct impact and may not see it in their lifetime. It’s having those conversations and convincing people that they need to make that change.” (Strategic champion, InsureD – FC1.1)

My findings suggest that it is necessary to actively support the organisation in forgetting old master stories that may be competing with the newly accepted master stories. Competing master stories could co-exist within an organisation’s narrative infrastructure but decision-makers appeared to apply dominant master stories above others when two or more were experienced as opposing. Most commonly, organisations had clear master stories around

values based decision-making but the master story of profit maximisation is often 'stronger', leading to decisions being made that could be considered counter to the values being espoused.

The logic of social-ecological dependency requires fundamentally different decisions to be made to many of the business decisions made today under the logics of business independence from social-ecological systems and limitless growth. Work was therefore required not only to sustain the new master story, but also to position it as stronger and overriding of competing master stories that may co-exist in the organisation. This may require partial forgetting (Weber, 2005) or more specifically, managed unlearning (Holan & Phillips, 2004), yet my study revealed limited examples of active forgetting work by strategic champions and I propose this may be a necessary element for a strategic change initiative to endure. Anteby and Molnar (2012, p. 516) present that repeated forgetting is critical for enabling emergence and change of organisational identity and find that "forgetting is as integral to collective memory as remembering. In that sense, the question 'who we are' might be tightly linked to repeatedly remembering to forget 'who we were not'". I anticipate that what they define as preemptive neutralization, i.e. "the ongoing deliberate attempt to neutralize these contradictory aspects with valued identity cues" (Anteby & Molnar, 2012, p. 516), may form an element of this forgetting work but forgetting certain master stories may require institutional level identity work to truly address. I discuss this further in the final chapter in the section on futures research directions.

A review of reconstituting

Unsurprisingly, I found that strategic champions worked with others in the organisation to embed the now accepted master story into the formal and informal practices of the organisation. Akin to what Rouleau (2005) found middle managers undertaking with clients during a strategic change process, I found evidence of 'disciplining' – formal and informal – to embed the new master story into organisational practice and ensure that it endures over time. Also, unsurprisingly, I found that strategic champions and leadership would work to constantly remind the organisation of the master story and the broader narrative infrastructure to which it belonged.

An interesting outcome from the reconstituting process that I noticed in organisations where the new master story had been adopted and integrated through reconstituting is that leadership selection criteria began to self-select for leaders with a preference for the narrative infrastructure that now included a social-ecological dependency master story. In these instances, I found the leadership selection to be informal and led by values alignment, which I present as congruent with narrative infrastructure alignment.

“In our experience when we share what we're about and our value system and our core mission and purpose as a business and what we're trying to achieve, together with I think very often when you're talking of that senior position, people in the market know who we are and what we represent. Then people who don't really believe in that or don't really buy into that, they weed themselves out of the process because you know you're coming into a cultural environment where the things that you really value and the things that the shareholders really value are not the same. Even before we get to the point of saying what criteria are we looking for and so on, there's a natural sifting process.” (Chair, NewInsure - FD3.1)

This sentiment is echoed by the current CEO of RetailCo who saw the shared value system as informally informing the recruitment and selection of new leadership for the organisation:

“I think what happens is that any business in seeking to appoint a director looks to people who have the same shared values. When looking at those values, a commitment to the environment, a commitment to social responsibility, a commitment to business that understands its role; more broadly, I think has come through in the directors that we've ended up with. It's not formal. I think it comes through that value system.” (CEO, RetailCo - RA9.1)

The outcomes of the reconstituting stage were that the new master story was adopted and enacted as part of the narrative infrastructure that establishes a set of principles and norms that guide decision-making in the organisation. While adoption might mean that the new master story was included as part of the narrative infrastructure, it did not ensure that the master story was always chosen over other master stories that make up the narrative infrastructure when two are presented in conflict with each other.

(6) Revisiting the underlying structure

A further and noteworthy stage that I identified in the process of shaping narrative infrastructure is when the existing narrative infrastructure begins to be questioned as still fit for purpose. This revisiting stage can initiate a new process of shifting narrative infrastructure, so could equally be thought of as the first stage of shifting narrative infrastructure. Revisiting I define as the episodic work done by strategic champions to support the organisation in reviewing the relevance of their current narrative infrastructure.

Within the revisiting stage, I identified ongoing and opportunistic approaches to work undertaken by strategic champions. In ongoing revisiting work, strategic champions undertook continuous scanning and systems thinking, combined with trust building in the organisation, from which they initiated the intentional posing of questions and hosting of enquiring conversations, mostly during periods of stability. I found opportunistic approaches when strategic champions leveraged a crisis or window of opportunity to initiate questioning.

(a) Revisiting - Ongoing questioning

I found that strategic champions were constantly scanning their environment, not only to inform the work they undertook in other stages to shape narrative infrastructure, but also to question the assumptions underlying their own understanding of how their organisation's context operates. For example, in BankCo, the Head of Ethics explained how she tried to make sense of the conditions that led to labour unrest in the mining sector. She then interrogated how this related to their own business practices, by trying to understand the risk and implications.

"We've looked at all the human rights abuses that happened over the year. We especially look at these mining strikes. We came to the conclusion that employee indebtedness is causing a whole lot of problems. If you go and have a look at employee indebtedness of any company or organisation and you say, "Okay, where does it come from?" the first thing is organisations do not display enough ethical leadership to actually pay their employees a living wage. What we then decided is we are going to develop a framework for the management of employee indebtedness for business in South Africa, but what we are also going

to do is we are going to take it a step back and we're going to link it to ethical leadership and sustainability, link that back to that. Then also giving them the tools to assist their employees in managing their finances better, but also taking on an activist role and telling these companies, 'Hey, without your employees you don't do anything, you don't create anything.' What most businesses forget, and this is my philosophy, is that we are not in the business of making money. There's something fundamental that happens in the correct way before we make money. That little thing is called trust. If you don't have trust with your investors, your shareholders, your clients, then they will not give you money to make money with or they will not support you by buying your products. How do you create that trust? That trust begins when your employees trust you." (Head of Ethics, BankCo - BA1.1)

This example illustrates the complexities being factored into the scanning and systems thinking undertaken by a strategic champion when faced with a perceived risk to the organisation – and how they related to principles that guide decision-making for the organisation. Another example is the early scanning and systems thinking work that led InsureCo to engage in transformative partnerships with local government to address systemic risks:

"It's about listening to the quiet voices. What are the issues that we are hearing and from whom and what are the weak signals that are at the outer cycles of our business? We know, this has coming on for a long time, that municipalities are failing. Government is not doing what they should be doing but we've consistently said business of business is to business and government is to govern. Eden didn't happen overnight - we knew over time that there are certain hot spots in South Africa where we are highly exposed. Climate change was just a buzz word but we see those signals coming much more vivid and much more bright and now we realise but wait a minute we'd better give attention to these signals." (Head of stakeholder engagement, InsureCo – FA2.1)

Leaders also referred to the skills of strategic champions to be able to undertake this work – they recognised the need for strategic champions who can scan the environment and make sense of the connections between the signals. Drawing on the analogy of how those who can notice the birds that take flight before a tsunami, one senior executive shared that "you don't pick up those signals if you've been brought up in a certain way or trained in a certain

way” and that we need more “ears and eyes to say, actually, society is changing” (Board member, InsureD - FC2.1).

I identified that strategic champions would enlist the participation of a broad range of important stakeholders in this collective questioning processes during stable periods. Many of the strategic champions that I interviewed discussed how they were trying to figure out how to truly listen to stakeholders and bring them into the collective questioning processes.

“We need to bring our suppliers, our customers, community, government officials into an environment where we can learn to give. What I'm hoping will happen is that we can all form a leadership development perspective, especially on the concept of sustainability, that we provide opportunities for our stakeholders to join us on the learning journey, to bring that, so we can hear the voices of our stakeholders, and as we learn around systems thinking, whatever the curriculum is going to be, that the audience sitting together are very different. That would tell me that we are a sustainable bank from a leadership perspective.” (Development Manager, BankCo - BA3.1)

Strategic champions also acknowledged that this is “a scary place for businesses because you're moving away outside your frame of control” (Strategic champion, RetailCo - RA4.3) but that it is necessary to navigate the complexity of shared challenges and thereby ensure the viability of the business going forward.

Some of the firms in this study only revisited their current narrative infrastructure to the extent that it could continue to protect the firm’s licence to operate and sustain the current business model. I found evidence of this way of thinking in Bankers:

“Bankers is old and we've been around for a hell of a long time and our intention is to be around for a hell of a long time further. To do that successfully we feel we do have to understand these trends, we need to respond to them intelligently. Two examples, both strictly commercial. South Africa's energy's use... We want to part of the funding of both the clean energy and the dirty energy and we will be happy to defend both of those decisions on the grounds of long term sustainability. I won't offer you the propaganda but I can if you insist.” (Strategic champion, Bankers – BB2.1)

I found several instances in companies where the revisiting would begin to bring the organisation’s core purpose into question as well. At times, there was a CEO who has a

strong vision of a sustainable future and / or the organisation's core social purpose. In the case where leaders' decision-making is "based in a value system and a deep down desire to try to leave the world in a slightly better place than we find it in" (Chair, NewInsure - FD3.1), fundamental change was believed to be possible. Many noted that in the absence of these convictions, the change will be "in the interest of business efficiency and cost savings", and always "quite superficial" (Chair, NewInsure - FD3.1). Also, strategic champions often identified when leadership failed to articulate the organisation's purpose and I noticed that this gave rise to an underlying tension for the organisation.

"The issue around purpose it is something that we haven't clarified [for ourselves]. We brand and, I almost can say, we dabbled with the concept and we ran back to our corners because we realised that it will have significant impact on a variety of issues because at the moment it's looks like purpose and profit cannot sit together because if you talk about purpose it would have to change the business model fundamentally. It's how we reward our people, it is the things that we hold up as a sacrosanct." (Head of Stakeholder Engagement, InsureCo – FA2.1)

A strategic champion in the same organisation shared her work to begin to question the purpose of the organisation:

"Part of this whole conversation is about who we are, so over the last year a lot of the conversation [has been on this] and it's been really difficult. People think you're woolly and conceptual and what the hell are you asking all these things about because it's not business. It's not what's done - it's weird and whoo hoo. Why do you want to talk about those kinds of things? But just recently we had our Management Conference two weeks ago and [our CEO] purposely said 'we must put something in about purpose', which has always been there. The way I see our role it's a little bit like being a coach where you hold spaces for things and you ask probing questions and then the organisation responds because you can't make them do things they don't want to do, they'll just ignore you" (Strategic champion, InsureCo – FA1.1)

In initiating a revisiting process, strategic champions had to read both the organisational landscape and timing and the mind-set of the leaders. A senior executive in InsureCo shared that strategic champions need to understand "where the mind-set is at and where the psyche is at because then, I think it helps you understand how to paint that final destination

picture for them; that it resonates with where they are at.” (Executive director, InsureCo - FA7.2). This can be difficult when there is a lack of organisational readiness to question the existing narrative infrastructure – especially when key decision-makers in the organisation do not recognise the need to change: “It’s very hard to do it when your organisation’s doing so well eventually and people don’t see an imperative for change” (Strategic champion, InsureD – FC1.1). Strategic champions and leaders both reflected that in the absence of a burning platform and / or leadership that had a values alignment with the proposed shifting of narrative infrastructure, it can be almost insurmountable to initiate a revisiting of the existing narrative infrastructure:

“In the case of an industry like the industries where it’s not directly relevant I presume. The directly relevant businesses I think it should get attention before you get the burning platform because it’s probably the CEO’s job to prepare for the future and these things I think this is going affect us. This cost of energy is going to affect their monies.” (Board member, InsureCo – FA10.1)

(b) Revisiting - Opportunistic questioning

I identified opportunistic questioning when a crisis or external event would present a window of opportunity that strategic champions could leverage to direct the organisation to revisit the relevance of the existing narrative infrastructure. For instance, BankCo still refers to how going through a period of financial crisis led them to “the realization that certain things had to fundamentally change” and that they had to “become a bank for all.” (Head of Ethics, BankCo - BA1.1). Internal organisational crisis was leveraged by the CEO at the time to shape the narrative infrastructure for the organisation going forward.

For InsureCo, crisis took the form of intense weather events that led to large claims back after back. An executive leader in the organisation reflects how the ground work had already been laid by strategic champions who had foreseen the risks and argued for shift in narrative infrastructure that would accommodate these sustainability challenges, but the window of opportunity presented by the crisis sharpened the organisation’s attention:

“And all the preparation work you've done can then be translated into action. One always, one often gets despondent about all the work that gets done that doesn't lead to tangible outcomes, but it's often that you just need to be ready

for when the crisis hits. Unfortunately, in South Africa, it's probably applicable around the world, prioritization of things often doesn't happen until a crisis does hit, or some form of crisis." (Executive director, InsureCo - FA7.2)

An example of another strategy window was the restructuring of Belnsure and the subsequent strategy process that followed. The organisation had recently gone through a merger and was reviewing its strategy, brand and culture as a result. When external consultants presented a language around 'shared value' that resonated with leadership at the time, it presented the strategic champion and head of sustainability for the company with a previously unavailable opportunity to advance a new master story within the organisation:

"I've been doing this for a long time and we just never got traction and we never got behind and there wasn't understanding. I think what did shift things quite a lot was the whole change of the operating model and the consultants there were working who were pushing the whole shared value thing anyway. [...] They were using the word shared value and there was a whole discussion around shared value. There was, apparently, quite a lot of discussion [...] It was a very different way of thinking. [...] I think it was just that process where the business and sustainability shifted at the same time." (Strategic champion, Belnsure - FB1.1)

A review of revisiting

Across the companies, I identified various challenges to initiating revisiting. A consistent challenge was immediacy of business demands which makes it challenging for individuals to "step out of that whole space and [think] of future issues" (Strategic champion, RetailCo - RA4.1). Another challenge was overcoming a mindset that compliance with regulation and / or organisational targets was sufficient and it was therefore not necessary to question whether the approach, actions and even narrative infrastructure of the organisation was appropriate. Mindsets became locked into short time frames and deliverables on targets, at the cost of forward thinking and revisiting the underlying assumptions informing the targets:

"Your timeframe gets sort of focused into too short a space like it's very much like 'what is the next kind of 6 monthly results or kind of annual results?'. Whereas you know inherently from a sustainability perspective we're trying to, we must push a little bit further ahead than that. And then even from a sustainability perspective, the Business Units sometimes get a bit fixated on their

sort of scoring side and less kind of worried about what they're doing to make sure from a long term perspective they're going to be able to meet targets." (Strategic champion, RetailCo - RA4.1)

The outcomes of the successful revisiting work were that the organisation began the work, supported in part by strategic champions, of shifting its narrative infrastructure to accommodate new principles to guide decision-making.

Sensegiving by strategic champions

Across the stages, I found that the work of strategic champions was to sensegive the new master story to both leadership and the organisation, and to influence the sensemaking of others, mostly leadership, to adopt the new master story as part of the organisation's narrative infrastructure. My findings align with prior research from Rouleau and Balogun (2011) who identified two discursive competencies of middle managers seeking to influence strategic sensemaking – namely 'performing the conversation' and 'setting the scene'.

Performing the conversation recognises that strategic champions purposefully engage in formal and informal conversations with a wide variety other organisational stakeholders to draw them into their agenda. The strategic champions in this setting similarly noted that it was often through one on one conversations that they could influence other organisational members. Group conversations were also initiated and facilitated to advance the adoption of a new master story.

Setting the scene involves setting up the context, background and opportunity for the conversation to be performed. Akin to what Howard-Grenville (2007) identified as resourcing in issue-selling work, my analysis found that strategic champions undertaking narrative-building work drew on a broad repertoire of organisational resources to give meaning to the new master story (Sonenshein, 2006). Strategic champions would 'set the scene' for shaping the narrative infrastructure of the organisation by drawing on historical and current master stories as well as the current internal and external operating context to establish context and background. Strategic champions would establish opportunity by both convening conversations and co-crafting boundary objects. Yet, my analysis also revealed

how strategic champions set the scene for conversations in which they did not always participate directly.

Invoking personal resonance

The sensegiving that I observed strategic champions perform had identifiable characteristics, which I found to be more relational and personal than one might anticipate. Their sensegiving was largely discursive and they often employed storytelling to foster the personal resonance of others. This was typically balanced though with data that created proof points to build the credibility of their stories as well.

“Stories enable you to make something real... and people respond to reality [...]. With the information age and the mass of stuff that gets bombarded with [...], people are selective about what they pay attention to. [...] They do relate to stories because stories give you [...] a consistent hold that makes sense. This is something that I can connect with [...], potentially, make a difference and even drawn to stories because of the way that stories make you feel. There's context, there's, it's not just a set of dry points that are being rattled off [...] It's all secret to a good presentation. People sit up and listen when you say the same thing in the context of a story, when they're anecdotes” (Executive director, InsureCo - FA7.2)

I found that strategic champions employed specific tactics to foster personal resonance through shared views and experiences. Consistently across all the organisations I studied, I found that introducing new information across the stages was more successful when strategic champions undertook this work through one on one conversations.

“One by one talks are ten times more work but if you take them through, and say ‘Okay, when I look at you, you are more concerned about animal welfare or you are more concerned about water or energy’, and you start from what you learn” (Earlier strategic champion, RetailCo – RA3.1).

Finding “the things that you know are shared” (Strategic champion, InsureD – FC1.1) or “a touch point with what they're looking at on a day-to-day basis and then you try to expand that” (Executive director, InsureD – FC2.1) was found to be important for two reasons. Firstly, to find a point of personal resonance and secondly to create greater certainty than trying to connect an individual to complex and uncertain projections of the future. In dealing

with issues that are far removed from many individual's daily realities, strategic champions recognise that "people feel they can't do anything about it" and therefore "you have to give people something where they can make a difference" as there is no point revealing that problem to somebody if you don't actually give them any means by which they can actually tackle the problem, unless they're true believers" (Executive director, InsureD – FC2.1).

Holstein and colleagues (2016) show how leaders appeal to emotions of fear and hope in combination with societal values in their sensegiving work to navigate a strategic change in narrative infrastructure. I found that strategic champions did not undertake organisational level work to invoke personal resonance but rather identified individual level points of interest as the starting point for invoking personal resonance with key decision-makers in the organisation. Previous work on issue-selling suggests that personal resonance leaves the issue to be perceived as a personal championing issue (Bansal, 2003). My findings suggest that personal resonance with the proposed master story was important for leaders to overcome the uncertainty associated with adopting a new master story. While business case development supports the logical and rational integration of a new master story, further commitment is required from executive leaders to invest in the additional work of adopting and sensegiving this new master story to the organisation.

Pragmatic action

Across all the stages, I found that strategic champions also had to be especially cognisant of organisational climate and timing in their sensegiving work.

"I have over the years suggested that our employee share interest scheme should go much further down the organisation [...], I can see why we don't give every employee shares, it's a very expensive and a lot of employees, especially unionized employees have both practical and ideological objections to it, but it strikes me as we're going to have a more inclusive form of capitalism. [...] I've lobbied the CEO and the answer that I've always received is, we're not ready. [...] Ideological timing is not ready. It's not necessarily a big impact on the bottom line. [...] It might be, but we've got a lot of expensive things. [...] When people at Bankers started agitating about global warming to the then CEO, somehow the main floor atmosphere was receptive. It might have been because

he could see the regulatory train coming.” (Company Secretary, Bankers – BB2.1)

I found strategic champions to be purposeful in their sensegiving to others and undertook work to enlist others to join in the journey to shape narrative infrastructure. One strategic champion shared her tactics for influencing others to accept the new master story she was shaping for the organisation: “When you finally get to what you’re about to share, they’re almost so far down in this part how you guys would be used that they can’t help but agree with the end result” (Strategic champion, Financial services – FA12.1). Strategic champions recognised that “it’s very difficult to get called into a conversation and say to people, ‘You’ve got to change’” (Strategic champion, InsureD – FC1.1).

I further found that strategic champions were able to balance passion with pragmatism in their sensegiving work. I found that shifting the course of an organisation did not happen through one major intervention alone but rather through a series of “small corrections” taking place often at the same time and over extended periods of time (Executive leader, InsureCo – FA13.10).

“We are faced, every day of our lives in Joburg, with awfulness. Children begging in the streets. [...] I'm living this life where I drive around ... actually I don't drive around in an expensive car, but I could theoretically drive around in an expensive car, live a very, very first world life and ignore the beggars on the way to the country club, which by the way I do actually do this today. It hurts, how do you deal with that thing? By keeping on trying and by not expecting too much. That revolutionary impulse is probably attractive in young people, but you have to get over it and realize that if you keep on that way, you're going to get nowhere, antagonize people, and burn yourself out. It's always about the small, possible thing.” (Strategic champion, Bankers – BB2.1)

Strategic champions employed a pragmatism to their influencing work, which informed how they approached conversations. These findings are congruent with a pragmatist theory of action which recognises that “means and ends are not always clearly determined prior to action” (Ferraro et al., 2015, p. 7) and that strategic champions can be thought of as active experimenters who undertake robust actions to pragmatically tackle grand challenges. Robust action is defined as “action that accomplishes short-term objectives while preserving

long-term flexibility" (Eccles & Nohria, 1992, p. 11). Characteristics of active experimenters have been identified to include "acting without certitude; constantly preserving flexibility; being politically savvy; having a keen sense of timing; judging the situation at hand; using rhetoric effectively; and working multiple agendas" (Ferraro et al., 2015, p. 9). I found that strategic champions employed these principles in their shifting of narrative infrastructure to effect strategic change.

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The goal of my study was to understand how strategic champions effect strategic change through their sensegiving efforts to shift an organisation's narrative infrastructure. Following a grounded approach, I developed a model of how strategic champions undertake narrative work to shift narrative infrastructure. This section discusses these findings, outlining my contributions to narrative infrastructure and how it can be shaped by strategic champions over time. I then explore the practical implications of my study for strategic champions seeking to support leadership in effecting strategic change and introduce the logic of socio-ecological dependency to organisational decision-making. I conclude this section with the limitations of this study.

5.2 Narrative infrastructure: extending the metaphor

While prior work establishes that multiple strategic narratives (Barry & Elmes, 1997) may co-exist and are often competing in their struggle for dominance in the organisation (Jarzabkowski & Sillince, 2007) less is known about how multiple master stories come together over time to form an enduring framework of guidance that informs organisational members' decision-making. Research to date has depicted narrative infrastructure as a set of rails, established by leadership, that guides organisational decision-making (Deuten & Rip, 2000; Fenton & Langley, 2011; Llewellyn, 2001). Yet, this metaphor may overly constrain our understanding of *how* narrative guides and constrains the strategies, decisions and actions of organisational members over time. The metaphor of rails also yields little insight into how narrative infrastructure is constructed, and reconstructed, over time. I expand on Deuten and Rip's (2000) metaphor of the rails that guide decision-making by suggesting that narrative infrastructure may be better conceptualised as an ongoing process of rail network building.

As depicted in Figure 6 below, Deuten and Rip (2000) outline a process in which pieces or fragments of a story (what Boje (2001) calls antenarrative) give rise to a 'master story', which

they conceptualize as narrative infrastructure - a set of rails that guide decision-making in the organisation. Yet, in examining the narrative infrastructure of the companies in this study, it was difficult to identify a single driving 'master story'. Instead, organisations drew upon antenarratives (Boje, 2001) grouping them into three to five master stories (such as *profit maximisation, environmental stewardship or partnerships for the long term*) that were drawn upon in different ways and with different degrees of emphasis, depending on the circumstance. Thus, as depicted below in Figure 6, I propose that narrative infrastructure may be better depicted as a network made up of several master stories connected directly or through antenarratives that, together, guide decision-making within the organisation.

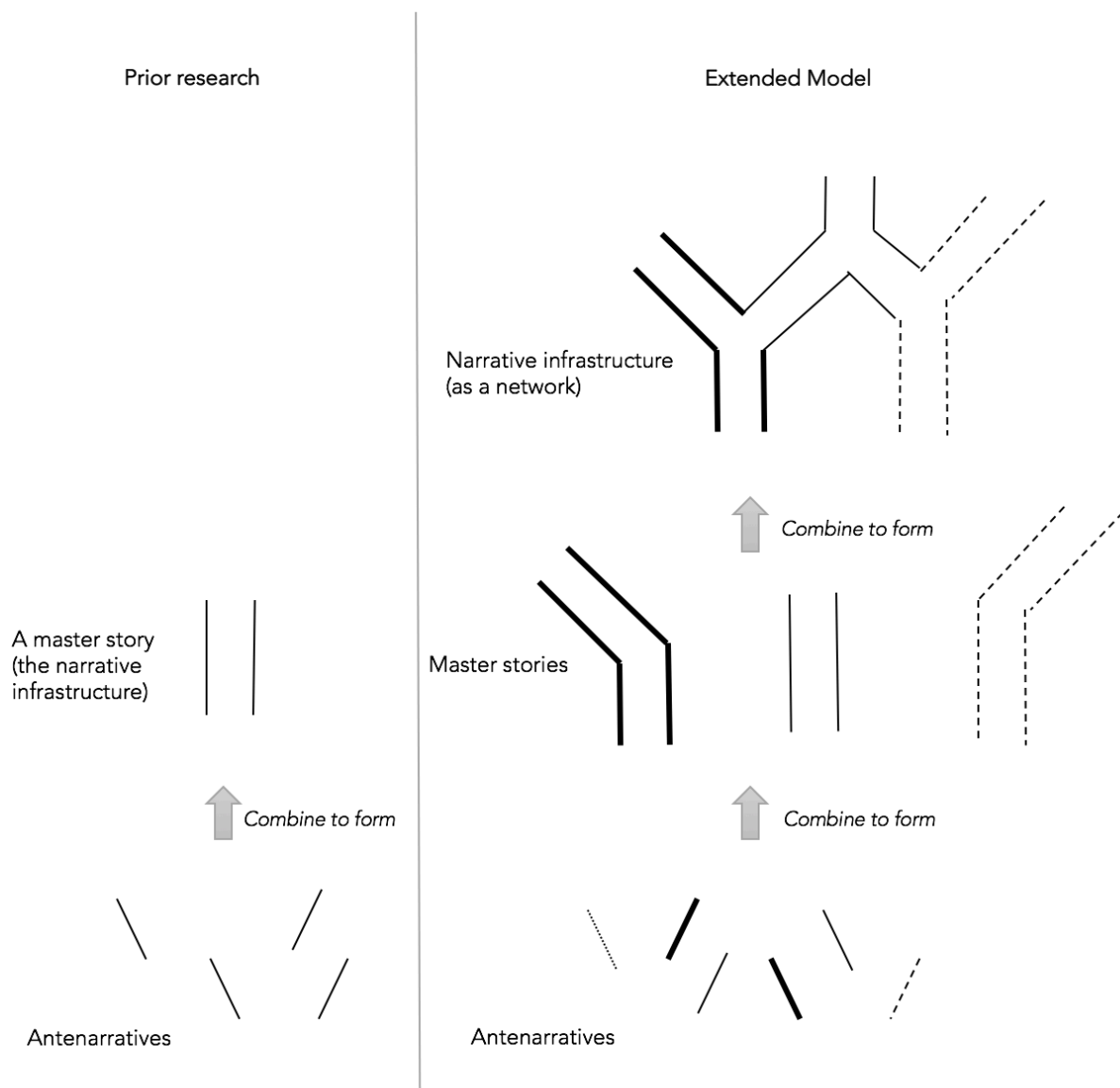


Figure 6: An extended model of narrative infrastructure

This definition of narrative infrastructure accommodates prior work that acknowledges the existence of alternative accounts and counter-stories, which continuously challenge the accepted master stories of the organisation (Boje, 1995, 2008; Vaara & Tienari, 2011). Prior research establishes that some of these antenarratives lead to the adjustment of accepted master stories while other antenarratives simply co-exist in parallel (Fenton & Langley, 2011). The extended model of narrative infrastructure that I present in Figure 6 highlights the presence of antenarratives, not all of which are taken up as part of the narrative infrastructure. Viewed as an evolving framework and not as a static object, this extended model of narrative infrastructure accommodates the potential, and therefore the importance, of antenarratives in shaping organisational narrative infrastructure and, as a result, organisational action.

As outlined in my findings, organisations developed multiple master stories that I found to be underpinned by different organisational or institutional logics. For instance, a master story at RetailCo about *partnerships for the long term* was underpinned by the experience that building trusting, longer term partnerships in their supply chain was in the best interests of the organisation and may call for short term investments to reap longer term value. In this case, several antenarratives about particular partnerships combined to form a master story about how the company commits to deep engagements with partners over the long term. I found that this master story was unique to the organisational context and history of the organisation, and propose that this gave rise to an organisational logic that is not easily replicated in other organisations or derived from a clearly identifiable and prevalent institutional logic. Whereas, in the same company, the master story of *profit maximisation* was underpinned by the institutional logic of maximising wealth for shareholders as the primary obligation of the firm. Thus, different master stories can be anchored in or underpinned by different organisational and institutional logics.

My findings show that different master stories can co-exist, sometimes comfortably, sometimes uncomfortably, creating the opportunity for both alignments and contradictions in their prescriptions for organisational action. Some decisions may comfortably align with one or more of the master stories, causing alignment in their prescriptions for organisational action. Other decisions may favour one master story over another, or even in place one

master story in contradiction to another, giving rise to conflicting prescriptions for action. Viewing narrative infrastructure as the composite of master stories (which may contain both aligning and contradicting prescriptions for organisational action) is reflective of a movement towards recognising the plurality and complexity of institutional logics (Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011).

Viewing narrative infrastructure as a network of co-existing master stories also suggests that an organisation's incorporation of emerging logics (Bertels & Lawrence, 2016), such as the logic of socio-ecological dependency studied here, is likely to necessitate concerted work to construct narrative infrastructure that addresses existing master stories with contradictory prescriptions for action. Where an existing master story presents misaligned prescriptions for action with a new master story, this may require bridging and shifting of the existing master story within the narrative infrastructure. For example, a master story of *profit maximisation* is often incompatible with a master story of *socio-ecological dependency* when profits are measured by quarterly returns, given the longer return periods associated with most social-ecologically oriented decisions. Shifting the master story of *profit maximisation* to include a longer-term view on return on investment does not negate the *profit maximisation master story* but makes provision for the master story of *socio-ecological dependency* to be accommodated as part of the organisation's narrative infrastructure. Where an existing master story presents antithetical prescriptions for action with a new master story, this may require narrative work (Phillips & Lawrence, 2012) to abandon and replace the existing master story. For example, a master story of *high executive remuneration* may not hold under conditions of increasing social inequality, combined with shifting stakeholder (and even shareholder) expectations and demands.

While this study intentionally focuses on the role of strategic champions to shift narrative infrastructure in order to effect strategic change, an understanding of how narrative infrastructure is shaped may offer insights into other organisational phenomena such as organisational change, culture, and identity given the extent to which these are shaped by, and shape, organisational narratives (Vaara et al., 2016). Building on the notion that narrative infrastructure is established through "the interaction of multiple levels of storytelling among different people at different times" (Fenton & Langley, 2011, p. 1185),

viewing narrative infrastructure as an ongoing process of rail network building offers the insight that multiple organisational actors have an important role to play in the construction, uptake and decommissioning of this network of multiple antenarratives and master stories in the organisation. Prior research has explored how leader sensegiving draws on and shapes organisational culture (including artefacts such as stories) in a dynamic interplay with organisational identity under conditions of environmental changes (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006), and this research suggests that the role of others than leaders should be considered in studying how organisations respond to shifting contexts. Organisational change scholars and practitioners should therefore pay attention to the multiple narrative components that make up an organisation's narrative infrastructure and to the role of others beyond leaders in not just responding to leader sensegiving of organisational change (Balogun, 2003; Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Westley, 1990), but also the agentic potential of other organisational actors within polyphonic organisations (Brown & Thompson, 2013). This suggests that it is not just leaders who 'tell the organisation forward', and that a framework emerges over time - made up of multiple narrative components which draw on the voices of the organisation as a whole – which acts to guide and constrain organisational decision-making as well as culture, identity, and the potential for change.

In conclusion, the metaphor of a rail network offers a rich metaphor through which to understand how narrative can guide and constrain organisational decision-making, and action more broadly, and the role of multiple organisational actors in building, using and maintaining this network.

5.3 Strategic champions and the sensegiving of strategic change

My extended model of narrative infrastructure has implications for how some organisational members - especially leaders and strategic champions - purposefully shift this narrative infrastructure. Focusing on strategic champions, I have identified a six-stage model of how they do so, presented here through the metaphor of narrative infrastructure as a rail network:

- i. Prompting: positioning the right information for leaders to recognise that a new line

- (master story) may need to be added on to the existing network
- ii. Enrolling: creating the conditions in which leadership can discuss, understand and agree to building on this new line (master story)
 - iii. Underpinning: supporting leadership in communicating the message out that a new line (master story) is being built and creating supporting measurement systems that plot how this will be achieved, signalling that this is a strategic shift for the company
 - iv. Reinforcing: communicating back to leadership that the organisational community are using and value the new line (master story), thereby legitimating the decision to expand into this direction
 - v. Reconstituting: ensuring that the new line (master story) is fully integrated into the rail network, which includes continuously working to position the new line as the preferred line of use and decommissioning old lines that are no longer fit for purpose and
 - vi. Revisiting: looking ahead to new territories (strategic challenges) and interrogating whether old lines (master stories) are still fit for purpose

I next turn to the role of strategic champions in shaping narrative infrastructure and my contributions to sensegiving for strategic change. Prior research on sensegiving in strategic processes has predominantly focused on organisational leadership (Bartunek et al., 1999; Fiss & Zajac, 2006; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996), whereas, less is understood about the role of other organisational actors such as strategic champions. Leaders are recognised as key actors who engage in sensemaking to “connect cues and frames to create an account of what is going on” (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010, p. 552) and sensegive by “articulating the need for, and intended nature of the impending change” (Gioia et al., 1994, pp. 363–364). While leadership is certainly a key strategic actor, Gioia and Chittipeddi’s (1991) model focuses exclusively on leadership, leaving open the possibility that others may play a role in effecting strategic change. It has been recognised that politically-able middle managers (or strategic champions) are influential in strategic change processes, yet the focus of prior research has largely been limited to their responses to strategic change (Balogun, 2003; Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Maitlis, 2005; Rouleau, 2005; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Westley, 1990). Consequently, we are left with a limited

understanding of who sensegives strategic change beyond leadership, and how they do this.

Strategic decision-making is broadly acknowledged to be guided and constrained by the narratives of an organisation (Balogun et al., 2014; Hendry, 2000; Mantere, 2014; Vaara, 2010), with narrative infrastructure recognised for setting a “discourse of direction” to orientate the organisation in its context, and its members in their response (Fenton & Langley, 2011; Holstein et al., 2016). Shaping narrative infrastructure in turn effects strategic change, in that the principles that guide organisational decision-making are being shifted. Yet, we know relatively little about how this is achieved beyond the work of leaders who sensegive strategic change to the organisation.

My dissertation responds to a call to understand how narrative infrastructure is shaped (Fenton & Langley, 2011), by examining the work of strategic champions to support leadership in this strategic change process. This study enriches our understanding of the sensegiving and sensemaking of leadership in the initiation and adoption of strategic change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), as illustrated in Figure 7 below. The sub-sections that follow outline my contributions to understanding of the work of strategic champions to support leadership in prompting, initiating, and revisiting a strategic change in the narrative infrastructure of an organisation.

I structure my discussion in this section according to the broad categories of *prompting* a new master story, *initiating* a shift in narrative infrastructure (encompassing *enrolling*, *underpinning* and *reinforcing* stages of work) and *revisiting*. I do not pay further attention in my discussion to the *reconstituting* stage of work identified in my process model as my findings support what prior research has identified as work to embed organisational change.

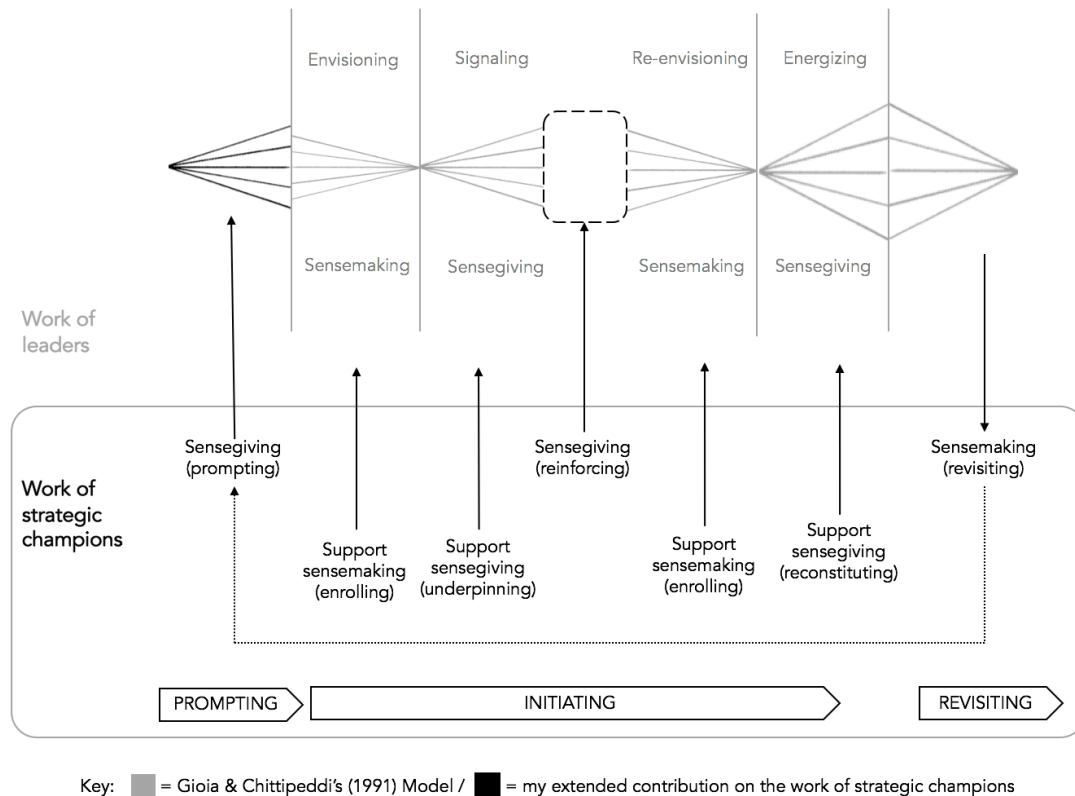


Figure 7: Extending Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991) model: The work of strategic champions in strategic change

5.3.1 Prompting a new master story

The first stage of Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991) model depicts a cognitive process of shaping understanding called 'envisioning' in which leaders initiate strategic change by sensemaking both the need for and the context of such change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia et al., 1994). However, my cases reveal that strategic champions *also* play an important role in the initiation of strategic change by providing leaders with the necessary cues and frames for them to be able to make sense of the strategic change and may even be the ones to identify the need for strategic change in the first place. I refer to this work as *prompting*, which I define as framing a new master story as relevant for leadership's consideration in their strategic processes. Thus, in Figure 7 above, I depict the prompting work of strategic champions as preceding the envisioning work of leaders.

In reflecting on the prompting work of strategic champions and its role in shaping narrative infrastructure, we know that there are a range of tactics that strategic champions might draw upon to bring strategic issues to the attention of leadership (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). For instance, from research on issue selling we would expect to see strategic champions engage in packaging (including attachment to valued goals), involvement, and timing (Dutton et al., 2001). In particular, using a 'business case' packaging has been shown to be effective by aligning with the dominant economic logic prevailing in many organisations (Dutton et al., 2001; Sonenshein, 2012). While prior work on issue selling helps clarify how to introduce and attach new issues to an organisation's existing narrative infrastructure (Ashford et al., 1998; Bansal, 2003; Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Sonenshein, 2006, 2012), it does not address how to shift the narrative infrastructure itself. Although strategic champions in this study did engage in what have been previously described as issue-selling tactics, attaching issues to the accepted 'valued goals' (or master stories) that form part of the existing narrative infrastructure of the organisation (Dutton et al., 2001), they also undertook *additional* work to extend the current narrative infrastructure by prompting leaders to incorporate a *new* master story into the organisation's narrative infrastructure through two key forms of work: naturalising and contextualising, as described in my findings and illustrated earlier in Figure 5.

The first of these forms of work, naturalising, references what Douglas (1986) calls "naturalising analogies" whereby strategic champions connect the new master story to the accepted narrative infrastructure by drawing upon the language of an existing master story. Cornelissen and colleagues (2011) theorise that analogical comparisons are more likely to be effective for advancing additive changes that are contiguous with past, established practices while metaphorical comparisons are more likely to be effective for substitutive changes that require a break from the past. Yet, the strategic champions studied here drew predominantly on analogical comparisons in their efforts to convince leaders to consider substitutive change in the organisation's narrative infrastructure. For example, strategic champions would consistently reference accepted master stories through their naturalising work and even when they prompted through contextualising, they would draw on references from other organisations to show how the proposed change is 'safe' to follow.

By their nature, interlaced stories make wholesale shifts unlikely and thus call for substitutive and iterative change efforts. I found that it is the networked and enduring nature of narrative infrastructure that calls for a staged transition whereby substitutive changes are more successfully navigated when they can be shown to be congruent with the accepted master stories of the organisation. I also suspect that it's the limited formal authority that strategic champions hold for the strategy process of the organisation that means they do not have the position to make formal changes and therefore adopt a subtler approach to shifting (rather than overthrowing, which a leader may be able to do).

Holstein and colleagues (2016) studied how strategy is formed as an intertextual narrative in higher education institutions, and found that competing narratives are accommodated through appeals to emotion and values. Re-interpreting their findings, it may not have been the uniqueness of their study context (i.e., higher education institutions) which they argued resulted in "on-going interaction between historical and new narratives that gives the content of strategy its essential voice" (Holstein et al., 2016, p. 1). Rather, new strategies appear to be more easily adopted by organisations when shifting intertextual narratives (or narrative infrastructure) can hold sufficient congruency between accepted and new master stories, even when these are perceived to be competing or substitutive. Thus, strategic change in narrative infrastructure is likely to be more acceptable to leaders when strategic champions can present antenarratives that bridge new master stories with accepted master stories. They argued that the "maintenance of strategic direction requires hope and a synthesis of societal values that maintains access to the past, the future, and multiple narrators" (Holstein et al., 2016, p. 1). A narrative infrastructure perspective would present that hope, in this context, was simply an antenarrative that was able to bridge the old and the new master stories and could have, in another context, been replaced with another antenarrative.

The second form of work performed by strategic champions in prompting leaders to incorporate a new master story into the organisation's narrative infrastructure is contextualising - whereby antenarratives are drawn on to connect the proposed new master story with the organisation's broader strategic context. Strategic champions work to support leadership in making sense of complex current and future scenarios unfolding in the

organisation's operating context by providing key antenarratives that illustrate the strategic relevance of the emergent logic underpinning the proposed new master story. Deuten and Rip (2000) recognise that 'start-out stories' told by leaders are essential in the early phases of shaping narrative infrastructure, and these start-out stories are "made robust through linkages with scientific, technical, economic and strategic elements" (Deuten & Rip, 2000, p. 76). I found that the work of strategic champions is not to tell the 'start-out story' themselves, but rather to provide key antenarratives that support leaders in making sense of their own reality and lead them to generate their own insights, fostering a sense of ownership over the new master story.

For example, in retelling the origins of the Way Forward at RetailCo, the previous CEO refers to his watershed experiences and how this led to what the organisation recognises as a master story on sustainability. In interviewing the strategic champion at the time of the initiation of their sustainability work, he reflected that there was lower awareness of these issues with leadership and it took sustained work to present the need for change, proposals for change and case studies of success, before the new master story started gaining traction.

Thus, we see how strategic champions - who hold limited formal authority for guiding strategic processes - prompt leaders with the frames and cues to initiate strategic change through a combination of providing antenarratives, including fragments of a start-out story and naturalising work that frames a new master story as congruent with existing master stories. Successfully prompting leaders to consider the new master story allows strategic champions to build further understanding and legitimacy for the master story to be incorporated into the narrative infrastructure of the organisation.

5.3.2 Initiating a shift in narrative infrastructure

Our understanding of how strategic change is initiated has largely focussed on the role of leaders as sensemakers and sensegivers (Bartunek et al., 1999; Corley & Gioia, 2004; Fiss & Zajac, 2006; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), with the role of storytelling and narrative identified in this process (Dunford & Jones, 2000; Snell, 2002). From previous studies, we would

expect to see leaders undertaking a process of identifying the need for strategic change (sensemaking) and communicating the strategic change to the organisation (sensegiving), ideally resulting in adoption of the strategic change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

However, as depicted in Figure 7 above and outlined in more detail in Figure 8 below, this study reveals that strategic champions undertake work to support leaders in the initiation of strategic change. Strategic champions help leaders to understand the proposed master story, to see it as legitimate and to enrol it into their strategic process. They then further support leaders as they begin to sensegive the new master story to the organisation, underpinning it by helping formalise the message into the organisation. Additionally, strategic champions work to selectively retell the uptake of the master story by the organisation back to leaders to reinforce leaders' adoption of the master story. This appears to be an iterative process that repeats until the new master story becomes taken for granted. In this section, I discuss the accomplishments underlying strategic champions' work to support leaders in owning, understanding and legitimising the new master story. Strategic champions achieve this by (i) fostering extended provisionality; (ii) co-creating boundary objects; (iii) leveraging trust; and (iv) drawing on organisational polyphony.

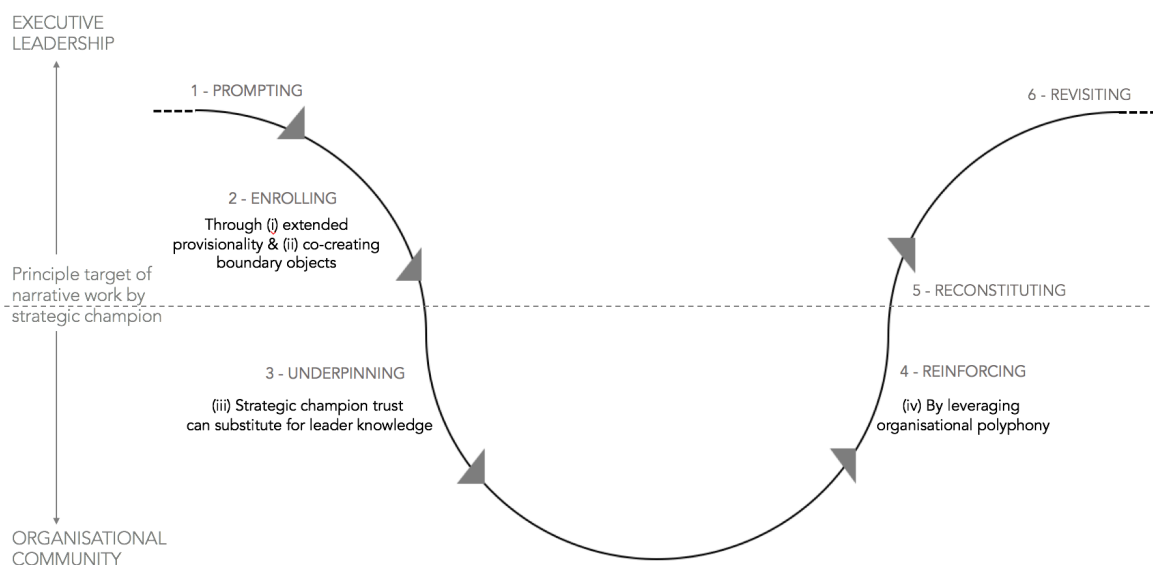


Figure 8: Accomplishments underlying a strategic champion's work to shift narrative infrastructure

(i) **Extended provisionality.** Strategic champions foster a state of provisionality for leaders in which the new master story is intentionally under-polished to create the space for leaders to debate and enrol the new master story into their strategic processes. Strategic champions leverage processes such as convening conversations or co-creating boundary objects to support leaders in their sensemaking - even if the strategic champions do not actively participate in the enrolling discussions themselves. Research on adaptive sensemaking in crisis recognises that doubt generates a valuable provisionality that encourages the exploration of new possibilities and can produce new understandings (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Weick, 2010; Yanow & Tsoukas, 2009). In this study, strategic champions foster an extended state of provisionality that makes room for dialogues that can deepen leaders' understanding of the antenarratives that will underpin a proposed new master story. I refer to this as an extended state because it takes multiple conversations and / or iterations of a boundary object for dialogue to unfold, develop and inform leader understanding of the logic underpinning the new master story. An important outcome of enrolling work that this provisionality supports is that leaders have sufficient understanding of the new master story. Further, by understanding how the master story relates to the organisation's current narrative infrastructure and / or the organisation's shifting context, that leaders also view the new master story as legitimate for the organisation to pursue. These outcomes support leaders in taking ownership and communicating the adoption of this master story to the organisation.

(ii) **Co-creation of boundary objects.** Strategic champions co-created boundary objects, most often visual graphics or a values statement, with leaders during the enrolling stage. These boundary objects can be thought of as instrumental symbols (Gioia et al., 1994), which in this setting support the integration of the new master story into the organisation's existing narrative infrastructure. My analysis shows that when leaders are involved in the co-creation of such a boundary object, their understanding of the new master story and its connection to the existing narrative infrastructure is deepened. Leaders' ownership of the new master story is strengthened by a combination of their involvement in the design of the boundary object and their increased understanding of the new master story. Boundary objects are also used – by leaders and strategic champions – to communicate the new

master story out to the organisation. Gioia and colleagues (1994) found that sensemaking and influencing were coincident and interdependent with a common symbolic base. Symbols, they established, were both expressive and instrumental, simultaneously revealing and concealing. In this study, boundary objects communicate the integration of the new master story into the narrative infrastructure with simplified language and / or graphics that accommodate the message being communicated out sufficiently simply, while allowing for complexity and ambiguity. In this way, these boundary objects become meaningful symbols that support leaders in sensegiving the new master story to the organisation, fostering organisational adoption and sustaining of the new master story over time.

The literature on boundary objects focuses largely on the impact that boundary objects can have for achieving shared understanding, enlisting support and coordinating work (Barley, 2015; Bechky, 2003; Carlile, 2002), but relatively less attention has been given to who creates boundary objects in different circumstances. My analysis shows that strategic champions proactively develop boundary objects as part of their work to integrate a new master-story in an organisation's narrative infrastructure, and they purposefully involve leaders in the design and use of these boundary objects in order to build their understanding of both the objects and the underlying narrative that they represent. Extending on Barley's (2015) performativity approach to work at knowledge boundaries, I find strategic champions intentionally work to co-create boundary objects with leaders in order to increase leader's ownership and understanding of the knowledge incorporated in, and emergent from, the boundary object.

(iii) Strategic champion trust. Prior research suggests that leaders sensegive strategic change to the organisation when they are confident in their position on the issues being communicated (Lawrence & Maitlis, 2007). In this study, however, leaders also sensegive when a trusted strategic champion is able to act as a content expert for them, including in the absence of individual content expertise or an established organisational track record. This reveals that while leaders may develop content familiarity and even expertise over time, it is not necessarily a condition for sensegiving to the organisation. Furthermore, when leaders engage in sensegiving it appears to support them in making sense of the content

they are communicating. This finding supports what others have speculated - that the very process of sensegiving also results in sensemaking: "When you hear yourself talk, you see more clearly what matters and what you had hoped to say. Sensegiving therefore may affect the sensemaker as well as the target" (Weick et al., 2005, p. 416). Strategic champions in this study appeared to recognise this potential and worked to leverage opportunities for their leaders to sensegive, increasing their leaders' sensemaking of and commitment to a new master story.

(iv) Organisational polyphony. Organisational polyphony refers to the multiplicity of discourses that make up an organisation's reality (Hazen, 1993) and is broadly recognised as influencing strategic processes through the potential for alternative forms of narrative, or antenarratives, to contest established master stories (Boje, 2001; Brown & Thompson, 2013; Holstein et al., 2016). Barry and Elmes (1997) recognise that creating polyphonic strategies calls for strategists to both listen and represent strategies that are more representative of differing organisational stories. Yet, organisations are inherently polyphonic and a narrative approach begins to make "visible the polyphony of organizational strategising, the multiple constituencies and stakeholders involved in authoring, editing and amending the strategy stories that constitute strategy-in-practice" (Brown & Thompson, 2013, p. 1148). There has, however, been a tendency to simplify or exclude multiplicity in strategy-as-practice research. As a result, we know little about how organisational polyphony can be leveraged during strategic change processes (Brown & Thompson, 2013). In this study, strategic champions enlist the voices of others, through the selective retelling and amplification of stories, to reinforce for leaders that the new master story is valued and being adopted by the organisation. The antenarratives that strategic champions retell consist of both stories (that resonate personally with leaders) and data (that demonstrate how the new master story delivers tangible value). Strategic champions intentionally leverage the power of organisational polyphony to legitimise back to leaders their decisions to adopt a new master story.

5.3.3 Revisiting

The final section of both Figure 7 and Figure 8 above depict strategic champions supporting key decision-makers to revisit the organisation's narrative infrastructure by leveraging opportunities to question whether it is still fit for purpose. With the exception of work on sensemaking and sensegiving in response to crisis (Brown, 2000; Brown & Jones, 2000; Gephart, 1992, 1993), research to date offers limited insight on processes to revisit narrative infrastructure - especially during stable or non-crisis periods. Insights can be drawn from social movement research which defines discursive opportunity structures as "the opportunity provided by salient discourses that are alive and have momentum at a particular point in time" (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014, p. 210). Koopmans and Statham (1999) find that using the right discourse at the right time can improve the chances of a frame being seen as sensible, realistic and legitimate. Discourse, in this context, refers to "general and prevalent systems for the formation and articulation of ideas in a particular period of time" focussing on "conceptions" and "a line of reasoning" over "any particular interest in language" (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000, pp. 1126, 1129).

My analysis reveals that strategic champions undertake both opportunistic and on-going approaches to revisiting their organisation's narrative infrastructure. To do so, strategic champions draw on discourses that are gaining traction externally to the organisation. Akin to policy windows (Kingdon, 1984), these can be thought of as "strategy windows"² which strategic champions leverage as an opportunity to initiate revisiting during stable periods. Strategy windows can also be drawn on to prompt a shift in narrative infrastructure, and I suggest that *revisiting* - shown as the end of the continuum depicted in Figure 8 above - is connected to the beginning of *prompting*.

In this setting, strategic champions actively work to position opportunities (such as an upcoming global conference on climate change) as relevant for the organisation to respond to and draw on scanning and systems thinking skills to both identify and leverage these

² Strategic windows are defined as an opportunity to pursue new product development during limited time periods when there is a fit between the requirements of the market and the firm's competences (Abell, 1978) but I view these as distinctly different to a window into the strategy process itself and therefore have deliberately termed what I observed as a strategy window.

strategy windows. Strategic champions successfully leverage these opportunities when they have invested sufficiently into understanding the issues and preparing themselves to respond in the event that a strategy window presented itself. This is aligned with the findings by Dutton and colleagues (2001, p. 730) that “there are event-triggered windows of opportunity for making change happen (Gersick, 1994; Tyre & Orlikowski, 1994)”.

And, while prior research establishes that discursive opportunity structures can be leveraged to advance an agenda, my analysis suggests that discursive opportunity structures can also be built internally. Skilled strategic champions built discursive opportunity structures in the absence of crisis or an event that would typically be leveraged to initiate strategic change. My analysis shows that strategic champions can foster collective questioning during stable periods (i.e., during the absence of internal or external crisis affecting the organisation) to initiate reflection among key decision-makers in the organisation as to whether the current narrative infrastructure is still fit for purpose. At times, the discourse may not have strong external traction and / or the organisation’s internal context may mean that the organisation will not be receptive to the questioning that the discourses invoke. In these instances, the work of strategic champions to introduce this discourse as part of the revisiting process is even greater. When the discursive opportunity structure is tenuous, strategic champions draw on their established track record in the organisation as a foundation of trust from which to initiate questioning the existing current narrative infrastructure.

5.4 Practical implications

My study also offers practical insights for strategic champions seeking to influence the narrative infrastructure of their organisation:

Identify and work with existing master stories: Create multiple connections to the existing master stories in your organisation by showing how the new master story can be thought of as an extension of what is already valued and accepted in the organisation. Be cautious of introducing logics that are too foreign to the current principles that guide decision-making in the organisation – no matter how ‘logical’ they may appear.

Position key information, not a new strategy: Select key pieces of information that underscore the relevance of the proposed new master story to the organisation and help show how this connects to the organisation's operating context. Don't present a fully polished, new and / or separate strategy – it is important for leaders to do the integration and strategy formulation so that they really understand and own the new master story.

Sustainability champions keep your passion and logic in check: For strategic champions wanting to advance the logics of social-ecological dependencies and / or organisational purpose, these logics are more likely to be considered when they attach to existing narratives and illuminate the relevance to the organisation. Keep in mind the stronghold that current logics that inform the existing narrative infrastructure have. Think transition, not overthrow.

Create opportunities for leaders to debate and integrate the new master story: Focus on creating opportunities for engaged debate and discussion on these topics by leadership, recognising that you may not always be present in the room when it happens. Hosting one event or workshop is a good start, but not necessarily sufficient. Building leaders' understanding and ownership of a new master story takes sustained engagement over time.

Develop your discursive competencies: The work to shape narrative infrastructure is largely conversational and successful strategic champions learn to both listen and dialogue effectively. Combining the right data and stories increases your chances of the new master story being acceptable and resonant to the organisation, in turn increasing the likelihood of its adoption. These are competences that you could actively develop through further training and by practicing listening, dialogue, analytics and storytelling on a regular basis.

Continuously remind the organisation: Keeping a master story as part of the narrative infrastructure requires ongoing work to remind the organisation of its relevance and value. Often this reminding work is informal and can be achieved by leveraging opportunities for leaders to speak about and therefore signal the ongoing importance of the master story to the organisation. Rewards and recognition programmes are also powerful means for reminding the organisation that making decisions that are aligned with the master story you are promoting, is valued by the organisation.

Actively help the organisation forget old master stories: Support the organisation to actively forget old master stories that may be competing with the newly adopted narrative. This can be done both formally by, for example, creating screening criteria in business processes or establishing a confidential hotline for employees to report incidences of undesirable decision-making. This can also be done informally by, for example, using storytelling to share examples of the choices individuals have made to forgo an old master story.

Foster moments for reflection: Encourage key decision-makers to pause and reflect on the master story once it has been accepted, which supports them to really come to grips with how this requires different decision-making of them. Design reflective sessions for key decision-makers to revisit the current narrative infrastructure and question if there maybe master stories may no longer be fit for purpose. These are often successful when designed as small, group workshops where the pace of work life is intentionally slowed down and where listening and sharing between key decision-makers can be actively enlisted.

Be patient: Shaping narrative infrastructure takes time, so be prepared to engage for the long haul. Valuable skills for successful strategic champions include knowing when to wait and not pursue an initiative if the organisational timing isn't right and knowing when to let go of an issue, to maintain trust with the organisation and continue to influence a broader agenda to adopt a new master story. Also, successful strategic champions often setup ownership and success for others to become part of the new master story, which supports the broader adoption and longer term endurance of the master story.

5.5 Limitations

From a social constructivist standpoint, I acknowledge the active role I played as the researcher in this study. The prolonged, engaged research approach I employed allowed me to build relationships within the firms that facilitated access to the interview participants and to interpret the symbolic nature of the organisational change practices and processes underway. I recognise, however, the potential bias I may have brought through who I chose to interview, which voices I drew on in my study and how I chose to interpret their statements. I employed active reflexivity (detailed in Chapter Three) to mitigate against bias

that would have undermined the validity of this study. I also acknowledge the potential limitations resulting from interview participants not reflecting their experiences honestly and / or critically but guarded against these as far as possible through the interviews being voluntary and anonymous.

As a process study, I recognise that the research would have benefitted from further longitudinal data gathering. While I spent three years of my doctoral studies documenting the organisational change processes within companies studied and accessed archival data dating back several decades, a longer period of study with a greater number of in company placements for observation and interpretation of the practices in action may have provided a richer understanding of the research phenomena. In particular, further study of how shifting narrative infrastructure can effect strategic change may reveal additional insights into the role of others than strategic champions in this work.

Although the focus of my research was the work of strategic champions to introduce the logic of social-ecological dependency through a new master story, I propose that the findings from this study may be equally applicable to strategic champions working to introduce any new master story to the narrative infrastructure of their organisation. I recognise, though, that I focussed on how shifting narrative infrastructure effects strategic change, so the findings of my study may not be equally applicable to other forms of strategic change initiatives. Further, my study did focus on the work of strategic champions and I therefore did not pay full attention to the work of other organisational actors in initiating and adopting a shift in narrative infrastructure – presenting a potential area for future research.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Future research directions

My findings suggest several directions for future research, including investigating which forms of prompting work are necessary (versus simply supportive), how old master stories, especially dominant and / or institutionally driven master stories, can be forgotten, how to develop the competences of strategic champions and the work of others in shifting narrative infrastructure and effecting strategic change.

I present narrative infrastructure as a meaningful theoretical lens through which to understand which principles guide decision-making in an organisation and how these may be shaped by organisational actors over time. I identified the prompting work of strategic champions to shift narrative infrastructure, and future studies could further explore which of the forms of prompting work that I presented are supportive versus necessary. For example, can a new master story be introduced by strategic champions in the absence of attachment to an existing master story?

I identified that reconstituting the narrative infrastructure requires forgetting old master stories that conflict with the newly adopted master story. This appears to be an underexplored phenomenon in both theory and practice, and holds merit for further investigation. Associated with this is our understanding of dominant versus less dominant master stories within the narrative infrastructure of an organisation. How do master stories become established as dominant over other master stories? What is the role of institutional logics in guiding and constraining master stories at the organisational level? What work can be done to overcome this? These questions present interesting areas for further study.

I identified the discursive competences of strategic champions undertaking work to sensegive strategic change. I draw on the work of Rouleau and Balogun (2011) to show that even when strategic champions are not necessarily participants in the strategic conversation, they still undertake discursive work including *setting the scene* and *performing the conversation*. My analysis sheds light on a third competence that strategic champions

employed in their sensegiving of strategic change: invoking personal resonance. My research suggests that invoking personal resonance with leaders is important for them to overcome the uncertainty associated with ambiguous and complex change and presents an interesting area of further research. More broadly, further research could explore how strategic champions apply and develop these discursive competences, and how strategic champions can be identified and supported as organisational change agents.

My research contributes to the narrative perspective on strategy-as-practice by exploring how narrative infrastructure can be shaped and how further studies could explore the work of others, with or in addition to strategic champions, in this process. How, for example, do other organisational members respond to the proposed new master stories and under what conditions will they support its adoption? How do organisational members integrate a new master story into their decision-making, and what conditions best support them in achieving this integration?

6.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, I undertook to study how organisations shift to incorporate the logic of social-ecological dependency into their strategic decision-making. Despite research highlighting the role of leaders in sensegiving strategic change and how leaders leverage narrative infrastructure to do this, we know relatively little about how narrative infrastructure is shifted and the work of others beyond leaders to do this. Adopting a narrative perspective on strategy-as-practice, I sought to unpack the work of strategic champions to support leaders in initiating and adopting a shift in narrative infrastructure in order to effect strategic change. Through an emergent and inductive research strategy, I investigated the work of strategic champions across a series of case study companies to shift the narrative infrastructures of their respective organisations.

I developed a process model of six stages of narrative work that strategic champions undertake to *prompt*, *enrol*, *underpin*, *reinforce* and *reconstitute* a shift in narrative infrastructure for their organisation, with an episodic stage of *revisiting* the narrative infrastructure, in which strategic champions guided the organisation to question whether

their current narrative infrastructure was still fit for purpose. Across these stages of work, I identified competences of strategic champions undertaking the sensegiving of strategic change.

I contribute to our understanding of strategic change by illuminating the role of strategic champions in supporting leaders to initiate and adopt a shift in narrative infrastructure, and make two contributions to the research conversation on narrative within strategy-as-practice. First, I extend the metaphor of narrative infrastructure as a set of rails that guide decision-making, and present a more fulsome picture of narrative infrastructure as a rail network – made up of several master stories which may have different, and at times competing, organisational or institutional logics underpinning them. Second, I identify key forms of narrative work by strategic champions to support leadership in prompting, initiating and revisiting a shift in the narrative infrastructure of an organisation, and demonstrate how they build master story legitimacy, understanding and ownership. My dissertation also lends insights to practice, identifying the tactics and competences to be developed of strategic champions undertaking to shift the principles that guide decision-making in their organisations.

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Appendix A | Summary of Interviews

Interview #	Interview Date	Company Pseudonym	Interviewer1 (Code)	Interviewer2 (Code)	Interviewees (Code)	Position	Role	Transcribed [Y/N]
1	2014/03/06	RetailCo	JS	OR1	RA1.1	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y
2	2014/03/07	RetailCo	JS	OR1	RA1.3	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y
3	2014/03/13	RetailCo	JS		RA2.1	Head of HR	Strategic Champion	Y
4	2014/03/17	RetailCo	JS		RA3.1	Earlier Strategic Champion	Strategic Champion	Y
5	2014/03/18	RetailCo	JS		RA1.5	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y
6	2014/03/24	RetailCo	JS	OR1	RA4.1	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
7	2014/03/24	RetailCo	JS		RA5.1	Head of Training	Organisational Member	Y
8	2014/03/25	ExternalOrg1	JS	OR1	EO1.1	Consultant	External Change Agent	N
9	2014/03/26	RetailCo	JS		RA10.1	Product Design	Organisational Member	N
10	2014/03/26	RetailCo	JS	OR1	RA6.1	Internal Communications Manager	Organisational Member	Y
11	2014/04/22	InsureCo	JS	OR2	FA1.1	Head of Strategy	Strategic Champion	Y
12	2014/04/24	InsureCo	JS		FA2.1	Head of Stakeholder Engagement	Strategic Champion	Y
13	2014/04/29	InsureCo	JS		FA3.1	Strategy Team Member	Organisational Member	Y
14	2014/04/29	InsureCo	JS	OR2	FA4.1	Head of Sustainability	Organisational Member	Y
15	2014/06/03	BankCo	JS		BA1.1	Head of Ethics	Strategic Champion	Y
16	2014/06/03	BankCo	JS		BA2.1	Culture Manager	Organisational Member	Y
17	2014/06/03	BankCo	JS		BA3.1	Head of Training	Organisational Member	Y
18	2014/06/05	InsureCo	JS		FA12.1	Business Manager	Organisational Member	N
19	2014/06/05	InsureCo	JS		FA13.1	Business Manager	Organisational Member	N
20	2014/06/05	InsureCo	JS		FA14.1	Business Leader	Executive Leader	N
21	2014/06/05	InsureCo	JS		FA15.1	Senior Director	Executive Leader	N
22	2014/06/17	BankCo	JS		BA4.1	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y

23	2014/06/17	InsureCo	JS		FA16.1	Senior Director	Executive Leader	N
24	2014/06/18	InsureCo	JS		FA17.1	Business Manager	Organisational Member	N
25	2014/06/18	InsureCo	JS		FA18.1	CEO	Executive Leader	N
26	2014/06/19	InsureCo	JS		FA19.1/FA20.1	Managers	Organisational Member	N
27	2014/06/19	BankCo	JS		BA5.1	Head of Innovation	Organisational Member	Y
28	2014/06/20	BankCo	JS		BA6.1	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y
29	2014/06/23	InsureCo	JS		FA21.1	Product Development	Organisational Member	N
30	2014/06/23	InsureCo	JS		FA22.1	Strategy Team Member	Organisational Member	N
31	2014/06/24	InsureCo	JS		FA5.1	Chief Financial Officer	Executive Leader	Y
32	2014/06/24	InsureCo	JS		FA23.1	Senior Director	Executive Leader	N
33	2014/06/24	InsureCo	JS		FA24.1	Senior Director	Executive Leader	N
34	2014/06/25	InsureCo	JS		FA25.1	Financial Manager	Organisational Member	N
35	2014/06/25	InsureCo	JS		FA26.1	Investment Manager	Strategic Champion	N
36	2014/06/26	InsureCo	JS		FA6.1	Risk Manager	Organisational Member	Y
37	2014/06/26	InsureCo	JS		FA27.1	Business Manager	Organisational Member	N
38	2014/06/27	InsureCo	JS		FA7.1	Head of Risk	Executive Leader / Strategic Champion	Y
39	2014/06/30	InsureCo	JS		FA28.1	Investment Specialist	Organisational Member	N
40	2014/07/01	InsureCo	JS		FA29.1	Senior Manager	Organisational Member	N
41	2014/07/02	InsureCo	JS		FA30.1	Integrated Reporting Manager	Organisational Member	N
42	2014/07/02	InsureCo	JS		FA31.1	Executive team	Executive Leader	N
43	2014/07/03	InsureCo	JS		FA32.1	Business Manager	Organisational Member	N
44	2014/07/07	BankCo	JS		BA7.1/BA8.1	Head of Sustainability / Sustainability Team Member	Strategic Champion / Organisational Member	Y
45	2014/07/07	InsureCo	JS		FA33.1	CEO	Executive Leader	N
46	2014/07/08	BankCo	JS		BA9.1	Group HR Communications Manager	Organisational Member	Y

47	2014/07/08	InsureCo	JS		FA34.1	CEO	Executive Leader	N
48	2014/07/08	BankCo	JS		BA10.1	HR Team	Organisational Member	Y
49	2014/07/09	BankCo	JS		BA11.1	HR Team, Wellbeing Manager	Organisational Member	Y
50	2014/07/09	InsureCo	JS		FA35.1	Senior Director	Executive Leader	N
51	2014/07/09	BankCo	JS		BA2.2	Culture Manager	Organisational Member	Y
52	2014/07/10	BankCo	JS		BA12.1	Head of HR	Strategic Champion	Y
53	2014/07/14	BankCo	JS		BA13.1	Green Building Expert	Organisational Member	Y
54	2014/07/15	BankCo	JS		BA15.1	HR Team	Organisational Member	Y
55	2014/07/15	BankCo	JS		BA16.1	Director of Operations	Executive Leader	Y
56	2014/07/16	InsureCo	JS		FA8.1	Head of Training	Organisational Member	Y
57	2014/07/16	InsureCo	JS		FA9.1	HR Team	Organisational Member	Y
58	2014/07/22	InsureCo	JS		FA4.2	Head of Sustainability	Organisational Member	Y
59	2014/08/11	Belnsure	JS		FB1.1	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
60	2014/08/11	Belnsure	JS		FB1.2	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
61	2014/08/11	Belnsure	JS		FB1.3	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
62	2014/08/25	Belnsure	JS		FB1.4	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
63	2014/08/25	RetailCo	JS	OR4	RA4.2	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
64	2014/08/27	InsureCo	JS	OR4	FA1.2	Sustainability Team	Strategic Champion / Organisational Member	Y
65	2014/09/05	Belnsure	JS	OR4	FB2.1	Director of HR	Executive Leader	Y
66	2014/09/05	BankCo	JS	OR4	BA7.2/BA8.2	Sustainability Team	Strategic Champion / Organisational Member	Y
67	2014/09/10	OtherCo1	JS	OR4	OC1.1	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	N
68	2014/09/15	BankCo	JS	OR4	BA7.3/BA8.3	Sustainability Team	Strategic Champion / Organisational Member	Y
69	2014/09/30	Bankers	JS		BB1.1	Strategic Champion	Strategic Champion	Y
70	2014/10/01	RetailWay	JS		RB1.1	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y
71	2014/10/08	RetailWay	JS		RB1.2	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y

72	2014/10/10	RetailWay	JS		RB1.3	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y
73	2014/10/13	RetailWay	JS		RB1.4	Sustainability Team Member	Organisational Member	Y
74	2015/02/03	NewInsure	OR4		FD1.1	Head of Training	Organisational Member	Y
75	2015/03/09	BankCo	JS	OR5	BA17.1	ex CEO	Executive Leader	Y
76	2015/03/09	TransportCo	OR4	OR6	FA10.1	ex CEO	Executive Leader	Y
77	2015/03/09	InsureCo	OR4	OR6	FA11.1	CEO	Executive Leader	Y
78	2015/03/09	InsureCo	OR4	OR5	FA7.2	Head of Risk	Executive Leader / Strategic Champion	Y
79	2015/03/09	InsureD	OR4	OR6	FC1.1	Head of Brand and People	Strategic Champion	Y
80	2015/03/09	InsureD	JS	OR5	FC4.1	Investment Manager	Strategic Champion	N
81	2015/03/09	ExternalOrg2	JS	OR5	EO2.1	Professor	External Change Agent	N
82	2015/03/09	ExternalOrg3	JS	OR5	EO3.1	ex Executive Director	External Change Agent	N
83	2015/03/10	ExternalOrg4	OR4	JS	EO4.1	CEO	External Change Agent	Y
84	2015/03/11	InsureD	OR4	OR6	FC5.1	Head of CSI	Organisational Member	N
85	2015/03/11	ExternalOrg5	OR4	JS	EO5.1/EO6. 1	Consultant	External Change Agent	N
86	2015/03/11	InsureD	OR4	OR6	FC6.1	Company Secretary	Executive Leader	N
87	2015/03/16	Bankers	JS	OR5	BB3.1	Programme director	Strategic Champion	N
88	2015/03/16	BankCo	OR4	JS	BA18.1	CEO	Executive Leader	Y
89	2015/03/16	Bankers	JS		BA18.1	Head of Sustainability	Organisational Member	Y
90	2015/03/16	BankCo	OR4	OR6	BA7.4	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
91	2015/03/16	Bankers	JS	OR5	BB2.1	Company Secretary	Strategic Champion	Y
92	2015/03/16	InsureD	OR4	JS	FC2.1	Board Member	Executive Leader	Y
93	2015/03/16	ExternalOrg6	OR5	OR6	EO7.1/EO8. 1	Programme managers	External Change Agent	N
94	2015/03/16	ExternalOrg6	OR5	OR6	EO9.1	CEO	External Change Agent	N
95	2015/03/17	ExternalOrg7	OR4	OR6	EO10.1	CEO	Executive Leader	N
96	2015/03/17	OtherCo2	JS	OR5	MA1.1	ex CEO	Executive Leader	Y

97	2015/03/17	NewInsure	OR4	JS	FD2.1	CEO	Executive Leader	Y
98	2015/03/17	OtherCo3	OR4	OR6	OC2.1	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	N
99	2015/03/17	ExternalOrg8	OR4	JS	EO11.1	CEO	External Change Agent	N
100	2015/03/17	ExternalOrg9	OR5	OR6	EO12.1	Change Agent	External Change Agent	N
101	2015/03/17	NewInsure	OR4	JS	FD5.1	Executive team	Executive Leader	N
102	2015/03/18	OtherCo4	OR4	JS	FD6.1	Investment Manager	Strategic Champion	N
103	2015/03/18	InsureCo	OR5	OR6	FA36.1	Financial Director / Manager	Executive Leader / Strategic Champion	N
104	2015/03/18	ExternalOrg10	OR5	OR6	EO13.1	Head of SRI Index	External Change Agent	N
105	2015/03/18	NewInsure	OR4	JS	FD4.1	Previous Head of HR	Strategic Champion	Y
106	2015/03/18	ExternalOrg1	OR6		EO1.2	Consultant	External Change Agent	N
107	2015/03/19	OtherCo4	OR4	JS	FD3.1	CEO	Executive Leader	Y
108	2015/03/19	Bankers	OR5	OR6	BB1.2	ex Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
109	2015/03/19	OtherCo5	OR5	OR6	OC3.1	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	N
110	2015/03/19	ExternalOrg4	JS		EO14.1	Head of Fisheries programme	External Change Agent	N
111	2015/03/19	OtherCo6	OR4	JS	OC4.1	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	N
112	2015/03/19	OtherCo7	OR4	OR6	OC5.1	CEO	Executive Leader	N
113	2015/03/19	OtherCo7	OR4	OR6	OC6.1	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	N
114	2015/03/20	InsureCo	OR5	OR6	FA37.1	CEO	Executive Leader	N
115	2015/03/20	ExternalOrg11	OR6		EO15.1	Change Agent	External Change Agent	N
116	2015/03/20	OtherCo8	OR5		OC7.1	CEO	Executive Leader	N
117	2015/03/20	OtherCo9	OR5	OR6	OC8.1	Head of Climate Change	Strategic Champion	N
118	2015/03/20	MineCo	OR4	JS	EA1.1	Head of Strategy and Stakeholder Engagement	Strategic Champion	Y
119	2015/03/20	OtherCo10	OR4	JS	OC9.1/OC1 0.1	Head of Sustainability / Director	Strategic Champion / Executive Leader	N
120	2015/03/27	RetailCo	JS	OR5	RA4.3	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
121	2015/06/10	RetailWay	JS		RB2.1	Head of Sustainability	Organisational Member	Y

122	2015/07/27	InsureD	JS		FC3.1	CEO	Executive Leader	Y
123	2015/07/27	RetailCo	JS		RA7.1	ex-CEO / Chairman	Executive Leader	Y
124	2015/07/29	OtherCo11	JS		OC11.1	CEO	Executive Leader	N
125	2015/07/29	OtherCo12	JS		OC12.1	CEO	Executive Leader	N
126	2015/10/13	RetailCo	JS	OR5	RA4.4	Head of Sustainability	Strategic Champion	Y
127	2015/10/13	RetailCo	OR4	JS	RA8.1	National CEO	Executive Leader	Y
128	2015/10/27	RetailCo	OR4	JS	RA9.1	Global CEO	Executive Leader	Y

Key: JS – Jess Schulschenk; OR – Other Researcher

Appendix B | Summary of Types of Work as Constructs and Sub-Constructs

Type of work	Description
Prompting	Framing the new master story as relevant for leadership to consider in their strategic processes.
<i>(a) Naturalising</i>	<i>Recasting the new master story using the language of an existing master story to show how the new master story was an extension of an accepted master story.</i>
<i>(b) Contextualising</i>	<i>Supporting leadership in making sense of complex current and future operating context scenarios by providing key pieces of information translated into compelling antenarratives that would illuminate the need to integrate the underlying logic of the new master story.</i>
Enrolling	Creating a provisional environment in which the new master story can be explored, discussed and better understood in order to be integrated into the strategy processes.
<i>(a) Convening conversations</i>	<i>Building trust and establish authority, both formal and informal, to convene conversations with leadership.</i>
<i>(b) Co-crafting boundary objects</i>	<i>Co-crafting boundary objects that could express how the new master story could become part of the organisation's narrative infrastructure.</i>
Underpinning	Supporting executive leaders in sensegiving the new master story to the organisation.

(a) <i>Leveraging opportunities for the message to be communicated</i>	<i>Intentionally leveraging or creating opportunities or leaders to communicate the new master story out in order to position it as strategic</i>
(b) <i>Formalising the communicated message</i>	<i>Formalising the new master story that leaders were communicating to the organisation.</i>
(c) <i>Enlisting organisational participation</i>	<i>Enlisting broader organisational participation in the new master story to create awareness and, in later stages, acceptance of the new master story.</i>
Reinforcing	Sensegiving to leaders that the new master story is being adopted by the organisation.
(a) <i>Selective retelling and amplification</i>	<i>Seeking out, retelling and, at times, amplifying, stories from across the organisation that provided evidence to leaders that the new master story was being adopted.</i>
(b) <i>Use of data as proof points</i>	<i>Drawing on data as proof points to establish credibility for the new master story.</i>
Reconstituting	Supporting the organisation in adopting the accepted master story as part of the narrative infrastructure
(a) <i>Formally embedding into organisational practices</i>	<i>Formally embedding through organisational practices the now accepted master story as part of the narrative infrastructure.</i>
(b) <i>Repetition</i>	<i>Continuously reminding the organisation of the master story that they adopted as part of their narrative infrastructure.</i>
(c) <i>Fostering reflection and listening</i>	<i>Fostering reflection and listening opportunities within the broader organisational community for the new master story to be adopted as part of the narrative infrastructure.</i>

<p><i>(d) Forgetting the no-longer fit for purpose master stories</i></p>	<p><i>Actively supporting the organisation in forgetting old master stories that may be competing with the newly accepted master stories.</i></p>
<p>Revisiting</p>	<p>Supporting the organisation in reviewing the relevance of their current narrative infrastructure.</p>
<p><i>(a) Ongoing questioning</i></p>	<p><i>Constantly questioning the assumptions underlying their own understanding of how their organisation's context operates.</i></p>
<p><i>(b) Opportunistic questioning</i></p>	<p><i>Leveraging a crisis or external event to direct the organisation to revisit the relevance of the existing narrative infrastructure.</i></p>