



La gestion du changement dans les organisations publiques complexes : l’approche de la stratégie comme pratique dans le cas du Contrat d’Objectifs et de Performance 2016-2020 de l’Office National des Forêts

Principle investigator: Nathalie CAROL, Meriem FOURNIER, Benoit GRASSER

Partners: CEREFIGE (Centre Européen de Recherche en Economie Financière et Gestion des Entreprises) de l’Université de Lorraine

Context — The new road map adopted by the French National Forestry Office (ONF), charged with managing public-owned forest, has raised critical questions for its staff who have voiced concerns about a profit-driven approach to forest management. To what extent will public forests be sacrificed for the greater interest of productivity and commodification? And, is profitability genuinely in the public’s best interest? This scenario of ‘organizational dissonance’ represents a unique case study with which to explore and test the theory of sensemaking developed by Karl E. Weick relative to the collective meaning and the dynamics its construction. The process of collectively constructing meaning, the cornerstone of organized action, takes place essentially through communicative interaction in social situations. It is through interactions with each other that agents of the ONF reach agreement about the meaning of a given action. This work integrates a complementary theory to operationalize key concepts involved in the sensemaking process. The Strategy as Practice (SAP) theory and its three core concepts, Praxis, Practices and Practitioners, was selected for its distinctive approach of focusing on the actors, their actions, their interactions and the context within which strategic micro-actions take place. According to this theory, strategy is not “something that an organization has but something that its members do” (Golsorkhi, 2015). Relatively few studies have addressed the role of middle managers in the strategic sense making process: are they merely transmitters of information between top management and operational teams, or are they themselves meaning makers acting as partner of the top management team? Aimed at providing new insights on this critically important question for the strategic management of an organization, the present work studies the role of ONF territorial unit managers in collective meaning construction.

Objectives — This study aims at investigating the role and practices of RUTs in the collective meaning construction process by using a Strategy-as-Practice approach to allow for a better understanding of the concerns and opposition generated internally by the implementation of the ONF first strategic axe:” increase the wood supply in response to the needs of wood sector stakeholders and create employment”

The guiding hypotheses of the data collection and analysis are as follows:

- senior managers and RUTs are both strategic sense makers;
- strategic axe 1 is causing an interruption in behavior sequences of forest agents;
- this interruption is sourced in ambiguity and questions the agents’ identity;
- the view of the actions to be undertaken collectively is constructed through communicative interactions that take place in timber marking situations;

- the human resources framework constrains the interplay between actors in interaction;
- forest agents do not agree with the objectives but do agree on the ways and means used to satisfy their personal interests;
- the shared vision on the ways or means to be deployed results from an established relationship between cognitive maps or schemas based on past experience and the present contextual situation;
- the shared vision of measures to be adopted is plausible rather than exact;
- the RUTs are intentional actors each with multiple identities and subjectivities;
- this plurality of identities, subjectivities and intentions is the source of contradictions in the practice of constructing meaning.

Approach — This project's core focus is on the meaning of actions surrounding the first strategic axe of the 2016-2020 ONF Objectives and Performance Contract, which is constructed through communicative interactions in situations and affects the way of being and acting of ONF agents. In other words, it looks specifically at actors acting and interacting. The researcher should be therefore positioned, "as close as possible to situations in which these actions and interactions unfold so that they may be retraced (historian), observed (observation, participant observation) or to allow the researcher to act in concert with the subjects being studied (research-action)" (Dumez, 2013, p.7). Semi-structured interviews combined with participant observation were selected for being the most appropriate data collection methods given the nature of our questions.

Key results — In order not to disturb the ongoing main investigation phase, the first results will not be disseminated.

Future perspectives — This research project proposes a singular and innovative approach to forestry for the benefit of scientific, professional and educational communities alike by examining the process of forest strategy implementation. It consists more specifically in establishing a link between an observed phenomenon (which must be explained), namely the disunity surrounding measures aimed at increasing the mobilization of wood resources, and its possible causes (which explain) (Dumez, 2013). A parallel objective of this study is to test the sensemaking theory, particularly the concept of collective structure in a new and underexplored area: the French National Forestry Office. Using the Strategy-as-Practice perspective as a complementary approach proved valuable for providing empirical data and testing its validity, data which today remains relatively limited despite the growing success of this perspective on the international scene (Balogun et al., 2006).

Valorisation —

Scientific communication	Date	Location
Journée des stagiaires et des doctorants du LERFOB (INRA)	27/06/2017	Nancy
Ecole d'Été du Réseau de Recherche sur l'Innovation RRI 2017	29/08/2017	Nancy
Colloque « <i>Entre dynamiques et mutations, quelles voies pour la forêt et le bois ?</i> », Réseau SHS d'ECOFOR	11/01/2018	Paris
Réunion de l'équipe Stratégie Organisation Ressources Humaines (SORH) du CEREFIGE/UL	15/03/2018	Nancy
EURAM Doctorial Colloquium 2018	17-19/06/2018	Reykjavik (Islande)

Médiation scientifique (suite au concours de MT180)	Date	Location
Elaboration d'une BD de la thèse par Ped& Fox	Février/mars 2018	Nancy
Passage dans la chronique "Talents de femmes" de Mirabelle TV	4-18/04/2018	Lorraine
Intervention dans l'émission " la tête au carré" de France Inter	11/05/2018	Paris
Réalisation d'un reportage photos avec le service CST de l'université de Lorraine diffusé sur les réseaux sociaux (Facebook & Twitter)	17-18/05/2018	
Réalisation d'un tournage avec France 3 sur la thèse et le concours MT180	Diffusé 11/06/2018	le Nancy
Interview avec la direction de la communication de l'ONF	14/06/2018	
Interview réalisé dans le cadre de "Perdue de recherche. Les sciences sociales au risque de la médiation"	14-15/06/2018	Bordeaux
Intervention pour la journée de rentrée du personnel de l'université de Lorraine	4/09/2018	Nancy
Communication au colloque International "Science & You"	15-17/09/2018	Pékin(Chine)

