Encompassing Stability and Novelty in Organization Studies: An Events-based Approach

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Abstract

The stability versus novelty relationship remains a conundrum in organization studies, partly owing to conventional views of time and temporality. In this article, we address organization as a stability-novelty intertwinement through the lens of organizational events. The advantage of an events-based approach is that stability and novelty are expressed as parts of the same acts, and not different acts, which tends to be the assumption among mainstream theories of organization change. The events-based approach developed for this article shows how the organization may be defined as a structure of past and anticipated events, defined and redefined on an ongoing basis. From a case study of the development of a competency management tool in a bank, we show how the intertwinement between stability and novelty is articulated through events throughout the project and how every event is both an act of stability and an act of change.

Keywords

events-based approach, novelty, process philosophy, stability, time

Introduction

A key characteristic of the literature in organization studies is the difference in how organization itself is understood – whether as an entity marked by its stability and changing through stages, also called the entity-like approach, or as an ungraspable flow marked by its ongoing novelty, also called the flow-like approach (Hernes, 2014a). These two sides have defined opposing views of organization that privilege either stability of organization or novelty. The choice of approach influences the understanding of how actors maintain rules, routines, or practices (etc.) and how they produce new ones at the same time as performing their activities. Whatever the approach,

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there is a lack of explanation of the underlying dynamics of both stability and novelty in organizational becoming. In this article, our purpose is twofold: to go beyond the current dualism in our understanding of organization through an events-based framework and, then, to put this framework into practice.

In the entity-like approach, researchers privilege a view of organization based on stability, being and change. Organization is seen as an enduring social-bounded system with identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Deephouse, 1999; Whetten, 2006; Whetten and Mackey, 2002), distinctive and noun-like qualities (King, Felin, & Whetten, 2010; Selznick, 1949, 1957; Stinchcombe, 1965), such as behaviour and decision-making capabilities (Argote & Greve, 2007; Cyert & March, 1963; Gavetti, Levinthal, & Ocasio, 2007). Even though these authors have mobilized different theoretical frameworks, their basic assumption on organization tends to be the same: organization is an entity defined on the basis of stable features. Organization is thus defined both by an inner and outer context (Pettigrew, 1992) and can be identified in a given environment. From this definition of organization, scholars have dealt with the evolution of organization from the notion of change. Organizational change means that organization evolves through stages. In other words, it is seen as a transformation between two points in time (Barnett & Carroll, 1995, p. 220). Authors such as Van de Ven and Huber (1990), Van de Ven and Poole (1990), Pettigrew (1990, 1992, 1997), and Langley (1999) have also developed a view of organization in which organization is studied from a sequence of events.

Conversely, scholars of the flow-like approach privilege a view of organization based on novelty, becoming and emergence. They have defined organization as an ongoing process of change (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). This view rejects the idea of organization as substance (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002), but rather considers organization as a fluid process of acts of connecting and reconnecting (Hernes, 2008) or re-lating (Cooper, 2005). Here, the organization is defined as "a world making" (Chia & King, 1998, p. 463), always in a state of becoming. As process precedes entities and always proceeds beyond them (Cooper, 2007, p. 1547), any theoretical explanation about organization has to refrain from claims of substance (Nayak, 2008). A major consequence for the understanding of change is that it is ongoing and the evolution of organization cannot be divided into stages. It thus follows that scholars have to study organization in their "indivisible continuity of reality" (Nayak, 2008, p. 177) and not in stages as stated in the entity-like approach. This is why scholars in the flow-like approach have used the notion of novelty (Chia, 2003; Chia & King, 1998) or becoming (Weik, 2011) rather than the notion of change. In other words, those scholars have reversed the ontological priority from making change a property of the organization – as posited in the entity-like approach, to making organization an emergent property of change (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002, p. 570).

Although this flow-like approach is promising, the main difficulty is in dealing with the ongoing production of organizational stability. Yet, both stability and novelty coexist in organizational life. For instance, Pentland, Hærem, and Hillison (2011) noticed in their studies of invoice processing that routines have changed (they generated patterns of action that have changed over time), while at the same time they have exhibited stability. As noted by Chia (2003, p. 130), action is always "a resultant effect of the ongoing tension and contestation between an immanent tendency towards repetition and a centrifugal drive towards novelty and otherness". However, as Birnholtz, Cohen, and Hoch (2007, p. 316) noted, most of the flow-based scholars prioritize change when arguing that they inadvertently seem to end up using organization interchangeably with stasis. Birnholtz, Cohen, and Hoch (2007, p. 316) also emphasized the importance of providing a concept that allows an account of stability despite flux in order to grasp what they called the "paradox of the (n)ever-changing world". This shortcoming of the flow-like approach has led to

serious consequences for research as it has been quite difficult to empirically illustrate how organizational patterns – i.e. a kind of stability – are reproduced by actors without running the danger of falling into a substantive view.

The reason why researchers cannot fully apply the flow-like approach empirically is the difficulty in taking stability into consideration in a view that assumes organization in a state of becoming. Faced with this issue, scholars have paradoxically tended to empirically analyse organization through different stages that could be separated and isolated (Alvesson, Loacker, & Sandberg, 2013; Langley, Smallman, Haridimos, & Van de Ven, 2013). For instance, Langley et al. (2013, p. 5) recognized that qualitative process researchers rely on integrative forms of "temporal bracketing" (which generally unfold sequentially over time) to identify units of analysis within longitudinal data. They added that such brackets are separated by identifiable discontinuities in the temporal flow. Consequently, these researchers have implicitly assumed a sequential and serial view of organizational change, where the past stages of organization are finished and have an impact on the present one, and the present one will have an impact on the future of organization stages. Yet, such a view goes against the idea of the flow-like approach, as this approach insists on the becoming of organization as an ongoing process of emergence of patterns that cannot be separated into stages.

To sum up, by analytically privileging the stability (entity-like approach) or the novelty (flow-like approach) occurring in different and isolated stages of the organizational life, both approaches tend to become entrenched in a dualistic view, whereby stability is opposed to novelty and hence mutually exclusive. Although Farjoun (2010) noted that it is an important shortcoming in organization studies and has shown that stability and change are fundamentally interdependent insofar as "stability can be both an outcome and a medium of change" (Farjoun, 2010, p. 202), both approaches have met difficulties in empirically representing how organization can have an enduring existence for actors while still in a state of becoming.

As a result, it is worth asking the question as to *how can we ontologically understand and empirically study organization on the assumption that stability and novelty reside in the same acts?* We believe that answering this question can shed light on how people develop and maintain the features of their organization, while being in a state of becoming. However, to answer this question, we need to pursue the development of a theoretical framework that does not separate stability and novelty and which could be empirically applied.

This article aims to offer an alternative view to understanding organization – called an events-based approach – that neither privileges stability nor novelty, but considers stability and novelty as two aspects in an ongoing state of organizational becoming. As much as we have been inspired by the flow-like approach and the work of writers such as Tsoukas and Chia (2002) and Langley et al. (2013), we wish to branch out from their work by proposing an approach that considers the events and their inter-relating as a way to empirically observe and understand how stability and novelty are concomitant. Indeed, the inter-relating of events – called "prehension of events" by Whitehead (1920, 1929) – means that actors act in their present through engagement with past and anticipated events. Consequently, in this approach, mainly rooted in the process philosophies of Whitehead (1920, 1929, 1938) and Mead (1932), and in some works in organization studies (Chia, 1999; Chia & King, 1998; Cobb, 2007; Hernes, 2014a, 2014b), stability is not only related to past and considered as the impact of the past; nor is novelty only related to the present and future and considered as a rupture with the past. Rather, past and future are continually defined and redefined in actual events. Indeed, the basic assumption of an events-based framework is that stability and novelty occur in the structure of past and future events as prehended (i.e. through engagement with events) by actors.

Consequently, this theoretical approach may help us to build an understanding about organization in which novelty and stability are intertwined in such a way that stages are not separated and isolated along a timeline, but are interrelated in the actual event lived by people. Rather than analysing organization through different stages that could be separated and isolated, the events-based approach implies an identification of the main events taken into consideration by actors in the present moment and describes how they are interrelated and defined. Organization is thus understood as a continuous present in which the past, present and future cannot be separated but have to be considered as a movement (Helin, Hernes, Hjorth, & Holt, 2014).

The article is structured as follows. In the first section, we will present the notion of event. We will begin by considering the causal view and the intertwined view of the notion of event. We will then draw four tenets for an events-based approach of organization. We will notably define organization as a structure of events leading to an active temporal view of organization (Hernes, 2014a, 2014b) and as such understand how stability and novelty are intertwined. The second section will aim at applying and grounding our theoretical framework via the case study of a project conducted in a bank in Europe that we will refer to as Banca. We will describe actual events and analyse how the structure of events is prehended (i.e. through engagement) through these actual events. The findings demonstrate how the team defines and redefines organization of project through an ever-transitory present, and thus how stability and novelty are intertwined. The third section will discuss the main contributions and implications of this research. As the main contribution, we propose the events-based framework as relevant to surpass the dualism of organizational stability and novelty in organization studies. Such framework implies an important theoretical implication: it offers an active temporality view of organization. The events-based framework, as empirically applied in our case study, may help researchers to overcome the linear view of time that scholars (especially those of the flow-like approach) have struggled to surpass.

Organization as a Structure of Events

In this section, first we aim to briefly present the notion of event. The second part of this section is devoted to the understanding of organization as a structure of events. The idea of structure of events enables understanding of how stability and novelty are intertwined into a current event, where the stability-novelty entwinement becomes evident. We will conclude the section by summarizing the main concepts (Table 1) and the main tenets of the events-based framework (Table 2).

The notion of event

The potential of the matter of event to understand organization had been pointed out by authors in organization studies for several decades (Chia & King, 1998; Durant & Vaara, 2009; Hernes, 2014a, 2014b; Van de Ven & Poole, 1990). In spite of their diversities in the approaches, the research based partly on the notion of event can be brought together according to two approaches: 1) a causal view of the relation of events mainly developed by positivist and realist researchers and 2) an intertwined view of events mainly anchored in process philosophy. We will define these two approaches and will justify why we adhere to the second one.

A causal view of events considers events as isolated facts occurring as a result of a causal relationship. This causal view of the relation of events can be found in the works anchored in a

positivist, realist or in one process-view background. Positivist researchers have dealt with the causation of events by emphasizing the nomothetic regularities between causes and effects (Durant & Vaara, 2009). Here the causation of events is considered as measurable and observable. Instead, the realistic approach (Bhaskar, 1975, 1979; Harré, 1970; Harré & Madden, 1975; Hull, 1988) has tried to surpass the positivist one by understanding the relation between events from the study of generative mechanisms which both reside in structure and establish a specific causal power. Close to this view, one process view of organization, mainly developed to study innovation by Van de Ven and Huber (1990), Pettigrew (1990, 1992, 1997), and Van de Ven and Poole (1990), has urged researchers to study the order and sequence of events in order to understand the organization process. Here the aim is to track events in real time as they occur over time by examining patterns of relationships among events, sequences and stages (Van de Ven & Poole, 1990).

An intertwined view of events rejects the causation or it is only considered as a proposition in order to understand the connection between events and things. For example, Holt and Mueller (2011), in an attempt to deal with the question of ontology in organization studies, have used the different treatment of the matter of events and things to distinguish realism and the social constructionism approaches. Holt and Mueller (2011) have notably argued that what we perceive is always the relation and the connection of things and events. Other research following this intertwined view of the relation of events has focused on event as a way to qualify the present moment. In entrepreneurship studies, for example, Hjorth (2013) has used the notion of event to express the creation of a situation in which new ways of living are possible. Based on the notion of Foucault's idea of subjectification, with the help of Deleuze's comments and elaborations (Deleuze, 1995), he emphasizes the importance of the present moment, as both a way to take the past into consideration and an opportunity to create new ways of living. These assumptions are in line with our aim in this article and offer us important insights about the relation and the connection between events.

Moreover, in this intertwined view of events, some scholars have relied on Whitehead's philosophy (1920, 1929, 1938)[1] to deal with the matter of events in organization studies. Here the roots of an events-based framework can be found. The very first work dealing with events from a Whiteheadian approach would seem to be the articles of Chia and King (1998) and Chia (1999). These authors have defined organization as event-clustering, i.e. a relation between events. In the same vein, Cobb (2007) stated that organizational understanding should include thinking of the world as made up of events. Events are here not considered as isolated, but arising out of other events (Cobb, 2007, p. 568). Hernes (2014a, 2014b) has gone further in the development and has defined organization as a structure of events and thus built foundations for an "event-based organization theory" (Hernes, 2014a, p. 264). This approach is quite relevant for us as it provides the basis for understanding how past and anticipated events are defined and redefined in the present on an ongoing basis. This approach enables a view of organization in which stability and novelty are intertwined into the current event as the definition and redefinition of past and future. This is what we will develop in the following sections.

From the notion of event to the structure of events

The notion of event has been defined from various approaches and it is a very broad term (Cobb, 2007, p. 571). Actually, any fact can be considered as an event, and the world can be considered as a world of events (Mead, 1932, p. 2). An election, a board meeting, or surfing a wave are

events. In the philosophies of Whitehead (1920, 1929, 1938) and Mead (1932) an event is a key unit for understanding the becoming of things. Time, space and things only exist in events as abstractions. We are immersed in the flow of events but the world is made concrete only in the actual event. Actual events can be considered as temporal boundaries of our living present (Hernes, 2014b, p. 128).

To illustrate the notion of event, let's take a simple example, a surfer surfing a wave. A surfer on a wave is a surfer only because this person acts as a surfer (he/she can stand up on a surfboard, move on the wave in order to follow it, etc.); and all the things involved in this activity (surfer, surfboard, wave, beach, reef, etc.) act in a specific way in order to make this activity possible. The activity of surfing is also made possible because everything and everyone is playing a role: the wave is breaking smoothly on the reef and does not close out, the surfer can keep the equilibrium long enough to surf the wave, etc. All these *things* (surfer, surfboard, wave, beach, reef) also have a role here and now, and thus acquire existence only during this event, which started from the take-off and will finish at the closure of the wave (or the wipe out of the surfer). After having surfed this wave, when the surfer goes back to the point break (or to the beach), the surfed wave does not exist anymore as a current event and the reef acquires another meaning and acts differently. It can be more or less dangerous for the surfer when she/he is paddling to the point break. The waves, the reef and the surfer are not exactly the same because they act differently. Another event has already started.

An event can last one second or several years, and each event can be divided into other events. For instance, the event *surfing a wave* can be divided into other events such as the take off, the carving on the bottom of the wave (bottom turn), the turn on the top of the wave (off the lip), the wipe out, etc. To keep this notion simple, one can say that an event can be defined as a fact in which the world acquires existence and characteristics, such as the surfer surfing a wave. More precisely, to understand the concept of event and its implications in our understanding of relationship between stability and novelty, three main points have to be underlined.

The first point is that an event is a moment that can be seen as a specific character of a place experienced (Whitehead, 1920, p. 52), a possibility to experience the whole reality (Mead, 1932). In this mode of thinking, things, people, past, future, etc. only exist here and now in the living present, i.e. in the actual event. As Mead (1932, p. 11) wrote: "a reality that transcends the present must exhibit itself in the present". In other words, there is no other reality than the actual event. The notion of event also puts the present and activities in the foreground, while insisting on the importance of the past and future to the experience of the present. As Mead argued: "given an emergent event, its relations to antecedent processes become conditions or causes. Such a situation is a present" (Mead, 1932, p. 23). As a consequence, past, present and future events are not discrete entities, neither dead data (Lucas, 1989) nor points on a timeline, but rather both inputs and outputs of the actual event.

Here is the second point about events. Events are intertwined and no interval can be reached between events (Mead, 1932, p. 22). Rather, they are defined by their relation(s) to others. An event cannot exist except through its relation with other events. They are not insulated entities existing out-there (Hernes, 2014a). Instead, events are internally connected and mirror each other (Hernes, 2014b). That is why the past and future are not taken for granted but are reproduced and co-shaped in the actual event. Each event is linked with those before and after, which are immanent in the present event. This is why the present is considered as continuous (Mead, 1932; Schultz & Hernes, 2013), because it integrates the past and future into it. The intertwinement of events means that reality is not a succession of "nows" but an ongoing present

integrating all the history and expectations. For instance, the way in which a meeting about a project is held is intimately linked with past events related to that project (such as previous meetings, and/or previous tasks that people have already realized), and the anticipated future events, such as the various deadlines, the experiences (lived or anticipated) which take place in the current (or actual) event. The actual meeting is thus defined by past and future events about the project as much as these past and future events can be redefined during the actual meeting. For example, past successes can be reconsidered as shortcomings while future deadlines and outputs can be redefined. For participants, the project only exists in this meeting as past, present and future events experienced.

The third point is that through events, the structure and order of activities are both maintained, ensuring stability of organization, while being modified, thus generating novelty. This is a crucial point to understand how stability and novelty are not separated in events. As Cobb (2007, p. 568) suggests, the experiences that actors live during events are a mere continuation of what has been. By bringing the past and the anticipated future into the present, events produce and reproduce structure and order (Whitehead, 1929, p. 89) by reconfiguring established patterns. The repetition of past and anticipated events, which form patterns, does not mean that an event can happen twice. As mentioned above, past and anticipated events are defined and redefined in actual events. Consequently, each actual event is inevitably different even if it consists of more or less the same past and anticipated events. Still, by experiencing more or less the same past and anticipated events across actual events, people produce and reproduce structure and order.

More precisely, Whitehead (1929) considered the notion of prehension in expressing the idea that events incorporate their predecessors (and we could add the successors). It means that actors always act in their present moment through their engagement with past and anticipated events. The notion of prehension is thus key to understanding how events can be seen as units of analysis of organization. As expressed by Cobb (2007), "Prehension is the way in which one momentary experience incorporates its predecessor. … What was there-then, is included in what is here-now" (Cobb, 2007, p. 570). In other words, past and anticipated events define an actual event, and what defines past and anticipated events is the actual event. Prehension is a crucial element in Whitehead's thinking, through which he explains the relational character of existence as well as the prioritization of the "how" of becoming (Halewood, 2005). This prehension of events brings coherence and continuity.

Think again of the surfer who is paddling to reach the point break with the aim to surf another wave. By prehending past and anticipated events related to the activity of surfing in this spot, the surfer can define the trajectory of the paddling. The surfer has already surfed at least one wave, which means that he or she paddled at least once from the closure of the wave to the point break and he or she found this point break at least once to surf a first wave. The current trajectory to attain the point break is also defined with regards to (at the very least) these two previous events (the paddling from the beach to the point break and the first wave surfed) that are really helpful in anticipating the next event: to surf another wave. The prehension of these events enables stability, order and structure to the activity in which the surfer is involved but also provides the potential to surf a new wave that might require different behaviour and skills.

We can now introduce the notion of the structure of events as a way to characterize the prehension of events as a whole, bringing stability and novelty into the actual event. This notion will then lead to a consideration of the temporality of organization as a key dimension to understand the stability-novelty intertwinement.

From the structure of events to an active temporal view of organization

Whitehead (1920) used the notion of the structure of events to define nature. For him, nature is a structure of events, and each event has its position in this structure and its own peculiar character or quality (Whitehead, 1920, p. 166). Following Hernes (2014a), organization as a structure of events means that different events are prehended as a coherent whole in an ongoing present. The structure of events is shaped by the events prehended by actors in their actual event. By being prehended in actual events, these structures of events bring not only stability of organization but also novelty. By defining a structure of past, present and anticipated events, actors produce and reproduce organization, which is both new and partly what has been before. Even if past and anticipated events are more or less prehended in the same way, these events are, at the same time, constantly renewed and opened to redefinition.[2]

The following graph (Figure 1) is an attempt to present actual events (for instance, actual event C) with their structure of events, where past events (past events A' and B') and anticipated events (anticipated event D) are prehended. In the figure, events are also prehended in time as both the same way and a new way. For example, A evolves to become A' in the actual event C; the actual event B becomes past event B' in the actual event C, etc. Moreover, the actual event C becomes the past event C' in the actual event D. Past and future events are continuously redefined in actual events. This is the reason why these actual events are not separated from one another but are an ongoing evolution in a continuous present.
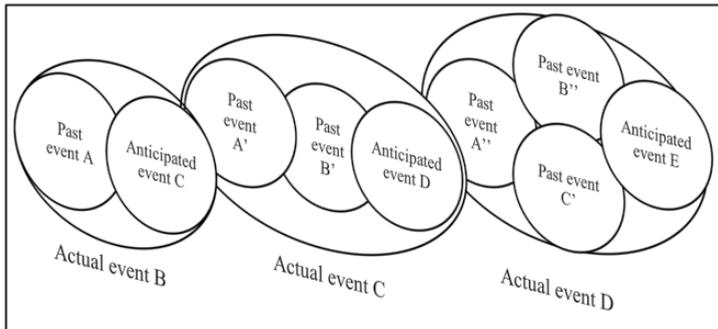

Figure 1. Actual events with structure of events evolving in a continuous present.

By defining organization as a structure of events that continuously evolves and brings both stability and novelty, temporality is the cornerstone for understanding the stability-novelty entwinement. Bakken, Holt, and Zunkel (2013, p. 18) have noted "any mention of an event includes a reference to time, and vice-versa …". Events play a major role in creating temporality, as the actual event in its relation with other events gives structure to time and, more importantly, the abstraction of its passage (Mead, 1932, p. 21). In other words, the structure of events defines temporality of organization and the abstraction of its passage. Consequently, by prehending the structure of events, the continuum of reality is defined. Essentially, by defining and redefining past and future events, temporality is defined and redefined as well. Through the prehension of the structure of events, the temporality – i.e. the continuum of the activities for actors – is thus both stable and new.

To sum up, four concepts emerge as a core to this events-based framework: event, prehension, structure of events and temporality. The following table defines these main concepts.

Table 1. Overview of the main concepts of the events-based approach.

Concepts	Definitions
Event	An event is simply a concrete fact. An event is a moment in which the activity and its organization are concrete and tangible.
Prehension	Prehension means that actors always define and act in their actual event through their engagement with past, present and anticipated events.
Structure of events	The structure of events is the past and future events prehended in an actual event. The notion of structure of events insists on the fact that these events are prehended in a certain way by actors leading to order the activity.
Temporality	Temporality is the perception of the continuum of reality. The prehension in actual event of past and future events – called structure of events – provides the ordering of events. This ordering is temporality.

Before putting the event-based framework into practice, let's synthesize its four main tenets (Table 2): 1/ event is unit of analysis to understand organization as stability-novelty intertwinement. 2/ Past and future events are prehended in the actual event. 3/ Organization is a prehended structure of events bringing stability and novelty. 4/ Ontology of organization is anchored in its temporality.

Table 2. Main tenets of an events-based framework.

Main tenets	Key explanations in understanding organization
Actual event as unit of analysis to understand organization	Organization is observed and understood through events in which humans and things act and have existence. Consequently, organization only exists in what is happening in actual events.
Past and future events are prehended in actual event	Past, present and future events related to the organization are not separated from one another but are prehended by actors in an ongoing present. As a consequence, the understanding of organization is done from the events prehended by actors in their activities.
Organization is a structure of events prehended in actual event and bringing stability and novelty	Organization is defined as a structure of events composed by past, present and anticipated events. By prehending a structure of events, actors produce and reproduce organization. Even if past and anticipated events can be more or less prehended in the same way (ensuring stability), these structures of events are constantly renewed, ever-changing and open (ensuring novelty). As a consequence, in an actual event, organization exhibits both reiterations of what has been and novelty at the same time.
Ontology of organization is anchored in its temporality	By defining organization as a structure of events, organization only exists as an active temporality, where past, present and future events are intertwined and cannot be understood separately. As a consequence, in an events-based framework, the ontology of organization is therefore inseparable from its temporality.

Research Design

As mentioned above, the aim of this research is to address the stability-novelty intertwinement in the becoming of organization by applying an events-based framework. We will empirically show that stability and novelty are expressed concomitantly through events, and not sequentially in different events, as suggested by mainstream theories of organization change. Consequently, our research method involves following a project that enabled us to describe its continuous present in order to understand how the project is both maintained, ensuring its stability; and redefined, ensuring novelty to adapt to the evolution of the activity, by actors through the prehension of past and future events in actual events.

More precisely, we consider a case about a project dealing with the development of a human management tool, with the aim of managing competencies at a bank that we will call Banca. Banca is a medium size bank specialized in private banking, which in 2009 had approximately 775 employees. Due to the worldwide financial crisis that began during the last quarter of 2008, Banca began to question its recruitment policy. While for many years Banca had continuously recruited new employees, the collapse of the financial markets put an end to new recruitment. In this context, Banca wanted to launch a project in order to improve its human management practices, particularly its competencies management system. The aim of this project was to avoid redundancies and to subsequently improve Banca's internal mobility. To develop a competency management tool, Banca negotiated a partnership with a research centre specialized in business, management and information technology. This partnership was also about a collaborative research. Consequently, both Banca and Research Centre invested money in this project. Furthermore, Banca hired a freelance consultant specialized in human resource management to assist with the development of the tool. Thus, the three main stakeholders in this project were Banca, the Research Centre and the consultant. The sponsors were Banca and the Research Centre, and the main team's members were the project's manager, the consultant, the director of the Research Centre, the manager of the Human Resources department at Banca, the person responsible for training at Banca, and one of the two co-authors of this article. The project was originally meant to last for 12 months, but ultimately lasted for 18 months, from October 2008 until March 2010. The Banca project was a rich opportunity to experience the becoming of organization as the actors involved in the different facets of the project were forced to define not only their aims and deliverables, but also deadlines, meeting schedules and anticipated future activities and outcomes. In other words, the actors had to define their organization and to maintain it throughout the project.

Research method

The following sections provide explanations on how we collected and analysed data. We then explain how we empirically applied the four main theoretical tenets of the events-based framework (cf. Table 3).

Our research method followed four main steps. One co-author had first-hand knowledge thanks to our participant observation of the project from October 2008 (its beginning) to September 2009. This co-author was hired as a researcher at the Research Centre in early October 2008 and was responsible for participating in the project and also spent 10 and half months with members of the project (part time). As a result, we lived the same events that the other team members did. More precisely, we carried out participant observations during a period of 10 months, from 15 October 2008 to 27 August 2009. We thus participated in most of the project meetings (roughly 40). We transcribed each meeting, noting the topics, main ideas

and decisions, and main quotes from the actors. Moreover, we participated in many informal conversations about the project during breaks, phone calls, lunches, etc. We recorded notes on these interactions in a journal. While we noted most of our own actions, interactions and quotes, we also made sure we recorded the methodological aspects, initial intuitions, findings, feelings and judgements in order to take the role that our own perceptions played in the findings into account. Furthermore, various documents (at least 190) were collected, ranging from official documents (such as partnership contracts, meeting reports, etc.) to unofficial documents (such as drafts, previous versions, etc.). We also had access to the emails written and received by the Project Manager during the project, which were exchanged during the project (310 emails were collected). Finally, throughout the project, we conducted and transcribed 31 interviews with actors within different functions and positions in the project. These data enabled us to understand Banca and the context of the project better.

The second step was aimed at ensuring that the actual events described in the article have a shared meaning among the team members. This is a crucial point to ensure the plausibility of our results. As Huber and Miroski (1997, p. 1426) underlined this as a matter of the "validity" of events: "Does every version of an event have as much validity as every other version?". To answer this question, we wrote two versions of a memo on the project. This memo dealt with the events of the project, the actors' main points of view (with quotes), the main decisions, and the deliverables produced. The aim was to compare our lived experience with those of the actors in order to ensure the reliability of the description. In July 2009, a first version was sent to certain project members (the Project Manager, an engineer, and the consultant). They agreed with the proposed interpretation of the sequence of events from October 2008 to July 2009 and thus did not send us a revised version of the memo. At the end of the case study in May 2010, a second version was written and presented to the Research Centre's main actors. Later on, the project manager and an engineer sent a revised version to us. Following on from this, we incorporated his comments into the document. This document is quite important as it ensures that the events (cf. next section) transcribed in this article have a shared meaning among the team members and have not just been interpreted by the researcher.

The third step was the back and forth process between theory and empirical materials (Orton, 1997), which enabled us to move past the description of the case and to provide insights. Our data analysis emerged throughout the process of writing the article, as the aim of the article evolved to the development of the events-based approach. Furthermore, by keeping process philosophy in mind, we read and re-read the empirical materials, and took notes about any relevant topics (Dodd, Anderson, & Jack, 2013; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 2002). By constantly comparing empirical data and theoretical frameworks, a number of interesting insights emerged.

The fourth step was the identification, description and following of the project pertaining to an events-based framework. Following this approach, the aim is to show how the project was a continuous present in which any actual event is incorporated into other actual events, and any structure of events is itself part of another structure of events. By describing a plausible ongoing process of the project through the actual events lived by actors, we are thus able to illustrate why stability and novelty cannot be separated. Here, plausible means that we do not seek a complete description of the structure of events evolving through actual events, but rather a description that explains how stability and novelty are intertwined in actual events. The actual events were thus selected when they were a concrete fact shared by the project's actors. From the memos, we have identified and described four main actual events: the first meeting, the writing of the partnership contract, the elaboration of the competencies model, and the making of the pilot tool. Moreover, as noted by Whitehead (1920), the description of

an event and its relation with a structure of events requires that one specify the place, time and character of the event: "In specifying the place and the time you are really stating the relation of the assigned event to the general structure of other observed events" (Whitehead, 1920, p. 165). For each event, we have thus identified the structure of events prehended, i.e. how past and future events take place to make the actual event possible. Consequently, each actual event is described as a structure of events giving order to the project. More precisely, this description enables us to show that the organization of the project lies in its temporality that is actively defined by actors in actual events.

The following table (Table 3) summarizes how we developed a methodology that enabled us to apply the theoretical framework.

Table 3. Articulation between the theoretical framework and the methodology.

Theoretical tenets	Methodological implications in the study of organization
Actual event as unit of analysis to understand organization	**Purpose:** Identifying the main actual events of an activity such as a project. **How:** Participant observation and document collecting that enabled the researcher to write a memo shared with participants. **Aim:** Ensuring that the actual events described in the article have a shared meaning among the team members. **Results:** We have identified and described four main actual events: the first meeting, the writing of the partnership contract, the first steering committee about the competencies model evaluation, and the making of the pilot tool.
Past and future events are prehended in actual event	**Purpose:** For each actual event, identifying how past and anticipated events take place to make the actual event possible. **How:** For each actual event identified, describing how past and anticipated events are mobilized by actors. **Aim:** Showing that the actual event is defined by past and anticipated events as much as actual events define past and anticipated events. **Results:** We have shown how actual events are not isolated events but constitute a continuous present.
Organization is a structure of events prehended in actual event and bringing stability and novelty	**Purpose:** For each actual event, show how the structure of events brings both stability and novelty. **How:** Identifying how past and future events are prehended both similarly (bringing stability) and differently (bringing novelty) throughout the project. **Aim:** Describing organization as a continuous present in which the past, present and future cannot be separated but have to be considered as an ongoing movement. **Results:** We have shown that some events of the project were prehended throughout the project. These events were not prehended in the same way throughout the project bringing both stability and novelty.
Ontology of organization is anchored in its temporality	**Purpose:** In actual event, organization appears as an ordered temporality. **How:** The description of the structure of events shows how events enable actors to define an organization of their activity. **Aim:** Showing that organization lies in its temporality that is actively defined by actors in actual events. **Results:** by prehending structure of events, the actors define the continuum of reality – i.e. time – and all of what constitutes organization: order, structure, etc. Organization is also redefined (novelty) and maintained (stability) in an active temporality.

Findings

In this section, we will present our findings. The case illustrates, firstly, how the organization of the project Banca is an ongoing movement in which stability and novelty co-exist in the same actual event. Second, the case illustrates how to empirically mobilize an events-based framework. For each main event described, we show 1) how the structure of events is prehended, 2) how this structure of events brings both novelty and stability, and 3) how events are not isolated from one another, but constitute an indivisible movement. Each actual event is illustrated with a figure. These figures serve as a simplified way to represent the structure of events prehended in any actual event that incorporates the structure of events of the total of the other actual events.

The first meeting and the beginning of the partnership

The first meeting between Banca and the Research Centre occurred on 9 May 2008. For the project team, this event was considered as the beginning of the project, although the partnership contract had not yet been signed. This first meeting was an intense experience for team members as it concretized the beginning of the project and its very existence for actors.

Nevertheless, during this first meeting, the aim of the project was not really defined and remained quite vague. The only agreement concluded was the development of a tool to manage skills at Banca expected in September 2009. Apart from this very broad aim, the motivations and the needs of Banca to develop this tool were unclear. Consequently, the lack of mutual agreement during this first meeting was considered later as one of the main reasons of the difficulties met by team members. Actors also prehended this event throughout the project to ensure both the stability of the project (it was the concrete starting point of the project) and to interpret the difficulties encountered to develop the tool (this event was reinterpreted many times to explain the difficulties encountered), bringing novelty to the project. For example, when the very first tensions between Banca and the Research Centre appeared, this event was reinterpreted as a way to make sense of what was going on:

Project Manager: "I think the project does not matter. What Banca cares about is the partnership, not the project."

Consultant: "The project was born because of the willingness to develop a private-public partnership." (Working session, 15th December 2008)

The diagram below (Figure 2) illustrates the emergence of a structure of events related to the project by showing how expected events such as the partnership and the development of the tool were prehended during the first meeting. At this time, the structure of events was therefore
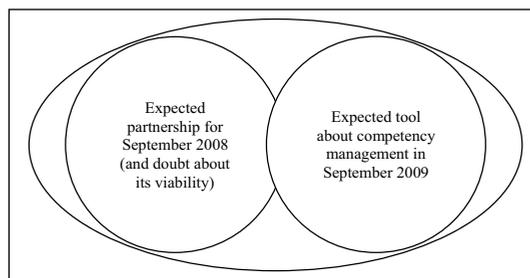

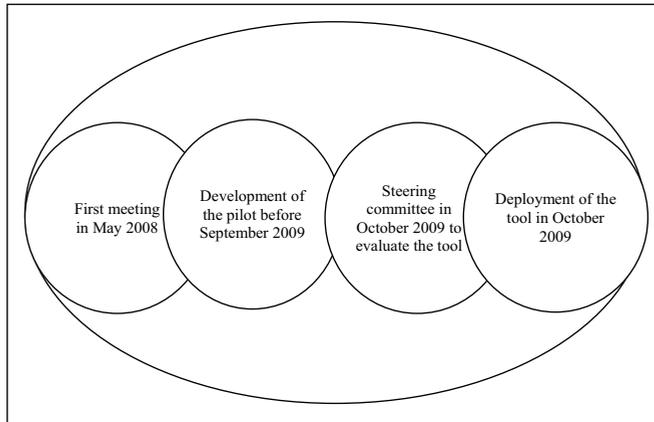**Figure 2.** Structure of events of the first meeting.

Figure 3. Structure of events of the writing of the partnership contract.

simple and mainly oriented towards the future, as the stakeholders did not share past events together. However, these two expected events helped stakeholders to roughly define a very first temporality of the project.

The writing of the partnership contract

Another event that was involved in the definition of the new tool was the elaboration of the partnership contract, which was negotiated between September and December 2008 and finally signed on 12 December 2008. Immediately after signing the contract, stakeholders took this event as their involvement in the project, despite the fact that the project had already been a *reality* for actors for several months (for most of the actors the project began with the first meeting on 9 May 2008). This contract aimed at defining the organization of the project and its aims.

More precisely, in order to write the partnership contract, actors had to redefine the meaning of past events such as (1) the first meeting during which they negotiated the aim of the project; but also future ones such as (2) the development of the pilot tool expected between October 2008 and September 2009. Moreover, they also defined other anticipated events such as (3) the final steering committee with all the sponsors expected for early October 2009, and (4) the deployment of the competencies management tool in Banca expected in October 2009 (cf. Figure 3). These events brought about a structure of events enabling stakeholders to prehend the actual event concerning the writing of the partnership contract. In other words, stakeholders reinterpreted what was said during the previous meetings to define all of the work packages and the projects' deadlines.

Actors thus prehended a structure of past and anticipated events that had been partly defined before, such as the first meeting on 9 May 2008 and the development of the pilot tool expected in September 2009. Such prehension of the structure of events introduced a sense of stability to the project. However, during this actual event they also defined new events bringing novelty: both the final steering committee and the deployment of the competency management tool in Banca were expected in October 2009. It is important to note that even though the actors continued to prehend events such as the first meeting and the development of the pilot tool (expected to take place between October 2008 and September 2009), their understanding was not entirely equal. For example, the pilot tool development event was better defined as deliverables and deadlines were specified in the partnership contract.

Nevertheless, from December 2008 and over the course of the project, new actions were undertaken. Consequently, the teams actors did not follow the initial sequencing defined in the partnership contract, and the nature of the deliverables also changed in order to meet Banca's requirements.

Project Manager (on the evolution of the project):	"We will have to explain this shift in meaning."
Consultant:	"The human resources manager has agreed to make an additional clause in order to pursue the project."
Project Manager:	"Things have changed. We will have to revise the contract." (Project committee, 17 February 2009)

It is worth noting that even though stakeholders did not respect the contract, they could not ignore it. On the one hand, what happened during the writing of the contract (i.e. negotiations and compromises) helped actors to define the organization of the project and thus to ensure its stability. On the other hand, these negotiations and compromises were also prehended as a constraint by stakeholders, who constantly compared the events and the deliverables produced with those mentioned in the contract.

The first steering committee: evaluation of the competency model

Parallel to the writing of the partnership contract, the project team members identified that one of the very first project activities would be to describe a theoretical competency management model in order to define, identify and assess skills before working on the development of a pilot. At that time, this theoretical model was considered very important, because it was to be a first step toward the development of the future competency management tool. According to the consultant, this model had to be validated by the responsible person of Banca and the Research Centre in order to become a key benchmark for the definition of the tool:

"In my opinion, the competency model will be the heart of the matter. We have to have time to explain. The model must seem simple. The model should be validated by the steering committee. Even if there is no steering committee in January, we have to organize one. We cannot go on with the development of the pilot model without the validation by the steering committee. This is the heart of the tool, everybody has to understand that." (Consultant, work meeting, 10 December 2008)

From October to December 2008 numerous efforts were made by the consultant and the project manager to define a theoretical competency model for presentation during the first steering committee on the 18 December 2008.

More precisely, the first steering committee was mainly about the evaluation of this competency model. To discuss the relevance of the model presented, the stakeholders referred to past events such as (1) the first meeting, in order to address the need expressed by Banca at the very beginning of the project; (2) the partnership contract and, more specifically, the deliverables negotiated by both the Research Centre and Banca during the writing of the document; and anticipated events such as (3) the development of the pilot before September 2009 and the matter of the implementation process of the theoretical model into the tool; (4) the final steering committee meeting expected at the end of the project (October 2009) during which the tool would be evaluated; and (5) the deployment of the tool in the bank after the end of the project (cf. Figure 4).
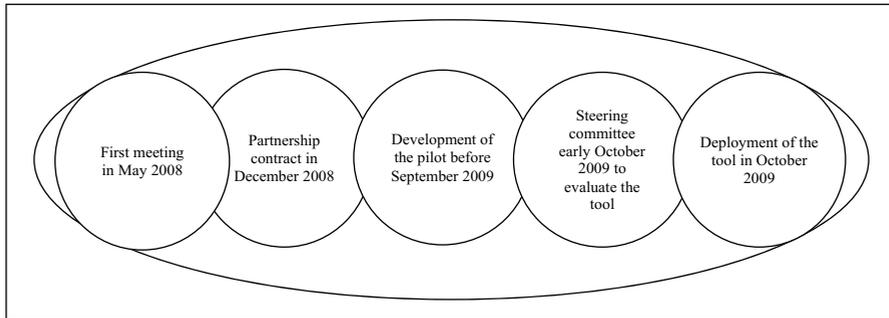
Figure 4. Structure of events of the first steering committee.

After much debate among the team members and the sponsors of the project (mainly the Human Resources Manager and the Research Centre Representative) about this model, the sponsors expressed their doubts, notably concerning its concrete future implementation into the tool. Because this competency model seemed too difficult to be implemented concretely in a tool, the steering committee did not validate it. Indeed, the sponsors clearly did not understand the practical aspects of this model.

To be precise, to evaluate this competency model, the members of the steering committee prehended past and anticipated events, but they were not prehended entirely as in previous actual events (i.e. the first meeting and the writing of the partnership contract). This evolution of meaning of both past and anticipated events brought novelty to the project. For example, to evaluate the relevance of the competency model, they had to define the meaning of the event of the development of the pilot more precisely, as the process development had remained quite vague up to this point in time. The prehension of this structure of events (by redefining past and anticipated events) also helped actors to define their actual event (i.e. the first steering committee) in order to judge the relevance of the competency model.

The making of the pilot of the tool

In late February 2009, based on the failure of the competency model to be validated, actors decided to change their approach: rather than develop an abstract theoretical model, they chose to develop the main uses of the tool. At that moment, the meaning of this failure was interpreted in the light of what would be attempted in the future: to make the tool more concrete for Banca and to avoid repeating the same mistake twice. Rather than to try and define the competency model, the actors focused on what they really needed in order to manage skills. Here is an example of this demand for a concrete tool in order to manage the trainings:

> The Human Resources Manager: "We have to describe concretely the skills. If we want to be efficient, we have to shift quickly to trainings …". (Steering committee, 6 April 2009)

This change of approach also called the relevance of the partnership contract, drawn up at the second actual event, into question. The past events of the writing of the partnership contract and the making of the competency model, which had been considered as necessary steps to succeed, were now actually considered, in part, as failures and a waste of time. The events of the definition of the partnership contract and the competency model were no longer considered as evidence of progress
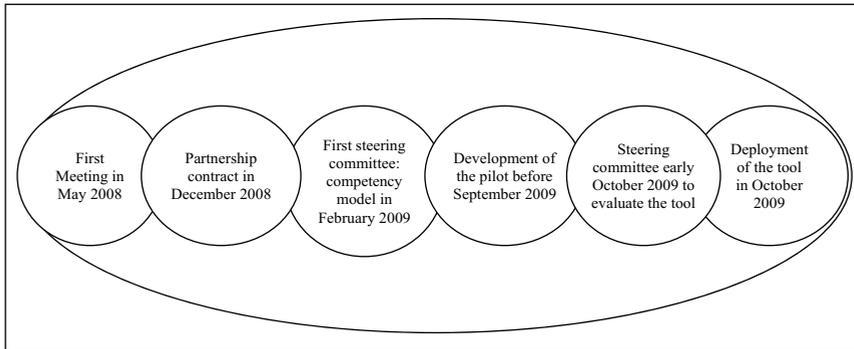
Figure 5. Structure of events of the development of the pilot.

in the project or as necessary steps to prepare the project. Consequently, the partnership was called into question as some actors thought that the project was far from reaching the initial goal:

> Human Resources Assistant, responsible for training: "I see 'description of job functions' and not skills. Our collaboration is based on the matter of skills. For the moment, we are far from the expected objective." (Working session, 12 May 2009)

In order to overcome these difficulties, the actors decided to define the pilot of the competency management tool with concrete utilities in order to achieve their aim by September 2009, the initial deadline of the project. Consequently, the project was redefined and thus changed by first redefining the past events, such as (1) the first meeting which was considered a loss of time because of the lack of definition of the project, (2) the writing of the partnership contract and the uselessness of the negotiation of the clauses as it had become impossible to respect them, (3) the failure to develop a competency model; and second, by prehending some anticipated events, such as (4) the deadline to develop a pilot of the competency management tool in September 2009, (5) the final evaluation of the project by the stakeholders in October 2009 and (6) its deployment in Banca, expected for October 2009 (cf. Figure 5). The evolution of the meaning of past events, such as the first meeting and the writing of the partnership contract, brought novelty to the project as these events were perceived as a waste of time and which led actors to redefine the project. However, this prehension also brought stability, as these events helped actors to inscribe the development of the pilot (their actual event) into the historicity of the project which had started several months beforehand, and into the expected future of this project as well, i.e. the deployment of the tool in October 2009.

To concretely develop the pilot of the competency management tool, the actors decided to define what was considered to be the core piece of this tool: the job form. This template was the basic tool used to identify, define and transcribe people's competencies into a single document. To do that, they relied mainly on the employees themselves to define the content of the job form.

Consultant (on the development of the job form):	"The content of the job form has emerged on its own. The employees themselves defined the job forms. We only stick to the descriptions given by the collaborators about their competencies and their job."
Human Resources Manager:	"To be effective, we must concretely describe the competencies …." (Project committee, 6 April 2009)

Between 13 February and 16 April 2009, the actors defined 10 versions of the job forms in line with tests carried out with the staff of two departments. On 5 October 2009, stakeholders organized a steering committee meeting to present and validate the job forms. These job forms were considered the basic features of the piloting of the competency management tool. Consequently, as regards to this new artefact, the Human Resources team of Banca operated an important shift: they decided to entirely reconsider the human resources information system. Rather than deploying a competency management tool, they decided to use the job form as a key tool to design a new information system.

To summarize, the Banca case empirically demonstrates how organization is a becoming process in which stability and novelty occur from the prehension of the structure of events. Owing to the fact that the prehension of the structures of events is neither entirely the same nor completely different, the structure of events partly evolved (bringing novelty) but ensured enough stability to make this project possible.

Discussion

The main purpose of this research has been to address the matter of organization as a stability-novelty intertwinement through the lens of events. Our central question has been how can we ontologically understand and empirically study organization on the assumption that stability and novelty reside in the same acts? To answer this question, we have developed an events-based framework inspired by Whitehead (1920, 1929, 1938), Mead (1932) and Hernes (2014a, 2014b). This framework encompasses four main tenets: 1/ event is unit of analysis to understand organization as stability-novelty intertwinement. 2/ Past and future events are prehended in the actual event. 3/ Organization is a prehended structure of events bringing stability and novelty. 4/ Ontology of organization is anchored in its temporality. Such framework based on an events-based approach of organization offers three contributions to organization studies, which we detail here after.

Dissolving stability-novelty dualism in our understanding of organization

First, by considering the event as a unit of analysis, an events-based framework may enable scholars to understand organization as an ongoing movement in which stability and novelty co-exist into the same reality. An events-based approach fully recognizes both the constant emergence of organization and the maintenance of its character. More precisely, by continuously re-defining past and anticipated events in actual events, we have argued that actors partly ongoing redefine the organization and, partly ongoing reproduce the structure and order of it. Stability and novelty are thus expressed in actual events. In giving priority to the actual event, the debate is no longer about the stability versus the novelty of organization, but rather about how organization is both stable and novel in the present. The matter of prehension has been a key concept to understand how actual events encompass stability and novelty in a structure of past and future prehended events. Let us now explore this in further detail.

The Banca case has exemplified the intertwinement of stability and novelty by showing that some past and anticipated events of the project were prehended throughout the project (such as the first meeting, the writing of the partnership contract, the first steering committee about the evaluation of the competency model, and the development of the pilot) while being redefined throughout the project. Indeed, these events were not prehended in the same way throughout the project. For example, in the beginning, the partnership contract and the competency model were considered as cornerstones to build the project, while later they appeared as failures to overcome. The events "writing of the partnership contract" and "the first steering committee about the evaluation of the

competency model" were not entirely the same throughout the project, even if actors never stopped to take them into consideration.

This is what prehension means; that past and anticipated events are defined and redefined throughout activities. Through prehension of events a continuous present emerges in which the past, present and future cannot be separated, but have to be considered as an ongoing movement. Following this approach, absolute stability and absolute novelty cannot exist. Stability as the exact reproduction or novelty as an entirely new situation, are mere illusion. Here, the stability and novelty of organization are always in a state of becoming, indivisible and occurring in actual event. Stability of organization is thus not based on enduring qualities and novelty is not based on rupture with the past, but they are constitutive of both past and anticipated events prehended as a structure. By prehending past and anticipated events from various degrees of different ways (by adding, forgetting, redefining events), actors bring more or less stability and novelty in organization.

Understanding organization as an indivisible movement

Second, the events-based framework pushes forward the flow-like approach by providing insights about how to empirically apply this approach without falling into the trap of a sequential view of events. Indeed, one of the main challenges in the development of an events-based framework has been to surpass the empirical difficulty met by scholars in understanding organization as an indivisible movement. That is why the notions of prehension has been crucial in the case study, as we have shown that events are both a continuation of what has been and partly something new. Far from causation and sequentiality of events, the focus on the structure of events prehended in actual event leads us to consider organization as an immanent unfolding force (Nayak & Chia, 2011). Consequently, the events-based framework seems to be a relevant approach to studying organization becoming.

However, one of the main difficulties of such an approach is in the discerning and the disclosing of an event and a structure of events, as they are key methodological aspects to start and circumscribe the study. Actually, Whitehead provided a very terse definition of the notion of event and the illustrations are very rare (Stengers, 2011). He only insisted on the inseparability between the event and the structure of events related to it: "But in discerning an event we are also aware of its significance as a relatum in the structure of events" (Whitehead, 1920, p. 52). In other words, to define an event, we need to define the structure of events. Our empirical application of Whitehead's thinking applied to the Banca project can be considered as a first attempt to discern and disclose events through their connection with other events in a structure. Consequently, we have no other choice than to describe a structure of events in order to understand the actual event itself. That was the aim of this empirical study: describing the structure of events in actual events in order to show that stability and novelty of organization is in the structure of events prehended.

Understanding organization as active temporality

Third and finally, an events-based framework offers an active temporal view of organization. By defining organization from the past, present and future as continually internalized into an actual event, this approach provides an alternative view of the linear and sequential view of time. In other words, an events-based approach recognizes that the tangible reality of organization exists in its temporality. As explained in the theoretical section, the events-based approach argues that the structure of past and anticipated events is constitutive of organization. Consequently, organization exists as temporality, "both in and through time" (Dodd et al., 2013, p. 35), providing meaning and the ontology for organization. By prehending events in a certain way, the actors

define their successes, their failures, their hierarchy, the scheduling of tasks, their goals, and so on. In other words, all of what constitutes organization is defined and redefined in an active temporality, as suggested by Schultz and Hernes (2013) and Hernes (2014a). For example, in the Banca case, by prehending the writing of the partnership contract, the team's members maintained, in part, the scheduling of the project and its objective. This active remaking of the organization's temporal trajectory in the actual event suggests how organization exists through this time-making, where temporality is not an external dimension or resource, but the very being of organization. Consequently, rather than consider that organization is ontologically prior to change (entity-like approach) or that change is ontologically prior to organization (flow-like approach), we propose that neither change nor organization is prior to either, but rather the ontology of organization is defined through its temporality.

Compared to a traditional view of events, an events-based framework brings a new regard to the relation between the past and the future in the present and avoids falling into a sequential and serial view of organizational change, where the past stages of organization are finished and have an impact on the present one, and the present one will have an impact on future organization stages. Such a new regard can help scholars to empirically "recover the continuity and to view the process of transformation as an indivisible movement" (Nayak & Chia, 2011, p. 295), i.e. the indivisibility of stability and novelty.

More precisely, the events-based approach considers that past is not over and the future is not merely expected. Past events are not dead data leading to the present, but are both constitutive and constituted in the present. Conversely, anticipated events are not only expected, but participate fully in the shaping of the present and the reshaping of the past. For example, in the Banca case, actors redefined the event related to the competencies model (past event) because of the critiques made by the steering committee about the impossibility to implement it into the future tool (anticipated event). This example illustrates that future expectations reshape the past, and these past and future events also serve as a basis to define the present. This finding is in line with previous research that has claimed that past and future are constitutive of the present (Adam, 1990; Dodd et al., 2013; Holt & Mueller, 2011), i.e. that past events are a construction that frame the present (Cobb, 2007; Suddaby, Foster, & Trank, 2010), the present event allows projection to the future (Gephart, Topal, & Zhang, 2010; Hernes & Weik, 2007), and projected possible futures reshape the past (Lorino & Mouret, 2013; Schultz & Hernes, 2013) and participate in the shaping of present. Temporality is continuously defined and redefined through actual events in order to make them possible. Organization is thus here defined from its temporality that enables people to act.

The main consequence of this statement is that time is internal to events (Adam, 1990; Hernes, 2014b) and serves as a structure for actors. In other words, time is a system-specific process that leaves a record (Adam, 1990, p. 67). As noted by Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 963), social engagement is informed by the past, but also oriented towards the future (as the capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and towards the present (as the capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects). Consequently, on the one hand, any sequential order of events and any separation of events are merely analytical as we live in a continuous present; however, on the other hand, the categorization of events made by actors defines the order and structure of organization that makes the activity possible.

Conclusion

Organization studies have been characterized by two opposing views. The entity-like approach that considers organization as an entity and privileges studies based on change, being and stability; and the flow-like approach that considers organization as always in a state of becoming and privileges

studies based on emergence, becoming and novelty. The entity-like approach recognizes that organization can remain stable over time but refutes any understanding of organization as a fluid process of acts of connecting, always in a state of becoming (King et al., 2010; Whetten, 2006). Conversely, by focusing mainly on the ongoing novelty that occurs in organizational life, the flow-like approach has insisted on the emergent process that characterized organization (Nayak, 2008; Nayak & Chia, 2011; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). However, the flow-like approach has provided few explanations about how stability emerges from a becoming process (Birnholtz et al., 2007).

In order to push forward the flow-like approach, we have developed an events-based approach. Following this approach, stability and novelty are not different states of organization, but rather they are understood as a same act happening in a present moment. Such a view aims first at providing a framework to understand organization as an indivisible movement in which stability and novelty are encompassed in an actual event; and second, making feasible the empirical application of the flow-like view that has mainly applied a misleading « temporal bracketing » method in its studies (Langley et al., 2013). In this, the events-based approach aims at pushing forward the process view that understands organization as evolving through different events as developed by Pettigrew (1990, 1992, 1997), Van de Ven and Huber (1990), Van de Ven and Poole (1990), and Langley (1999). In spite of the important contributions of this approach – these scholars have highlighted the importance of events and the study of their relation to understand organization – their study based on a more or less causal approach of events doesn't bear any comprehension of organization as an indivisible movement.

In this, an events-based framework seems to be a promising approach to study organization. It may be a way to surpass various dualisms, to study organization as an immanent process, and to bring time into the ontological debate about organization. The reason being that as this theoretical framework provides an alternative view to study organization, this article can only be considered as a starting point for future research.

Notes

1. Organization scholars have long recognized the relevance of Whitehead's process philosophy work in thinking about the becoming of organization (Bakken & Hernes, 2006; Chia, 1999; Chia & King, 1998; Cobb, 2007; Cooper & Burrell, 1988; Hernes, 2008, 2014a, 2014b; Hernes & Weik, 2007; Nayak & Chia, 2011; Shotter, 2010; Weik, 2011). Whitehead's philosophy, especially as it was expressed in his seminal work *Process and reality* (1929), is an attempt to show how orders emerge and perish, working from the notion of "actual occasions" as his ultimate unit of analyses.

2. Chia and King (1998) have similarly used the notion of *event-cluster* and *aggregations of events* to express the idea that reality is the assembling, disassembling and reassembling of past aggregations of events into ever newer and novel event-clusters (Chia & King, 1998, pp. 465–466). Following this idea, Chia (2010) has defined organization as patterns of relationships and event-clustering (Chia, 2010, p.

116). These patterns of relationships can be explained by the fact that every actual event is an extension of others and composes, in part, new ones.

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