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STRATEGY EMERGENCE AS WAYFINDING

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Abstract

Strategy researchers now increasingly recognize that in many organizations strategic coherence can emerge inadvertently from local coping actions and decisions taken ‘on the hoof’. Yet, how exactly this is possible remains undertheorized. We draw from the practice turn in social theory to propose a perspective of strategizing as wayfinding that emphasizes how local purposive action, habitus and small iterative changes made can actually result in the unexpected emergence of a coherent and plausible strategy. We empirically investigate the case of a premium-end gourmet restaurant in the highly institutionalized field of Haute Cuisine; their everyday practical coping actions taken, and the ongoing improvisations made, and analyze them in relation to the individuals concerned, their professionally-socialized identities, the unique set of organizational circumstances they faced, and the institutional and environmental demands put upon them. We show how strategy, as a consistent pattern of actions, emerge serendipitously from the synergistic interweaving of such local coping actions taken and the positive unintended consequences that unexpectedly ensued. We contribute to the strategy research by proposing a model of strategy emergence as a wayfinding process that takes into account the actors' social embeddedness and reveal the dynamics of how this actually happens in practice.

Key-Words (5)

strategy emergence, wayfinding process, practice, haute cuisine restaurant, purposive, habitus

STRATEGY EMERGENCE AS WAYFINDING

"We have a strategic plan. It's called doing things"

(Herb Kelleher, co-founder South West Airlines)

Strategy practice and process scholars recognize that many organizations achieved success not because they had pre-established strategic plans, but because a viable strategy often emerges inadvertently (Chia, 2013) as a coherent "pattern in a stream of decisions" (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985:257). As a consequence, they have redirected attention away from the content of strategic planning to the activities, actions, processes and practices occurring within organizational life (Golsorkhi, Rouleau, Seidl & Vaara, 2015; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas & Van de Ven, 2013; MacKay & Chia, 2013; Mintzberg, 1978; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985; Pettigrew, 1985, 1992; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Van de Ven, 1992) to explain strategy making and to highlight the phenomenon of strategy emergence. Yet, more research is needed on *how* a strategy, as a coherent and consistent pattern of actions, can actually emerge (Tsoukas, 2010; Vaara and Whittington, 2012) even in the absence of clear prior intentions and deliberate planning.

This paper attempts to address this question of how strategy emergence is possible by bridging practice-based approach and strategy process research (Chia & Mac Kay, 2007; Kouamé & Langley, 2018; Mirabeau, Maguire & Hardy, 2018) through a focus on the role of everyday practice as an ongoing wayfinding activity involving 'purposive' rather than 'purposeful' action (Chia & Holt, 2006, 2009; Chia & Rasche, 2010). We argue here that much of the literature on strategy and strategy making presumes a rational-calculative model of human action in which "thinking should precede action; that action should serve a purpose; [and] that purpose should be defined in terms of a consistent set of pre-existent goals" (March, 1972: 419). Such an implicit

understanding is deeply embedded in the western culture (Jullien, 2004: 4) and remains a challenge for strategy research (Mintzberg, 1990; Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014: 1203; Tsoukas, 2010). It is what has prevented a satisfactory account of how strategy can emerge inadvertently from a stream of seemingly unrelated local coping actions. Yet, as March (1972) and others have pointed out, the reality is that in many facets of ordinary organizational life, people regularly do act without having a clear objective or longer-term goal in mind; their primary preoccupation is dealing with the here-and-now. Overcoming impediments, dealing with disruptions and unexpected changes, resolving concerns 'on the hoof', is what characterizes the everyday life of organizational actors. Hence, everyday actions can be "purposive without the actor having in mind a purpose" (Dreyfus, 1991: 93). This distinction between purposiveness and purposefulness is crucial to our understanding of the possibility of strategy emergence. Within this perspective, we show that strategy emerges as a consistent pattern from the intertwining of individual, organizational and social concerns through a collective habitus which frame perceptions and possibilities as the driver of action (Bourdieu, 1990). Habitus is what accounts for the inadvertent emergence of strategy via an iterative practical coping process we call wayfinding.

To this end, we investigate the case of a small company in a highly institutionalized environment: a premium-end gourmet restaurant (Champagne Gourmet Restaurant - CGR) in the field of haute cuisine. We focus on the everyday practical coping actions and small adaptive changes made, and analyze them in relation to the individuals concerned, their professionally-socialized identities, the unique set of organizational circumstances faced, and the institutional and environmental demands put upon them. We show how through the initiation and intertwinement of a variety of small uncoordinated iterative changes, in their search for novel ways of improving service and dining experience to appease a very demanding cliental, it was possible for CGR to

"wayfind" its way towards strategic coherence and to distinguish itself with significant consequence.

Our study contributes to the emergent strategy school of thought by showing how a wayfinding perspective, underpinned by the practice turn in social theory with its important focus on habitus as the generator of purposive action, can well explain the phenomenon of strategy emergence. More broadly, our study contributes to strategy research by empirically showing that the immanence of underlying social practices is what makes possible the relationships between micro and macro levels of strategizing. We also add to the understanding of the dynamics of emergent strategy by highlighting how the positive unintended consequences of small actions taken, and the itinerant interweaving of these actions cumulatively led to an effective and productive outcome for the organization.

In what follows, we begin with the notion of emergent strategy and show how a practice-based perspective, inspired by the notions of purposive action and wayfinding, can help advance our understanding of how a strategy can emerge as a coherent pattern. This is followed by detailing the research method adopted for empirical investigation of the CGR case. In the third section, we detail the changes that occurred at CGR through a period of some four years and analyze them within the perspective of actors' habitus and trajectories, the local restaurant and the centrality of haute cuisine. Finally, we discuss our findings.

EMERGENT STRATEGY, PRACTICE AND WAYFINDING

Emergent Strategy

Several decades ago, Henry Mintzberg and colleagues (Mintzberg, 1978; Mintzberg & McHugh, 1985; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985) pointed to a theoretical gap that existed between the notion of planned strategy and that which actually happens in organizations. Mintzberg (1990: 182)

especially criticized the strategy design school for its unwarranted presumption that thought must always precede action and that strategy formation is above all a conception process rather than one of iterative trial-and-error learning. For him and his colleagues, organizational strategies often emerged as partly unplanned consequences of human actions and interactions; strategy is better understood as "a pattern realized despite, or in the absence of intentions" (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985:257). Emergent strategy is, "in essence, unintended order" (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985:271); that is, both coherent and consistent. Tsoukas (2010: 53) observes that with emergent strategy "we talk about strategy ex post facto [...] practitioners do not necessarily have the sense that they strategize – this is, usually, researchers' attribution [or that of] practitioners themselves when they retrospectively make sense of what they do".

Ever since these initial insights, and notwithstanding a wide acknowledgement of the notion in contemporary strategy literature (MacLean & MacIntosh, 2015:74), only a small number of studies have directly focused on emergent strategy per se (Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014: 1202). Most of these, some of which are very well known, were aimed at substantiating the concept, either theoretically or empirically. Theoretical developments (ex. Mintzberg & McHugh, 1985; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985) essentially elaborated nuances along the continuum opposing emergent to intended types of strategy. Empirical investigations (Kipping & Cailluet, 2010; Mintzberg, 2007; Mintzberg & McHugh, 1985; Mintzberg & Rose, 2003; Mintzberg, Taylor & Waters, 1984; Mintzberg & Waters, 1982; Pascale, 1984) validated the notion by longitudinally tracking organizations' realized strategies and, within this frame, by contrasting realized strategy with initial plans, deliberate with emergent strategy. Very few studies have directly dealt with the underlying mechanisms that make possible emergent strategy or detailed some of its intricacies thus far. There are those that have especially outlined the central role of middle management in arriving at a coherent strategy. For example, in telling the story of Honda's entry into the US market, on the

basis of employees' retrospective account, Pascale (1984) showed that what fundamentally forged Honda's eventual strategy was in fact the local adaptive responses of perplexed managers directly engaged in the field. Contextual variables favorable to such strategy emergence, have also been identified such as interactive control (Osborn, 1998) or the development of projects misaligned with or peripheral to the existing strategy (Mintzberg & McHugh, 1985). Mirabeau & Maguire (2014) for example have shown that autonomous strategic behavior plays a key role in how emergent strategy originates. They nonetheless call for researchers to “further develop the emergent strategy concept by focusing on iterated processes of deploying material and symbolic resources” (Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014: 1228). Despite the notion being widely acknowledged in strategy literature, emergent strategy, its intricacies and dynamics, therefore, remain undertheorized. In particular, while previous literature has shown that strategy can emerge in the absence of clear intentions, they have not adequately explained how such emergence can be realized through largely uncoordinated local actions. How does a coherent strategy emerge despite or in the absence of clear intentions?

Practice perspectives on strategy and strategy emergence

If studies directly dedicated to further investigating the notion of emergent strategy remain scarce to date, Mintzberg and colleagues' pioneering work nonetheless initiated an alternative processual (ex. Burgelman, 1996; Langley, 1999; Langley et al., 2013; Pettigrew, 1985; 1992; Van de Ven, 1992) and practice-based (Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Vaara & Whittington, 2012) approach in strategy research that indirectly addressed the question of emergent strategy. As a matter of fact, in order to disentangle strategy making and to capture some of its dimensions such as time, agency, or context, scholars adopted more micro approaches to the phenomenon and progressively shifted (Chia & Mac Kay, 2007) the focus from strategy to strategizing and what

socially-embedded organizational actors actually do (Whittington, 2007). Within such perspectives, scholars were so far able to highlight several facets of strategizing (thus, though indirectly, of strategy emergence) such as the role of middle management (ex. Mantere, 2008), that of projects inductively emerging at the organizational periphery (Regnér, 2003), and the discursive (ex. Samra-Fredericks, 2003) and material (ex. Arnaud, Mills, Legrand & Maton, 2016) dimensions of strategizing.

Recently, scholars have further reassessed the fruitfulness of these approaches to studying strategizing (Kouamé & Langley, 2018; Mirabeau, Maguire & Hardy, 2018). In particular, their potential to unveil the intricacies and dynamics of emergent strategy is claimed to be twofold: first, they can highlight "the potential significance of micro-level details for concepts [...] that are often described empirically at a much higher level" (Vaara & Whittington 2012: 302) and provide "insight into how lower-level processes and practices engaged by individuals and groups connect to broader organizational-level processes and outcomes including strategy" (Kouamé & Langley, 2018: 560); and second, they can fully account for the social embeddedness of actors and how that affects their responses (Chia, 2013; Chia & Holt, 2006, 2009; Chia & MacKay, 2007; Elbasha & Wright, 2017; Langley et al., 2013; Tsoukas, 2010; Whittington, 2007).

Advocates of the practice-based approach however acknowledge that further work needs to be done (Carter, Clegg & Kornberger, 2008) to better relate strategy emergence to other forms of strategizing (Avenier, 1999; Mirabeau et al., 2018) and, most importantly, to unveil the inner workings of emergent strategy (Tsoukas, 2010: 49; Vaara & Whittington 2012: 313). In particular, they argue, most practice and process strategy research have so far directly addressed mainly formal and purposeful strategizing activities (Vaara & Whittington 2012: 313), and, despite the significant advances made over the last decades, existing research still does not explain how a myriad of micro local adaptive actions and decisions taken can come together into an emerging

and coherent macro pattern in the absence of intentions. How do seemingly inconsequential local actions, taken in situ and often *sponte sua* at the coal face of a business, eventuate into a coherent pattern that we then retrospectively recognize as being essentially strategic? This is the question that remains unanswered by both process and much of current practice-based approaches to strategy and strategy emergence. Our contention here is that the full import of the practice turn in social theory has not been sufficiently realized in current strategy theorizing that will enable a better understanding of how inadvertent strategy emergence is possible. Following the practice turn, our study examines, how in practice, a coherent strategy can emerge in the absence of clear intentions. In the next section, we introduce our conceptual framework in more details.

Wayfinding through purposive action

One of the most important implications of the practice turn is that “we must first overcome the traditional interpretation that theory is prior to practice” (Dreyfus, 1991: 47). As a foremost advocate of practice theory, Dreyfus (1991: 90) draws on the work of Heidegger and Nietzsche to insist that “Our understanding of the world is pre-ontological. We dwell in the equipment, practices and concerns...without noticing them or trying to spell them out”. In other, as Nietzsche puts it, “we could...’act’ in every sense of the word, and yet none of all this would have to ‘enter our consciousness’” (Nietzsche, 1974: 354, in Dreyfus, 1991: 57). From a genuine practice-based perspective, actions and practices precede conscious thought; they serve as a capability substrate that make cognitive representation possible in the first instance (Dreyfus, 2002: 367). As such, to truly appreciate the radical implications of the practice turn, there is a need to begin with everyday practical coping actions.

In this study, we adopt Chia and Holt's (2006, 2009) practice-based perspective on strategizing as wayfinding to characterize strategy emergence. Among the rich set of concepts and

features of strategizing that Chia and Holt (2009) introduce, we specifically selected the following key notion: wayfinding, purposive action, habitus, small changes, and unintended consequences arising from actions taken. Wayfinding (Ingold, 2000; Chia and Holt, 2009: 159-179) entails actors' exploratory actions: "feel(ing) their way *through* a world that is itself in motion, continually coming into being through the combined action of human and non-human agencies" (Ingold, 2000: 155, emphasis original). In wayfinding people do not negotiate a world whose layout is already fixed and laid out in advance. Rather they only "know as they go" (Ingold, 2000: 230); theirs is a knowledgeable form of ambulating. Wayfinding as a generic mode of engagement largely builds from one of two possible modes of existence first articulated by Heidegger (1971: 60); 'building' and 'dwelling'. Building is characterized by the distancing of individuals from their lifeworld through cognitively-driven activities such as designing, planning and goal-setting (Ingold, 2011: 10). The starting point for a building perspective is an "imagined separation between the perceiver and the world, such that the perceiver has to reconstruct the world, in the mind, prior to any meaningful engagement with it" (Ingold, 2000: 178). Dwelling, on the other hand, entails the assumption of immersion of beings in their lifeworld so that actors are characterized by an "absorbed intentionality" (Dreyfus, 1991: 104); the world does not appear ready-made but takes on significance through its incorporation into our everyday activities (Ingold, 2000: 3-5). From this dwelling perspective, "the world continually comes into being around the inhabitant, and its manifold constituents take on significance through their incorporation into a regular pattern of life activity" (Ingold, 2000: 153). When understood thus, much of human everyday activity can be described without necessarily relying on the cognitivist language of deliberate planning and intention, and intelligent behavior is possible without mental representations (Dreyfus, 2002).

Developing on this insight, Dreyfus (1991: 93, emphasis original) proposed an important distinction between purposeful and purposive action insisting that actions can be "*purposive*

without the actor having in mind a *purpose*". This distinction between purposive and purposeful action has been taken up and elaborated upon by Chia & Holt, (2009: 105) and Tsoukas, (2010:59) with purposeful action linked to a building mode and purposive action relating to a dwelling mode of existence. These two contrasting modes of engagement and their corresponding basis for action has important consequences for our understanding of practices and inadvertent emergence of social orders including especially a specific strategic order.

As Chia and Holt (2009) and Tsoukas (2010) argue, whereas in the former building mode, the designer/producer is assumed to bear prior intentions and acts intentionally and *purposefully* to plan and achieve his/her pre-conceived (mentally represented) end-goals, in the dwelling mode one acts *purposively* by drawing on what is directly available to deal effectively with the predicaments and obstacles he/she immediately faces, from within the specific set of circumstances he/she finds him/herself in. Purposive action is practical coping action taken *in situ* and often *sponte sua* to fix problems and to overcome immediate impediments or obstacles without necessarily having any longer-term consideration in mind (Chia & Holt, 2009: 108-111). Chia and Holt (2006, 2009) and Tsoukas (2010) maintain that acknowledging the primacy of purposive action and skilled practical coping enables us to give an alternative account of the phenomenon of strategy making without resorting to the language of deliberate intentions, goals, plans, and pre-thought strategies or even the language of structures and universal logic. As Dreyfus (1991: 93) stresses emphatically, "in a wide variety of situations, human beings relate to the world in an organized and purposive manner without the constant accompaniment of representational states that specify what the action is aimed at accomplishing". This is not to deny the value or existence of deliberate strategy. Rather, it is to insist that there is strategic coherence immanent in the practical coping actions taken to deal with problems faced *in situ*. Strategic planning, purposeful goal setting, and navigational maps are

only possible because such purposive orientation and practical coping ability is already in place as a necessary skilled substrate.

This is because an individual's habitus and predisposition, and hence responses, are significantly shaped through socialization (often unconsciously) into a set of collectively accepted practices (Bourdieu, 1990). Such practices involve tendencies, responses, skills and discriminations, which are often silently and unintentionally acquired through observing and emulating other people's actions. Practices, therefore, are not simply about what individual actors do as autonomous agents. Rather, they constitute a socio-historical shared repository of established ways of engaging with the world and dealing with social and professional situations in a manner that is deemed appropriate and acceptable by the community concerned. Practices tie the individual and social levels together. They are "embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity" organized around "shared practical understanding" (Schatzki, 2001: 2). They are sedimented forms of "collective action" (Barnes, 2001), "collective meaning-making, identity forming, and order-producing activities" that are essentially "primitive and foundational" (Nicolini, 2013: 7); something that precedes individuality and identity (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Chia & MacKay, 2007; Dreyfus, 1991). As socially acquired and historically-shaped tendencies they have wide-ranging organizational implications in terms of how they shape and influence organizational processes, and outcomes (Chia & Mac Kay, 2007; Nicolini, 2013; Rasche & Chia, 2009).

Social practices entail the construction of habitus, a "system of durable, transposable dispositions [...] which generates and organizes practices [...] without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them" (Bourdieu, 1990: 52). It is a 'modus operandi' that ensures a consistency in the orchestration of action without necessarily implying the need for prior intention and cognitive representation (Dreyfus, 2002) Local everyday practical coping actions, adjustments and improvisations are attributable to this

underlying habitus. Yet, habitus is by no means deterministic or mechanical; nor does it sanction an unbridled voluntarism. It is as opposed to the "mechanical necessity of things without history as it is to the reflexive freedom of subjects without inertia" (Bourdieu, 1990: 56). Habitus allows us to steer a middle way between construing actions as the making of deliberate free choices or as inevitably determined by underlying structures and/or universal logic. It creates a theoretical space for understanding the significance and value of local adaptations and improvisations; for appreciating how purposive coping actions can be taken without any longer-term plan or deliberate intention. A fundamental promise of the practice turn in social theory, thus, is its ability to potentially overcome the micro-macro, process-content dualisms that continue to plague much of social scientific theorizing, and by extension, strategy theorizing.

Conceiving of strategy emergence in social practice terms, therefore, enables us to see how consistency and congruence of individuals' actions within an organization arise almost inadvertently without even actors themselves realizing it. First, as practice is relational and interconnects levels of analysis, wayfinding represents a useful frame to account for the dynamics between individual local conditions and responses, and organizational and field phenomena. Second, in practice theory, social embeddedness and habitus, as a set of immanent "deeply embedded internalized tendencies distributed throughout the organization and acquired through socialization/ acculturation" (Chia & Rasche, 2010: 41) make the unintended convergence and coherence of actions possible. In other words, the phenomenon of strategy emergence can be better understood from within a dwelling-based practice perspective (Chia & Holt, 2006, 2009), where habituated purposiveness of action serves as a useful basis of explanation while organizations reach "out into the unknown" (Chia & Holt, 2009: 159). It follows that wayfinding openly acknowledges the real possibility of unintended consequences (both positive and negative) arising from actions taken as an organization wayfinds its way through as-yet uncharted terrain. Surprise, uncertainty

and unintended consequences are the natural order of the day in such practical coping circumstances. In this perspective, "strategies are secondary stabilized effects of culturally transmitted practices" (Tsoukas, 2010: 49).

Altogether, adopting a practice-theory view of strategy emergence as wayfinding leads to an emphasis on: the purposiveness of action; the importance of habitus in predisposing organizational actors; the significance of small incremental coping changes in bringing about major transformations; and, therefore, the inevitability of both positive and negative unintended consequences arising from such actions taken. These are the key features of the wayfinding approach that we adopt to understand strategy emergence. That said, the wayfinding perspective proposed by Chia & Holt (2006, 2009) does not delve empirically into possible loops and combinational effects, and in particular into the intricacies of how actions taken, and their unintended consequences intertwine together to nourish the emerging ordered pattern, or detail how these relate to one another. Doing this requires further empirical investigation and elaboration in order to articulate the listed features and to develop an empirically-grounded model of strategizing as wayfinding that explains inadvertent strategy emergence. However, such empirical investigations will first require methodological elaborations since the development of the strategy as wayfinding framework does not yet include such considerations, whether for data collection or analysis.

RESEARCH METHOD

Empirically examining emergent strategy as wayfinding required us to constantly oscillate from the behaviors and trajectories of individuals, to the organization, and the social, institutional and competitive fields it operates within (Chia & Holt, 2006: 638; Chia & MacKay, 2007; Nicolini, 2013; Tsoukas, 2010). Our study is thus based on a single unique longitudinal case that enabled us

to observe closely the people, their work and self-understandings, their local and social circumstances, their predicaments, and to appreciate how they cope with ongoing problems from within the situations they find themselves in. The study involves a small company, Champagne Gourmet Restaurant (CGR), a Michelin-starred restaurant, over a four-year period from 2005 to 2009. We selected this case for three main reasons. First, the company faced competitive challenges and multiple concerns about its future that formed a context of special relevance for studying strategy emergence. Second, the moderate size of the firm represented an opportunity to collect data at various levels, from the micro practical coping activities of agents to the situations they are collectively immersed in, to the macro strategic evolution of the firm. It also allowed us to investigate a small company, whereas most studies on strategy emergence focused on large organizations. Finally, the specific activity of CGR was an advantage too: gourmet restaurants are engaged in a highly institutionalized field (haute cuisine) in which institutional forces profoundly shape expectations and self-understandings, and influential guidebooks' ratings and structure competition around cooking issues. Not only did such structured context already proved relevant to management and strategy research (ex. Durand, Rao & Monin, 2007; Gomez & Bouty, 2011; Gomez, Bouty & Drucker-Godard, 2003; Rao, Monin & Durand., 2003; Svejenova, Mazza & Planellas, 2007, Svejenova, Planellas, & Vives, 2010), it above all enabled us to account for both the contextual influences on our case and haute cuisine as the social practice in which all actors at the restaurant are engaged in.

Empirical setting: haute cuisine and CGR restaurant

The haute cuisine field

Contemporary haute cuisine is characterized by the meticulous preparation and careful presentation of food at a high price and usually accompanied by rare wines. It is the field in which high-end

gourmet restaurants compete. Haute cuisine (or literally high food) refers to cuisines of fine dining establishments originating initially from Italy during the Renaissance but subsequently developed and refined within the French context (Goody, 1998: 40). During the Renaissance, differentiation of manner and approach to food consumption increased rapidly so that ostentatiousness in food presentation and consumption became of great social importance. With the political, economic and cultural upheavals of the French revolution and the bourgeoisie's then desire to raise its social status and ostentation up to its economic standing, culinary discourse developed as the codification of culinary and eating knowledge (Ory, 1998; Parkhurst-Ferguson, 1998, 2004). The "migration of the best cuisines from the tables of court and nobility" and from the aristocratic homes to restaurants post-revolution (Goody, 1998: 138-139) provided the basis for contemporary French fine dining restaurants.

Perception of excellence within this culinary sector is nowadays heavily influenced by gastronomic guidebooks (Durand et al., 2007; Rao et al., 2003) through their restaurants' rankings that, in turn, shape customer's expectations (Karpik, 2010). These guidebooks evaluate restaurant performance, structure competition, provide legitimacy, as well as document acknowledgement and credit by peers (Durand et al., 2007). Lastly, they are also important to third parties, especially high-quality product suppliers and financial partners. Of these important guidebooks, the Michelin Guide is indisputably the most dominant (Karpik, 2000, 2010; Parkhurst-Ferguson 1998) and its rating has therefore been universally adopted to delineate the sector in strategy literature (ex. Durand et al., 2007; Gomez and Bouty, 2011; Rao et al., 2003; Svejenova et al., 2007).

The Michelin Red Guide rates restaurants on two dimensions: forks (none to 5) to reflect the overall comfort of the restaurants, and stars (none to 3) to indicate the gastronomic quality of the food served. Today, stars have become the criterion most valued by all actors in the field (Karpik, 2000, 2010), be they competitor restaurants and chefs or other stakeholders (clients,

partners or media). They reward the gastronomic quality and creativity of restaurants: one star reflects "very good cooking", two stars mean a restaurant "worth a detour", and three stars single out restaurants serving "exceptional cuisine worth a special journey" (as specified in each Red Guide issue).

Michelin ratings impact competition because they define positions and the strategic groups in which restaurants compete (Durand et al., 2007). About 2000 restaurants are awarded between one and three Michelin stars today in Europe and less than 70 achieved the ultimate three stars. The number of stars awarded in each instance impacts directly on a restaurant's clientele and revenue. According to Johnson, Surlemont, Nicod & Revaz (2005: 179-173), moving from two to three-star ranking would result in a 30 percent increase in revenue, and losing a star could cost as much as a 50 percent fall. This is because a three-star restaurant is expected to offer a superior, more sophisticated and artistic cuisine than a two-star one; a difference that clients willingly accept would be reflected in the price they have to pay. Therefore, losing or gaining a star also implies potentially changing targeted clients because underlying expectations themselves would change. Furthermore, margins are often low in gourmet restaurants: 5 percent at best according to Johnson et al., (2005: 291). This is because of the high level of fixed costs: in three-star restaurants, it amounts to about 45% of an average menu price (*L'Expansion*, 2011) with an average ratio of employees to guest per sitting usually one to one. Restaurants therefore frequently develop a wider activity portfolio in a related diversification logic, or search for greater differentiation to be reflected in even higher prices.

Michelin ratings also shape the field in terms of the expectations and aspirations of chefs and restaurants. Creativity by chefs became a central stake in haute cuisine with the *nouvelle cuisine* wave from the years 1970's onwards (Rao et al., 2003) while technical excellence turned into a mere prerequisite. Accordingly, three-star chefs are now significant high-profile individuals

known for their own often idiosyncratic styles, in their restaurants and French society at large; famous personalities who are expected to regularly further advance gastronomy and delight their clients with relentless culinary innovations (Bouty & Gomez, 2015), and whose names are therefore attached to the restaurant rating. This is part of the professional habitus of haute cuisine chefs (Gomez & Bouty, 2011). In addition, and in more strategic terms, this means that chefs' cuisines are central to restaurants' strategies, and that strategy making in haute cuisine restaurants largely revolves around the chef and the kitchen.

Highly formal work organization, excellence requirements in every fine detail, and a greater number of cooks than in other ordinary restaurants typify these haute cuisine kitchens. Work is organized by station (meat, fish, vegetables, pastry...). Each station is under the responsibility of a station chef who supervises two to four cooks. Each dish is the result of collective efforts from different stations, and second-chefs are responsible for their coordination. They manage the timing and rhythm among stations so that the different elements composing the dish are concomitantly ready to be put together in the plate. The head chef supervises the whole kitchen and ensures coordination between kitchen work and the dining room. In particular, s/he makes sure that all guests at a table are served at the same time at each stage of their meal. S/he also manages the rhythm at kitchen/dining room interfaces so that guests are neither kept waiting too long nor hurried. This too is the professional habitus that all aspiring haute cuisine chefs are initiated into.

CGR Restaurant

CGR is a French high-end gourmet restaurant deeply anchored in the Champagne region. It is located in a luxury castle and park, near many of the internationally renowned Champagne producers, with whom it habitually maintained close and cordial relationships. In 2009, at the end of our research study, it employed about 70 employees and served up to 75 guests at each sitting.

It comprised a (flagship) gastronomic two-Michelin-star restaurant, a brasserie restaurant, and a small luxury hotel. Clients at the gourmet restaurant were mostly composed of international tourists, Champagne traders, and some wealthy elite locals or politicians; the brasserie targeted more local customers for less sophisticated, though high quality, meals at lower prices (about 50€ a menu against 200€ at the gourmet restaurant). Late 2009, as the chef was about to leave and relocate in another country for family reasons, critics and the press celebrated CGR and its chef's achievements qualifying them "high-profile" (press article LF2009-0901¹) and agreeing that they deserved to be rewarded by a third Michelin star (press articles LF2007-0120; LF2008-0222; LM2008-1002; S2009-0313). Some four years earlier, however, the overall situation at CGR was significantly different, as synthesized in Table 1

Table 1. Contrasting situations at CGR

Prior to 2005	2005	2009
Chef founder retired in 2003 second-chef took over as head chef	New chef appointed in March 2005	Chef resigns end 2009 (family reasons)
3 then 2 Michelin stars (3 rd lost in 2004)	2 Michelin stars	2 Michelin stars; 3 rd expected
Clients at gastronomic restaurant: international tourists and Champagne traders expecting exceptional cuisine	Clients at the gastronomic restaurant: locals expecting excellent cuisine	Clients at the gastronomic restaurant: international tourists and Champagne traders expecting exceptional cuisine
About 100 dining seats & 100 employees	About 100 dining seats & 100 employees	About 75 dining seats & 70 employees

¹ Since most press articles include the name of the organization under scrutiny or other identifying details in their titles, we refer to them using code names in order to maintain anonymity. Codes names are built from the name of the source and date of publication (SOURCEyear-date) so that readers can situate events within the case timeline.

Includes the gourmet restaurant and a luxury hotel

Includes the gourmet restaurant and a luxury hotel

Includes the gourmet restaurant, a brasserie restaurant and a luxury hotel

CGR was founded in the years 1980's by a charismatic and internationally revered chef whom, over the years, many French and non-French elite chefs apprenticed with. Already located in the current beautiful park and castle, it has been acknowledged as the epitome of classicism in French haute cuisine, both for the food that was being served and for the matching décor of the place. The gourmet restaurant had been awarded the maximum three Michelin stars ever since 1986. It could serve up to 100 guests at each sitting and employed about as many employees. When the founding chef retired in 2003, his second-chef took over as head chef of a team that he, therefore, knew well; like some other cooks and dining-room staff he was a longstanding employee of the restaurant. But, as a chef, he had trouble finding his own style and maintaining the culinary reputation CGR had acquired. Guidebooks, critics and the media questioned his culinary innovations calling 2004 "a graceless year" (press article LM2005-0401); cooks at the restaurant questioned his management (interviews); and regular clients increasingly deserted the dining room. CGR lost its long-standing emblematic third star when Michelin downgraded the restaurant to two stars in 2004; worst, the guidebook sanctioned the overall downward evolution by maintaining this rating the following year. By early 2005, the restaurant therefore faced a real tension. It had gradually drifted towards addressing a more local two-star clientele and was thus in danger of entering a different competitive market and encountering clients less willing to pay for the unremarkable gastronomical offerings served by the head chef who, unlike his predecessor, was not among those known and celebrated for their culinary skills and whose cuisine was not worth a

special journey. Some cooks, longstanding employees of the restaurant had resigned and left; others had given notice. Early 2005, another head chef was appointed, opening our window of study.

Data sources

We collected longitudinal data on CGR, over almost 10 years, and with a special focus on the period 2005-2009 which, as highlighted above, corresponds to a change of trajectory for CGR under the guidance of a particular chef. We collected data from multiple sources as synthesized in Table 2.

Table 2. Data sources

Secondary data	Formal interviews	Direct observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 159 press articles • Menus of the restaurant (2005-2009 and prior to 2005) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 interviews (total 10,5 h) over 2005-2009 period <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - head chef twice (2h and 1h) - two second-chefs twice (2x1h) - dining-room-chef (1h) - one station chef (45mn) - sommelier (40mn) • 2 interviews before 2005 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - founding chef (2h) - successor chef (1h) • Additional informal conversations with cooks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 sets (total 13 h) over 2005-2009 period <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - full sitting in kitchen (7h from 6 pm to 1 am) - partial sitting and full commented tour of the facilities with the head chef (6h). • 2 sets (total 8h) prior to 2005 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - partial sitting and commented tour of the facilities with the founding chef (5h) - partial sitting and commented tour of the facilities with the successor chef (3h)

We collected data on our focal case from three main sources to allow data and methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978). First, we gathered secondary data in the form of press articles and CGR menus. We extracted all (159) articles on CGR from Factiva database between 2000 and 2009, 126 of which dealt with the 2005–2009 period we specifically focused on. These articles

describe multiple aspects of CGR, its actors, cuisine, strategy and competitive challenges over the years. Second, we conducted formal interviews at CGR. Between 2005 and 2009, we formally interviewed the head chef twice (two hours then one hour), the two second-chefs twice, the dining-room-chef, one station chef and the sommelier over an hour each. Prior to 2005, we also interviewed the two previous chefs (founding-chef and his successor); these data allowed us to contrast with the period under focus. All interviews were fully transcribed. We additionally had more informal conversations with cooks on several occasions. Third, we conducted on-site real-time observations, both during and before our period of focus. Over 2005-2009, we observed work in the kitchen during full sittings. Arriving at 6 pm while the restaurant team was getting ready for the evening, we observed the preparation of ingredients in the kitchen, the briefing, the scanning of the clients list and of specific cooking and service corollary requirements. Then we spent the whole sitting in the kitchen (each of us standing at a distinct spot in the kitchen for purpose of observer triangulation; Denzin, 1978) to observe the team while they worked under pressure. We left CGR at 1 am after the debriefing was done, the kitchen cleaned, the supplies were ordered, and everybody was leaving. For greater accuracy and despite the late hour, we fully transcribed the details of our observation right after it ended. On another occasion, we likewise observed kitchen and dining-room work but, the chef additionally took us on a detailed guided tour of the buildings, from the dining room to the kitchen, his personal small office adjacent to the kitchen and his files, the park and other facilities, including those that were under construction (future brasserie restaurant). Like for interviews, we already had conducted 2 observations prior to 2005, when the kitchen was under responsibility of the chef-founder and his successor respectively; these data proved useful to contrast with those collected in 2005-2009. Notes of these observations were transcribed in full too. Our data gathering ended when the focal chef himself left (for family reasons) in late 2009.

Data analysis

Based on Chia and Holt (2009) perspective on strategizing as wayfinding, we designed a five-stage data analysis unveiling the relationship between the individual, organizational and field's level and using the concepts of purposive practical coping, immediate concerns, habitus, and unintended consequences.

In the first analytical step we retraced the overall evolution of CGR in haute cuisine: Michelin ratings, evaluation by the press, and competitive developments. Second, we adopted a more internal focus to our case and paid attention to what the different actors did, how, and in which physical circumstances (Rasche & Chia, 2009; Tsoukas, 2010). Our observations proved especially rich in this regard since we were able to witness several purposive and practical coping actions in everyday kitchen and dining-room work, and deeply sense how cooks and waiters embraced and internalized the social practice associated with haute cuisine. Third, we retraced the trajectory of the head chef to better understand his professional habitus. We were also attentive to the professional situations of the second and dining-room chefs, as well as that of other cooks. Fourth, we coded our data to identify small purposive actions and incremental changes made at CGR over 2005-2009 with a view to fixing problems or dealing with some immediate challenges. We specifically focused on those referred to in interviews and that each of us were also able to witness during our observations, which allowed triangulation. We therefore selected eight coping actions along four features: the organization (reducing the number of employees and dinning seats down to 70 and 75 respectively; keeping a kitchen team of 30 yet with two second-chefs), the menu (combining classical dishes and innovative preparations in the menu; using Champagne as a drink to match dishes), material elements (introducing temperature regulators and lighting dimmers in the kitchen; changing dining-room carpets and china), and the portfolio (developing a brasserie-

restaurant; organizing two running teams of cooks in alternation across the kitchens). Although numerous other small purposive changes were undoubtedly made at the restaurant over the 2005–2009 period, we chose to stick to this list. Our purpose was not to be comprehensive but rather to specifically investigate clearly identifiable and traceable small improvements and adaptations that took place at CGR. In a fifth step, based on our interpretation of the data, we modeled the relationships between practical coping actions, the immediate organizational concerns, and actors' habitus. We also traced the unintended consequences and identified how they dynamically intertwined with each other and with the institutional and competitive environment to contribute to the eventual forging of a coherent emergent strategy at the restaurant.

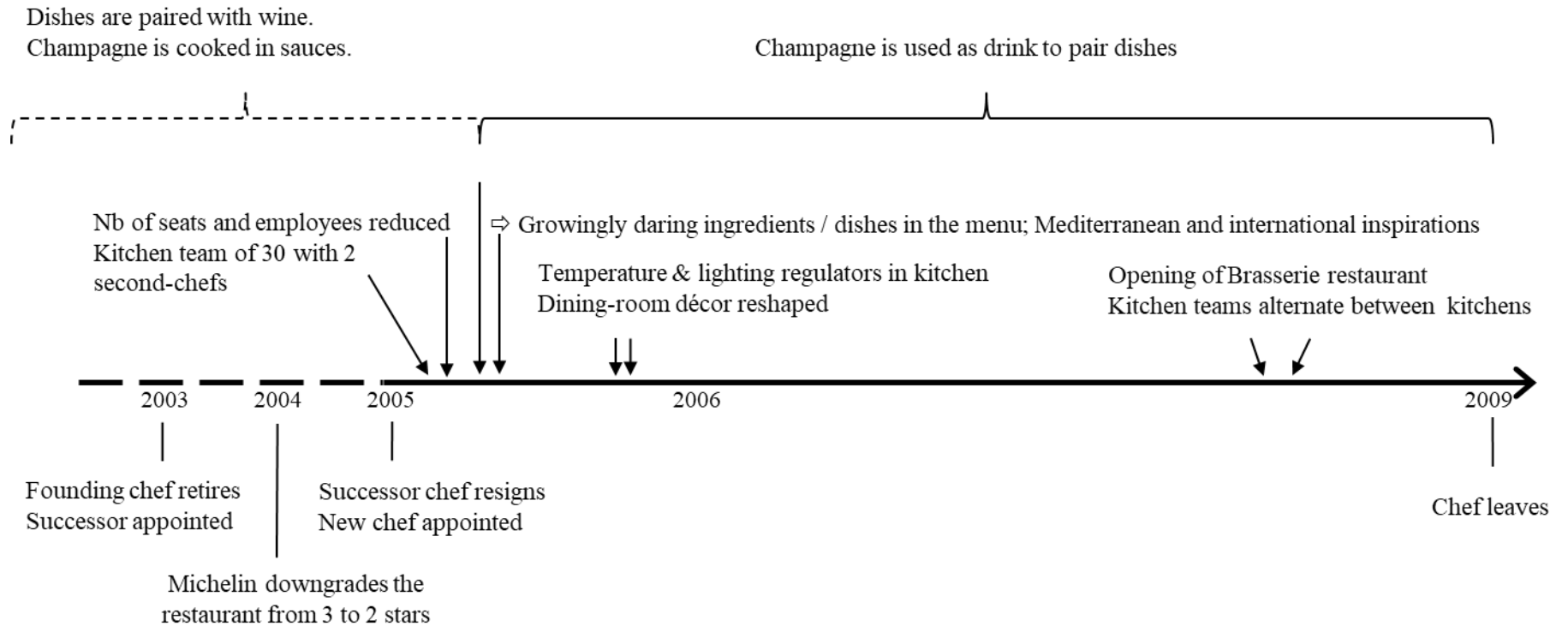
WAYFINDING AT CGR: TOWARDS CULINARY EXCELLENCE

In this section, we detail some of the changes that CGR underwent through a period of some four years and the immediate concerns they echoed. Then we analyze them within the perspective of wayfinding characterized by purposive coping actions informed by actors' habitus, their trajectories and the local context of CGR. Last, we show how strategy at CGR emerged inadvertently from a complex combination of these purposive coping small changes, and their unintended consequences.

Purposive changes at CGR over the 2005–2009 period

The new chef joined CGR early 2005. Contrary to what often happens in haute cuisine, he was not appointed with his own team or even with his favorite second; he simply joined the remaining of existing kitchen team. He observed closely what was going on at the restaurant and then introduced some local changes he saw were necessary; their chronology is represented in Figure 1

Figure 1. Purposive changes at CGR: a timeline



Prior to 2005, CGR was organized to serve up to 100 guests both at lunch and dinner sittings: two kitchen teams (each of about 30 cooks) worked in alternation to provide the service needed. For practical cost reasons, the new chef reduced the number of seats down to about 75 and that of employees to 70 (30 of whom work in the kitchen). This helped directly lower overall operating costs as the restaurant was facing financial losses and considering repositioning its pricing. *“Ever since we lost the third star, we need to decrease the price of our meals... we are too expensive now. Thus, we need to cut costs”* (interview with the dining-room manager). The chef also introduced a new hierarchy with two second-chefs able to take kitchen responsibility in alternation: *“Here, we’re open seven days a week so it’s important that the kitchen team remains very fluid and that nobody gets trapped in a given station.... And I wanted to build something sound”* (interview). This was followed by progressively experimenting and introducing his own culinary innovations in the dishes and menus. They were of crucial importance at that time since regular clients had deserted the restaurant. Yet, the new menus had to reconcile the tension between fulfilling the regular clients' conservative expectations, themselves nourished by the history of the place, and offering something else, new and exciting. The figure of the previous founder-chef still weighted heavily and *“the problem was that clients were nostalgic and thought that all had already been said”* with regards to previous culinary achievements, the new chef insisted (interview). He told us for example of a 2005 evening when a couple, longtime restaurant clients, ordered the *'degustation menu'* and felt so unsettled by what they ate that the lady began to cry and commented: *“Monsieur [founding chef] would have never done that”*. Our data indicate that, over 2005-2009, new menus progressively incorporated innovative ingredients in classical dishes as well as more novel dishes as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Evolutions in dishes: illustrative data

Innovative ingredients in classical dishes	Innovative dishes in the menu	Drinks to pair dishes
2005		
Turbot with crayfish and Champagne sabayon sauce		Meursault wine
2006		
Royal spiny lobster hot and cold in roe swim	Foie gras Pithiviers, pigeon and olives in a Salmi sauce	Lanson Champagne 1989
2007		
Duck foie gras and black truffle, with white mushroom and orange wine seasoning	Poached and roasted Brittany lobster on finely chopped tomatoes, shellfish brunoise, and candied lemon, with lobster-stuffed macaroni	Martel Champagne 1998
2008		
Freshly caught Atlantic sea bass, vanilla flavored olive oil and Aquitaine caviar	Langoustines: raw with green mango, avocado and roasted coral; crispy tandoori; as ravioli with champagne sabayon sauce	Pommery Champagne 1998
2009		
Roasted sea bream smoked with wild fennel, bottarga bouillon	Poultry cooked with raz- el-hanout spice	Veuve Cliquot Champagne

In 2005, the menu featured strictly traditional dishes such as a "Bresse chicken roasted in salted crust, with truffles stuffed under the skin". In 2006, more innovative ones such as a "Roebuck loin rubbed in juniper, salsify, pumpkin, endive, and purple Mediterranean artichokes sauce" were integrated. Over the following years, other original dishes appeared, while increasingly novel preparations were additionally introduced in apparently still classical dishes: for example, the indispensable blue lobster was served with mascarpone and herbs ravioli and seasoned with yuzu

and bitter grapefruit. As illustrated in Table 3, the chef also kept the local Champagne as the unifying theme of the restaurant yet within a new perspective: instead of cooking Champagne in sauces (as the founding chef and his successor previously did), he used it as a drink to match his new dishes: "*Champagne was definitely the starting point...But again, I needed to do something different...I started to build menus by winery and to develop dishes in this perspective*" (interview). Appendix 1 illustrates one of these ephemeral menus each created around a specific winery.

In the dining room, bright carpets, curtains, chairs, and china soon replaced the former dark-colored and floral décor so that the outlook of the place sustained the new menus offered, paired with revised use of Champagne, and created a new and different dining experience. Small material changes were also made in the kitchen. Based on his experience in other kitchens worldwide, the head chef had felt that temperature in the kitchen was too high and that light was also too strong and disturbingly aggressive for his team to work well in and peacefully concentrate on their preparations under the intense pressure of customer demands (interviews of the chef, second-chef and informal discussions with cooks). He therefore introduced both temperature regulators and lighting dimmers to create more conducive working conditions. We actually observed the chef controlling the temperature and lighting at one sitting muttering constantly to himself "*light at 10%*" ... or "*too hot...*".

A final change regards diversification of offerings within the business portfolio: the opening of a brasserie-restaurant intended to provide lunch to hotel guests who had indeed very limited medium-to-high-range choices available in town: "*Our problem is that the gastronomic restaurant serves hotel guests for only one meal at night. With the brasserie-restaurant we will generate additional cash by serving our guests lunch as well, in a more relaxed and informal dining-room; simpler, less expensive [...] We also wanted to stop offering standard lunch [based on some dishes from the evening menus though at lower prices] at the gastronomic restaurant for hotel guests*

since that depreciated the value of dinners" (interview). The brasserie restaurant opened late 2008. It was positioned as less expensive than the gastronomic restaurant and located in an outbuilding that was renovated for the purpose. The chef collaborated with his existing kitchen team (second and station chefs) on designing a new menu based on simpler seasonal products at lower prices (€50 for lunch compared to about €200 at the gastronomic restaurant). He organized his team to alternate between the two restaurants: two groups of cooks operating, one in each kitchen in alternation: *"We have the same employees. But we have two turnovers. The [brasserie] menu is comforting, with steak, liver... We also took opportunity to introduce American-inspired dishes, and pot-au-feu!"* (interview). Altogether, and as summarized in the first and second columns of Table 4, several small incremental changes took place over the 2005-2009 period to purposively cope with immediate concerns at CGR.

Table 4 From immediate concerns to purposive changes as practical coping shaped by habitus

Immediate organizational concern	Purposive practical coping	Shaped by habitus
Changes to organization		
Lower operating costs	Overall number of employees and dining seats reduced down to 70 and 75 respectively	Integrated haute cuisine norm of average ratio of 1 employee / client /sitting
Preserve operational fluidity	Kitchen team of 30 though with 2 second-chefs	Integrated haute cuisine norm of strongly formalized kitchen organization
Changes to menu		
Seduce clients	Increasingly daring ingredients and innovative dishes introduced in the menu	Careful creativity by the chef; personal touch, taste and inspirations
Anchor the restaurant in the Champagne region	Champagne used as drink to pair dishes	

Changes to material elements		
Sustain concentration in the kitchen	Temperature regulators and lighting dimmers in the kitchen	Enduringly produce high quality while dishes are cooked on order; chef's own experiences worldwide
Modernize the outdated dining room	New décor and china in the dining-room	Belief that eating environment contributes to the eating experience
Changes to portfolio		
Offer choice of lunch for hotel clients	Opening of Brasserie restaurant	Integrated knowledge that related diversification towards less prestigious eateries is common place and successful in haute cuisine
Devise menus	Kitchen teams alternate between gourmet and brasserie restaurants	Furthering of cook's experiences

The cumulative effect of such small and multifarious changes was that, by the latter half of 2009, clients that had been lost after the founding chef retired, gradually returned. The newly established brasserie started to attract clients too. Food critics increasingly suggested that CGR should logically to be awarded three Michelin stars (press articles LF2007-0120; LF2008-0222; LM2008-1002: S2009-0313). Let us now turn to analyzing how habitus shaped these practical coping irrigating them with haute cuisine social practice.

Purposive changes as practical coping shaped by habitus

When he joined CGR, the chef was in his mid-thirties. Of southern-French extraction, he attended culinary school in France, started as a commis (trainee) and rapidly rose to station then second-chef. Then he became executive chef in reputed French restaurants in Japan and the US; under his supervision, a New-York restaurant was distinguished best US restaurant and achieved three Michelin stars early 2000's. In total, before arriving at CGR the chef had had 15 years of experience in high-end gourmet restaurants in different contexts and cultures. In early 2005, he was acutely

aware of the weight of the history at CGR, of the clients' and employees' elevated expectations, and of the current difficulties the restaurant faced; he had a clear understanding of the challenge: "*We do know at which level we have to play to make it*" (interview). He also saw it as an opportunity to develop his own reputation and shape his personal trajectory in the international haute cuisine arena: "*I have nothing yet, I have no image; we have to build it. [...] If you want to stand out, message comes first and cuisine second. You have to have people come into your story and dream*" (interview).

In 2005, CGR, having lost its long-cherished Michelin three-star rating, appeared seemingly on a downward spiral heading toward culinary oblivion. This was existentially problematic for the chef and employees who considered themselves to be inextricably wedded to the higher echelons of haute cuisine as a lifelong vocation and were reluctant to contemplate working in another type of restaurant: "*working in a two-star restaurant on the verge of becoming one-star didn't make sense; it's not my job, it's different. And it's not what I want. I am an haute cuisine cook; that's what I do...*" said a second-chef. The provision of a memorable gastronomic experience is an intricate social practice which carries with it specific priorities, social stakes, career trajectories and embedded ways of knowing and working; these shape every practical coping action. A short example will help illustrate this. During one of our observations, poultry roasted in salted crust had been ordered by some guests at a table. When the dish was carried at the pass from the oven, the chef and a second-chef assessed its cooking, agreed that the piece needed another 10 minutes and sent it back. This delay provoked a chain reaction because other guests at the table had ordered different courses, which now had to be held back so that guests could be served at once. Yet, because keeping clients waiting is not tolerated in haute cuisine, the chef and second-chef also quickly improvised by introducing an additional starter course so that guests would not notice the delay; practical coping action taken *in situ* and *sponte sua* saved the day on this occasion. Ten

minutes later, when the chicken was back from the oven, they checked cooking and agreed: *"it's fine; we were right, it's perfect"* (observation). Such a spontaneous coping response was irretrievably shaped by actors' haute cuisine habitus that refused to simultaneously compromise the quality of food served and to countenance the notion of keeping guests waiting. This is a strong professional imperative which distinguishes haute cuisine from other cooking fields. The loss of the three-star Michelin rating had created a crisis of identity for the cooks and their self-understanding. Yet, despite all these uncertainties actors in the restaurant held customer's delight as their primary and core objective; this was their *raison d'être*. *"When you are a kid and you want to become a cook, you dream of [...] the three Michelin stars. We have the tools to achieve this. On a daily base, we expect the Michelin stars back... but we are not obsessed because we do not control the stars...Cooking is a giving job. What we want first is to delight people and for this we need to be delighted ourselves, we need to enjoy what we do"* (interview with head chef). As accomplished practitioners, the chef and his team are in the business of haute cuisine culinary advancement to delight customers. Their haute cuisine habitus profoundly shaped the multiple purposive incremental changes made over the 2005-2009 period as synthesized in last column of Table 4.

While reducing the overall number of employees at CGR was motivated by economic considerations, as we pointed out earlier, it also bore the hallmarks of haute-cuisine where the average ratio of employees to guest per sitting is often one to one. This was something the head chef had experienced in other Michelin-starred restaurants and that he preserved at CGR. Further, the changes made to the menus deeply echoed haute cuisine practice in which novelty is expected from chefs though not desired simply for the sake of it. At CGR, the chef carefully and progressively combined his own touch, taste, Mediterranean origins, and international exposures

to the local products, clients, and tradition. Likewise, in giving pride of place to the locally produced Champagne in the eating experience, he preserved highly classical references, yet broke with the past and created his own personal culinary imprint by serving Champagne as a drink to match dishes; a small change with big implications for it subtly signaled a clear break from his illustrious predecessor. "*I had two possible choices*" said the chef, "*perpetuating the existing (and we would have continued our descent [shakes his head no as he talks]) or not [...]. I have to write my own story, my trajectory, my own cooking*"... The chef considers himself as an artisan and his culinary inventions are consubstantial with his own acquired habitus, his sense of self-identity and the trajectory of his personal odyssey as a chef. All these elements are strong constituents of his habitus.

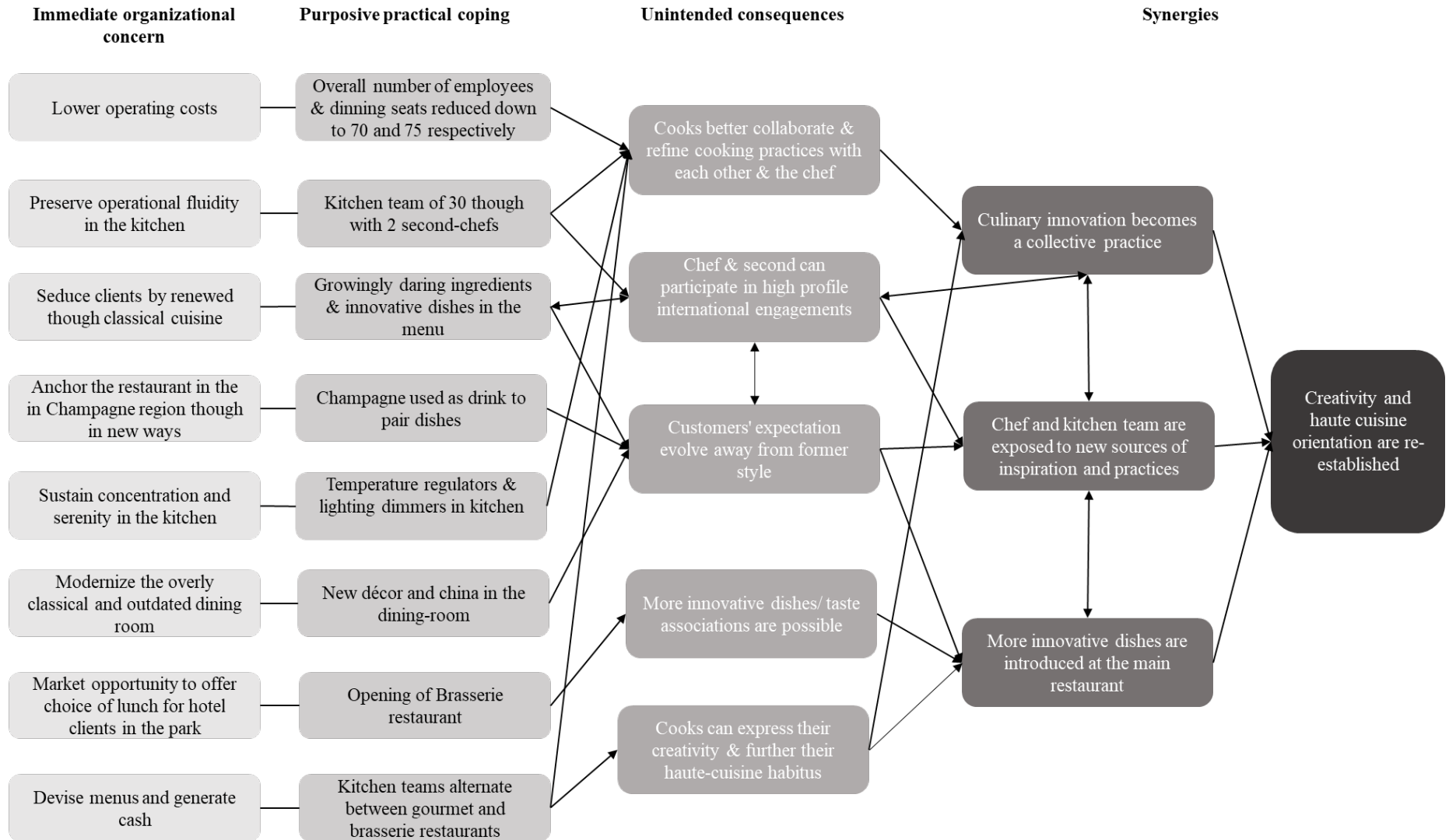
These innovative changes in the dishes and menu were matched by subtle changes in the dining room décor, which provided a new gastronomic ambience for clients whose dining experiences and tastes were gradually fused with the chef's own culinary preferences. As the chef put it, "*it's a whole story*" (interview). Material changes in the kitchen (temperature controls and light dimmers), although seemingly incidental, were nevertheless perceived as key changes by cooks who noted their subtle but significant effect on everyday practices. It created a quieter and more relaxed atmosphere that helped them to feel more engaged with the challenge of achieving high-end gourmet cooking as well as enabled better kitchen/dining-room interface to maintain service quality at the highest level expected of the best restaurants and sustain customers' eating experience. Last, the opening and positioning of the brasserie restaurant echoes business developments well accepted in haute cuisine, where the gastronomic achievements of gourmet restaurants often irrigate other offering at less prestigious (though high quality) spin-off bistros that, in turn, generate cash to sustain operations at the flagship Michelin-starred restaurant. Altogether, the many changes, from the minor material to the more structural, together with the

culinary innovations that took place at CGR over the four years were essentially *in situ* practical coping actions in that they were taken to deal with and overcome immediate concerns yet were also profoundly shaped by haute cuisine habitus of actors.

... To unintended consequences and emergent strategy

In the very process of wayfinding their way towards culinary excellence, the changes initiated by the head chef generated several positive unintended consequences. Practical coping actions taken to deal with immediate obstacles and predicaments unexpectedly helped contribute to a clearer sense of strategic direction. Three such unintended consequences stand out in our data set and relate to each other on the matter of creativity as depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2. From immediate concern to practical coping to unexpected outcomes and synergies



Firstly, culinary innovation became a collectively-shared practice. The more relaxed and focused working atmosphere created in the kitchen produced subtle changes in the relationships within the kitchen team that in turn encouraged fresh experimentation, collaboration and hence new culinary achievements. Cooks could focus more on producing higher quality dishes, became more willing to accept feedback from clients, and more prepared to exchange, explore and refine their cooking practices with each other. They grew more confident in their own capabilities and learnt to collaborate with the chef who entrusted them with creating new dishes around general themes he proposed (interview) both at the gourmet and brasserie restaurant. This was especially important to second-chefs because it represented a genuine developmental opportunity to further their own habitus and culinary expertise as future haute cuisine chefs. One of them explained: "*In 2005 I had already given notice when he [current chef] joined. Eventually I decided to stay and give it a try... to further my experience with a third chef... and in the end I am still here ! [...] We work in a three-Michelin-star spirit. [...] And we are involved in creativity. In between sittings, we work in the kitchen. He [chef] brings up ideas, like "it's early winter, eating richer dishes is comforting... creams and sabayons..." and we work together, we exchange ideas, we experiment, we taste, we discuss openly*".

Secondly, the chef and his team were increasingly exposed to new sources of inspiration. Delegation of responsibilities and smoothness of the restaurant operations released the head chef from his supervisory oversight thereby enabling him to spend more time outside the restaurant to participate in high profile public engagements. When we met him the second time for example, the chef was back from Helsinki and about to leave for Singapore, together with two of his subordinates, to perform cooking demonstrations alongside other internationally acknowledged chefs. He would display his culinary innovations: the way Champagne is used at CGR, the philosophy of cuisine that prevails, how local products and international developments are brought

together in a unique way and so on. Such wider field level activity contributed to attracting international clients to CGR. It also enriched the chef's own sources of inspiration and indirectly impacted the dishes served at the restaurant, with the introduction of non-local ingredients (such as green mango), new associations or preparations (such as Japanese inspired jellies) that the second-chefs were able to better appreciate as well. In the restaurant's kitchen, these novelties progressively modified the cooks' daily practices as well as clients' expectations allowing tastes to evolve away from the former classical style of the restaurant. The spin-offs from the small purposive operational changes made led to an unexpected possibility of opening up to fresh inspirations for the chef and its team.

The third unintended consequence that we identified regards the impact of the opening of the brasserie-restaurant. Originally, this project was seen as a much-needed way of generating fresh revenue and bore no other direct relationship to restoring the main restaurant's gastronomic status. Yet, it unexpectedly came to serve as an experimental laboratory for the cooks; it provided fresh opportunities for them to develop their professional skills, their culinary expertise and their haute-cuisine self-understandings. For one thing, cooking in the smaller brasserie's kitchen gave them greater decision-making autonomy: the kitchen required fewer cooks with enlarged responsibilities so that working at the brasserie became an opportunity for developing themselves. But the most unexpected thing was that the brasserie turned out to be an experimental bridgehead for the main restaurant with far wider-ranging impact than initially intended. Cooks took the challenge of mixing ingredients from a variety of traditions (local, Mediterranean, Japanese, American...), and quickly saw the opportunity for experimenting with new and more innovative dishes as well as introducing new taste associations that were unfamiliar and not yet acceptable at the main gastronomic restaurant. The brasserie therefore served as a springboard for the cooks to express and display their own culinary skills. Freed of nostalgia and classical expectations, clients were

also more open to taste new preparations there. Successful new associations, ingredients or preparations initially created at the brasserie were subsequently incorporated into new dishes at the gastronomic restaurant. Thus, Mediterranean and international inspirations grew more salient throughout time with the introduction of such elements as candied lemon, middle-eastern soft spices, chickpeas or dates... This emergent synergy in turn opened spaces for further culinary developments as clients' tastes and expectations progressively evolved. The team discovered new ways of expressing themselves and developing their habitus as they worked on the two entities that were initially intended to be gastronomically independent. As the head-chef summarized it: "*Some wait passively in expectation, while others are actively involved in their jobs. I want to do things, to motivate; one never knows what might happen*" (interview).

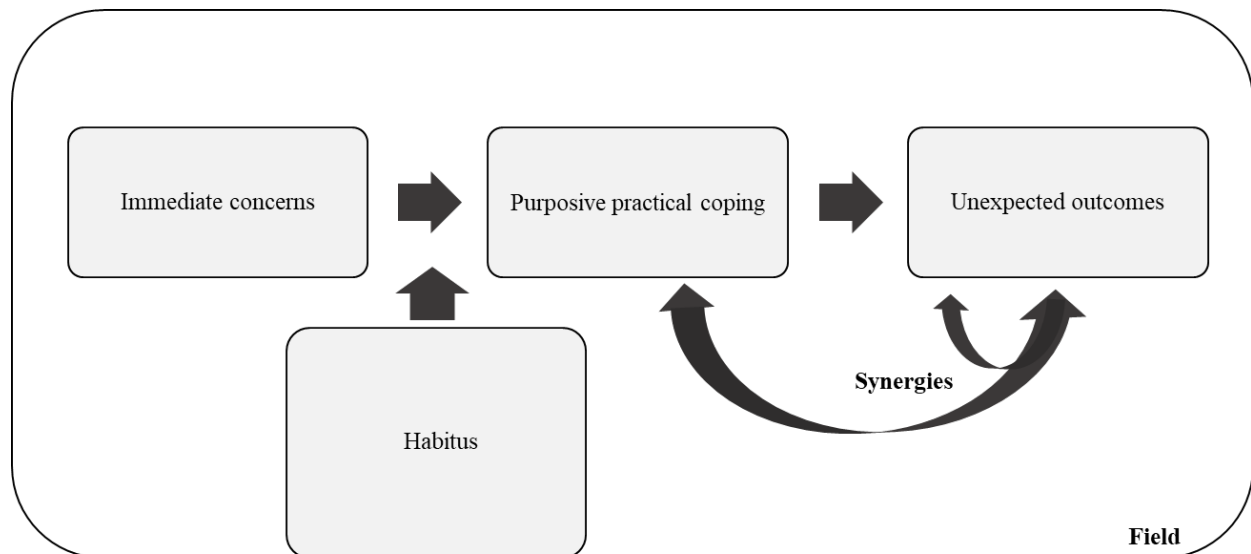
CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

This research developed out of an observation that although emergent strategy has been well acknowledged a concept in strategic management literature for several decades, its specific dynamics and intricacies were yet to be examined in further details (Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014; Whittington & Vaara, 2012), especially to understand how exactly strategy can emerge, as a coherent and consistent pattern, despite or in the absence of deliberate intention, formal strategic planning and goal setting. We investigated this question within a practice-based perspective (Chia & Mac Kay, 2007; Kouamé & Langley, 2018; Mirabeau, Maguire & Hardy, 2018) accounting for the social embeddedness of actors and how that affects their responses. We specifically adopted a conceptual approach to strategizing as wayfinding (Chia & Holt, 2006, 2009; Tsoukas, 2010), a relational stance, which acknowledges the purposiveness of action, the importance of habitus in predisposing organizational actors, the significance of small incremental changes in bringing about major transformations, and the inevitability of unintended consequences arising from such actions

taken. Our longitudinal empirical study of a gourmet restaurant, a small company in a highly structured field, showed how strategy emerged within the organization through a multitude of small local actions taken with a restricted view to fixing immediate problems and concerns in situ, yet which also drew from actors' habitus and the haute cuisine social practice they are engaged in. With this, our study contributes to a better understanding of the phenomenon of emergent strategy and to the development of the strategizing as wayfinding framework.

First, we add to existing knowledge by proposing a model of strategy emergence. We empirically show that what makes consistency possible in emergent strategy as a "pattern realized despite, or in the absence of intentions" (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985:257) is the immanence of social practices that, through habitus, irrigate every coping action taken as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Strategy emergence as wayfinding



The seemingly inconsequential small changes made to purposively overcome immediate concerns at CGR are practical coping actions profoundly shaped by the restaurant's staff's and chef's ingrained habitus, structured by the field of haute cuisine. The habitus of haute cuisine and the

particular local restaurant are immanent in everyday purposive practical coping and contribute to providing coherence to the emerging stream of actions. Our study, hence, contributes to emergent strategy research by empirically pointing to the value of introducing the field-habitus relationship in the analysis of the phenomenon. In the particular case of CGR, such feature is especially salient since the restaurant was on a downward spiral heading toward culinary oblivion. Things had to be turned around; how was an open question however. Given the staff's and chef's haute cuisine self-understanding, working towards regaining the lost gastronomic status seemed natural, even though they did not know how exactly this could be achieved. This is not to say that fighting to win the third Michelin star back was unimportant to CGR and its members. On the contrary, it was absolutely crucial, yet it influenced actions and behaviors in a different, less direct and more profound way (Chia, 2013); one that was mediated by the social norms and practices surrounding the provision of haute cuisine. Cooks and the chefs most certainly valued regaining the Michelin three-star rating but also recognized that it could only be achieved by internalizing and perfecting their own culinary expertise so that they could delight their guests through culinary innovations and excellent service. The chef had also integrated this challenge organizationally and exemplified it personally: defending or upgrading the restaurant evaluation and building his own reputation in the field internationally. This, in our understanding, is how the Michelin quest tempered by the habitus of haute cuisine and, moderated by the contexts and expectations of various stakeholders, shaped the eventual consistency and coherence of the multitude of small initiatives undertaken at various levels in the organization. Thus, the restaurant's glorious history, acknowledged classicism and long-standing relationships with Champagne producers, and the international experiences of the head chef as well as the traditions of haute cuisine all participated to make possible the emergence of a coherent pattern in the stream of actions and decision retrospectively recognized as strategy.

Our study therefore also suggests that the pervasive influence of social practices is what accounts for the interactions between micro and macro levels and is fundamental to understand how strategy emergence from local purposive coping actions is possible. In that, it contributes to answering the call to better account for the social and collective embeddedness of the strategy practitioner's agency (Elbasha & Wright, 2017; Rasche & Chia, 2009; Rouleau, 2013: 561; Whittington, 2007) and to highlighting how "lower level processes and practices engaged by individuals and groups connect to broader organizational-level processes and outcomes" (Kouamé & Langley, 2018: 560). That said, we acknowledge that the specific case we investigated may cause some limitations to our conclusions. In particular, we selected CGR as an instrumental case because it is a small company, engaged within a highly institutionalized field, and in which strategy largely revolves within a clear activity and physical perimeter (the kitchen). The immanence of field-level practices and social elements may well be less obvious or more diffuse in larger organizations and/or in those evolving within less institutionalized fields; this does not mean that it would be less significant but rather that empirically detecting it could be more challenging. Additional research will be useful to further investigate more dispersed settings in this regard. Further studies will also potentially unveil how perhaps more heterogeneous habituses interact to provide coherence to the macro pattern emerging out of micro decisions and actions. In the case we studied, actors' habituses are profoundly shaped by haute cuisine and, although these habituses retain highly personal dimensions, they nonetheless have much in common. This will certainly be less the case in larger organizations although we suspect that shared organizational elements will nonetheless still be significant. Further explorations in this direction, as fascinating as they may be, will however be empirically challenging since they will require both an in-depth engagement with actors in the field (to finely capture their habituses) and a distanced appreciation of the emerging flow of actions and decisions taken.

Second, we contribute to emergent strategy research by unveiling the dynamics of the phenomenon. We especially put forward the almost systemic nature of emergent strategizing. We concur with some past studies (ex. Pascale, 1984; Tsoukas, 2010) to show that emergent strategizing lies in locally-embedded daily interactions with the external environments that crucially rely on perceptual sensitivity to situations. Yet, in addition, we show that emergent strategizing also develops through the synergistic intertwinement of coping actions and of some of their unintended consequences. The brasserie-restaurant project is especially illustrative in this regard given the contrast between the intended financial and eventual creative contribution of the project to the overall emergent strategy at CGR. As a coping action it intertwined with other coping actions taken (for example the introduction of lighting dimmers and temperature regulators at the main kitchen) to produce unintended consequences, but also with unexpected consequences of these actions (the more relaxed ambiance at the main kitchen for example). Prior literature had provided only indirect indications of parallel dynamics, especially though the contribution of projects misaligned with or peripheral to the existing intended strategy (Régner, 2003; Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014); nor was this aspect considered in the original wayfinding framework (Chia & Holt, 2006, 2009). In contrast, we show that strategy partly emerges from the synergistic interweaving of coping actions and their unintended consequences. In that we add to existing literature with a new dimension of the emergent strategy as a wayfinding phenomenon. Further research will nonetheless be useful to deepen understanding of how various, seemingly unconnected, projects and their unintended consequences unexpectedly combine with each other and contribute to sustain emergent strategy. It will also be necessary to better understand whether and how actors' habitus shapes such synergies among coping actions and their unintended consequences. We showed that actors' practical coping actions are shaped by habitus. On this base

one can reasonably imagine synergies to be identically influenced since actors remain in the game at this stage: they can spot possible synergies, actively interlace elements or keep them apart...

What's more, our study shows that emergent strategy is a dynamic phenomenon within which coping actions and their consequences incessantly relate to each other in time. This aspect has not been under direct scrutiny in prior literature, which so far suggested rather analytical and static linking among internal elements within emergent strategy (ex. Chia & Holt, 2006, 2009). In this study, we show how small changes cumulatively and dynamically lead to unexpected consequences and unanticipated synergies and contributed in an iterative way to shaping the eventual strategic trajectory of the organization. Each purposive coping action alone, considered at a given moment, might appear to have potentially limited consequences; but some such coping actions resonate with each other throughout time and interlace to produce unanticipated effects that inadvertently contribute to strategy emergence.. In other words, we show that the intertwining of elements in the dynamics of emergent strategy develops through time, in possibly unexpected ways. Altogether, we suggest that strategy emerges as a dynamic, synergistic, and cumulative combination of coping actions and their (unexpected) consequences. We however suspect that distinct temporalities are at play as can be illustrated by the contrast between the short-timed direct effect of temperature regulators and lighting dimmers in the kitchen as opposed to those, more gradual, of the brasserie restaurant. However, we were not able to precisely account for these nuances and further empirical research is therefore needed to cultivate this avenue.

Third, our study additionally contributes to the strategy as wayfinding framework, which has received limited attention so far. On the theoretical side, we contribute to further the development of this framework, by putting forward central concepts, by interrelating them into a model and by suggesting new interactions among them. In particular, theoretical elaborations by Chia and Holt (2006, 2009) are more significantly focused on elements than on relationships among

them. With our model of emergent strategy as wayfinding, we add to the wayfinding framework by interrelating its main components: we show that (and how) purposive actions relate to immediate concerns (to which they respond), to habitus (which shapes them), and to their consequences (intended and unintended). We additionally put forward a synergistic relationship between purposive actions and unintended consequences over time that was not initially included in the framework. Our study also contributes to the methodological development of the wayfinding framework, which, to our knowledge, has not been put to work empirically in strategy literature to date. The different stages that we describe in our research process can be used as guidelines by other researchers wishing to account for wayfinding, and relate the micro-level purposive actions to macro-level phenomena.

In sum, our study contributes to developing a research approach to understanding strategy emergence that is empirically rich and that attempts to capture the messy and richly textured character of strategy emergence from within the everyday experiences of the organizational actors themselves. It shows how the emergence of a coherent and plausible strategy is often a consequence of purposive tinkering, idiosyncratic though socially structured adaptive changes made within specific organizational circumstances, and unintended consequences. All these elements account for the iterative nature of what we call wayfinding where coherence and consistency of action is achieved in the emergent pattern of action despite the lack of a deliberate strategy.

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APPENDIX 1

Ephemeral menu created around a specific champagne winery

TRADITION DE CHAMPAGNE

Semaine Style BRUNO PAILLARD

POUR PATIENTER :

Huître Gillardeau à peine tiédie, crème au caviar d'Aquitaine

LANGOUSTINE-ARAIGNEE DE MER :

à cru, udon et consommé légèrement épicé, servi glacé
Bruno Paillard Chardonnay Réserve Privée

ROUGET DE PETITS BATEAU :

satay-sésame, en fine dentelle de pain
Bruno Paillard Première Cuvée

HOMARD BLEU :

chipirons, haricots coco blancs et cèpes grillés liés d'une sauce civet
Bruno Paillard Millésime 1996

PIGEONNEAU :

pois chiches, citron et dattes fraîches dans un bouillon au raz-el-hanout, fine semoule
Bruno Paillard NPU "Nec Plus Ultra" 1995

PITHIVIERS :

de foie gras, pigeonneau et olives, sauce salmis
Bruno Paillard Millésime 1989 servi en Magnum

PAMPLEMOUSSE ROSE :

en amertume, biscuit rose de Reims, pour dégustation d'un Champagne

POIRE D'AUTOMNE :

en consommé, amandes Polignac et chocolat Grand Cru
Bruno Paillard Première Cuvée Rosé

Cafés, Infusions, Mignardises

Prix : 225 euros sans le champagne

Prix : 305 euros avec le champagne

Les menus sont servis de préférence pour l'ensemble des convives de la table
(jusqu'à 13h30 au déjeuner et jusqu'à 21h30 au dîner)