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## **‘SOUL-SEARCHING IN THE ARCHIVES: CRISIS, TEMPORALITY, AND PATH DEPENDENCE’**

**BY WIM VAN LENT – IÉSEG SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT**



### **ABSTRACT**

Although powerful in explaining organizational persistence, path dependence theory has been criticized for downplaying managerial agency. Since path dependence is an inherently historical phenomenon, agentic approaches emphasize temporality, which refers to actors’ strategic connection of their firm’s past, present, and future, but discussions of this practice remain sporadic. An emerging literature on firms’ uses of the past could further elucidate the role of temporality in relation to organizational path dependence, but it strongly prioritizes the rhetorical use of strategy for purposes of sensegiving, neglecting history’s potential for strategic sensemaking. To advance understanding of temporality, we examine how senior decision-makers at Barclays Bank drew on corporate archives following the 2007-2009 Global Financial Crisis. Our data suggest that various strategic decision-makers drew on Barclay’s past for both sensemaking and sensegiving purposes, which produced a heterarchical sense of temporality that allowed them, as a group, to imagine virtuous path dependent mechanisms projecting ways towards a renewed competitive advantage. Beyond demonstrating the joint importance of sensemaking and sensegiving in temporal agency, this finding adds substance to agentic approaches to path dependence and reinforces the emerging view that action paths are not automatically self-reinforcing but have to be “worked”.