Preliminary info about the SAP stream at EGOS 2011 Gothenburg

Call for papers forthcoming:
"Strategy-as-Practice: Informal Strategizing – Power, Identity and Technologies"

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Informal practices of strategizing

The “Strategy-as-Practice” (SAP) perspective re-conceptualises strategy as a social activity (strategy not as something an organisation has but something that people do). For the 2011 track, we invite papers especially focusing on informal practices of strategizing. While formal processes of strategy formation have been the subject of strategy research for decades, the less visible yet consequential informal processes of strategizing deserve our attention too. Here we particularly encourage attention to issues of power, identity and technologies. Outside formal processes, power, identity and technologies are liable all to influence outcomes in unexpected and likely heightened ways. Who gets to talk and who is heard in strategy formation is closely linked to questions of identity, power relations and the openness of the (social) technologies in use.

Power

A practice perspective enables us to focus on how power is produced within strategy practices, instead of being only a possession of individuals. Promotion of specific ideas, understandings, concepts, methods and subjectivities produce power relations which are also linked with material consequences. Power may appear less visible in informal strategizing. However, while informal strategizing provides opportunities for challenging dominant power relations and creating new ideas, conceptions and subjectivities, it may also afford scope for more subtle forms of organizational politics-as-usual. Papers here could focus on struggles over strategic ideas, strategy-making practices, or on the subjectivities and power relations within a society, industry or organization. The challenging of ideological and material implications of institutionalized strategy-making practices could also be examined. Other questions include:

- How are strategies legitimized within informal strategizing?
- How do informal strategy-making activities and practices constitute subject positions and how are subjectivities resisted?
- In such informal activities, how are ideologies, strategies or institutionalized strategy making practices challenged?

**Identity**

Informal strategy work can challenge the exclusive role of top managers and provide lower-level managers and other organizational actors with the opportunity to influence an organization’s strategy. Acknowledging the relevance of more ‘peripheral’ organizational actors for strategy formation raises the issue of identity of strategy workers, i.e. who considers herself a strategist in these informal settings? Who is considered a strategist? And, irrespective of such self-identity, whose voice gets heard in the end? These general issues are even more relevant if we are to explore informal strategy work where identity is constantly up for negotiation. Thus, papers might address some of the following aspects:

- How do strategy workers in informal strategizing self-identify themselves as such?
- How are strategy workers enrolled/excluded in informal processes of strategy work?
- Which informal practices facilitate a participatory mode of strategy work?

**Technologies**

Strategy technologies include a wide range of analytical, social and representational tools. One particular interest here is in how new IT-based technologies may increase the potential for more inclusive, improvisational or informal strategizing. Electronic documents may increase participation, flexibility and accountability through easy circulation, editing and recording of track-changes. Chief executives now blog with their employees and more open technologies such as ‘jamming’ are purportedly more inclusive. The sheer leakiness of electronic documents also increases external accountability. We take a wide view of technologies, but our interests include:

- how new technologies have increased (or not) opportunities for more informal, and improvisational strategy-making, intentionally or unintentionally
- how such new technologies may have shifted the balance of power in strategy, in any direction
- how any increased participation or accountability in strategy due to new technologies may have changed employees' sense of identity and responsibility with regard to strategy.

Professors David Knights (University of the West of England) and Georg Von Krogh (ETH Zurich) will provide commentaries on selected papers.
If you are particularly interested in empirical studies on strategizing informed by process theories, please consider a submission to the sub-theme on "Strategizing as Wayfinding: A Process Perspective" (Grand, Rueegg-Stuerm, Chia).