“Strategy as Practice”

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Panel Discussion
“Practice-based Approaches in Organizational Studies”

(based on Human Relations Special Issue on “Strategizing: The Challenges of a Practice Perspective”)
From “Activity-Based-View” to “Strategy as Practice”

Precursors:
• Business Policy/Harvard Tradition
• Mintzberg’s studies on managerial activities

JMS Special Issue (2003) – “Activity-Based View”
• Strategizing as the doing of strategy
• Emphasis on the “micro-actions”

HR Special Issue (2007) – “Strategy as Practice”
• Strategizing as the doing of strategy in the context of the wider field of social practices – micro-macro link
A framework for s-as-p research

Praxis
the actual doing of strategy

Strategizing

Practices
guiding the doing of strategy
(tools, technologies, discursive practices etc.)

Practitioners
the people who do strategy
What is strategy?

Definition:

Strategy is (1) a socially accomplished activity, constructed through the actions, interactions and negotiations of (2) multiple actors and (3) the situated practices that they draw upon.
Areas of empirical research in s-as-p

- Use of formal administrative practices in three different university contexts (e.g., Jarzabkowski 2003; 2005)
- Use of discursive practices by particular strategists (e.g., Samra-Fredricks 2003; 2004)
- Sense-making by middle managers in strategic change (e.g., Balogun/Johnson 2005)

Diagram:
- Praxis
- Practices
- Practitioners

Intersection A: Use of discursive practices by particular strategists

Intersection B: Use of formal administrative practices in three different university contexts

Intersection C: Sense-making by middle managers in strategic change
Who is a strategist?

Against traditional board room demographics:

• Need to study the actual identities, experiences and competences

• Wider scope of strategic actors: all levels of the organization and also external to the organization
What do strategists do?


S-as-p: what do these activities involve and how do they shape strategy
What does an analysis of strategists and their doings explain?

Dependent variable:

- Not only firm performance
- Also micro outcomes, e.g. individual decisions
- Also macro outcomes, e.g. institutionalization of particular practices within an industry
How can existing theory inform an analysis of s-as-p?

• S-as-p is not defined by a specific theoretical base
• Diversity of theoretical sources:
  – theory of social practices (e.g. Giddens, Bourdieu, deCerteau)
  – Complexity theory
  – Discourse theory
  – Sense making theory
  – Etc.
Thank you for your attention!
Taking the agenda forward: areas of research

1. Practitioners:
   - particularly the role of actors external to the firm
   - role of strategists’ personal identities and experiences

2. Practitioners and Practice (Section C)

3. Practices and Practitioners (Section A)

4. Implications of different theoretical approaches

5. New methodologies