SPO LARGE-SCALE WORKSHOP ON NEW DIRECTIONS IN STRATEGY RESEARCH

ASTON BUSINESS SCHOOL
3 – 4 SEPTEMBER 2007
The SPO (Strategy, Partnerships, and Organizations) Program invites the Aston Community to participate in a Large Scale Workshop on Strategy to be held from September 3 – 4, 2007

Purposes

- To bring together some of the leading cutting edge thinkers on strategy from the Academy and structure a workshop around their current thinking
- To produce papers for publication in a special issue of the Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal

Theme

The importance of strategy to contemporary organizations and their top managers can hardly be overstated. Strategy links the interior world of the organization to the exterior worlds of the environments in which it operates. The objective is to open up debate on the links between accounting and strategy. In particular, it is interested in what strategists actually do when they engage in the process of strategy making. Rather than analysing mission statements and models of rational decision-making, the issue aims to shed light on the day-to-day routines, the process and the practices of strategy making in organizations. Three core questions will be posed to participants in the workshop:

1. Where, by whom, and how is the work of strategizing actually done?
2. How inclusive is the strategy-making process?
3. What are the common tools and techniques of strategizing and how are the products of strategizing communicated and consumed?

Thematic issues for address

1. Reflexively accounting for strategy
   - Which organizational members become strategists and how they do so?
   - How do they maintain their roles — that is, what strategies do they use to maintain their strategic position?
   - What is the work of doing strategy?

2. What is the role of strategy in the internal dynamics of the firm?
   - What rites of passage do organization members experience in their move from the realm of operational activities to strategy making?
   - What prepared them for their role as strategists?
   - How did they acquire their strategic cultural capital?

3. What is the point of strategy in the internal dynamics of the business school?
   - Does the ‘case method’ approach of MBAs prepare MBA students for a life ‘doing strategy’?
   - Do strategy subjects focus on the key competencies required to analyse strategy?
   - Is such a thing as an a contextual strategy for organizations possible?

4. Ontologically, what is the status of strategy as practice?
   - If strategy is what (some) organization members do, how is the boundedness of strategy established?
   - What makes a practice strategic?
What is the relation between what strategists do when they use prescriptive versions of strategy and the ontological status of that which they prescribe, or, is Porter’s diamond real because strategists make it so?

5. Politically, what is the status of strategy vis a vis stakeholder models of the organization?
   - Strategy, it is often said, is the preserve of the top management team. In a stakeholder model of the organization what is the role of which types of stakeholder in determining an appropriate strategy?
   - What is the role of ‘excluded’ stakeholders in the strategy enterprise, such as the anti-globalization or animal liberation movements?
   - Can strategy escape its etymology, politically?

6. Epistemologically, what makes one strategic discourse better than another?
   - Is strategy always a performative discourse privileging measures of performance?
   - What performance criteria should be included and excluded from a consideration of strategy?
   - What makes a strategy successful according to what and whose criteria?

Organizers

Stewart Clegg (Aston & UTS)
Chris Carter (St Andrews)
Martin Kornberger (UTS & St Andrews)

External Participants

Stephen Ackroyd (Lancaster)
Nic Beech (St Andrews)
Nacho Canales (St Andrews)
Chris Chapman (Oxford)
Peter Clark (Queen Mary)
Ian Clarke (Lancaster)
Jo Duberly (Birmingham)
Gabriela Edlinger (Innsbruck)
Mahmoud Ezzamel (Cardiff)
Gerry Hanlon (Queen Mary)
Stefano Harney (Queen Mary)
John Hassard (Manchester)
Keith Hoskin (Warwick)
Silvia Jordan (Innsbruck)
Alan Mckinlay (St Andrews)
Robert McIntosh (Glasgow)
Sven Modell (Manchester)
Andre Spicer (Warwick)
David Seidl (Munich)

Structure of the Event

The workshop will run over two half-days.

- **Day one**
  - 12.00 - 01.00 Welcome lunch
  - 01.00 - 01.45 Question 1: Reflexively accounting for strategy
    - Nic Beech & Robert Macintosh (co-authors)
  - 01.45 - 02.30 Question 2: What is the role of strategy in the internal dynamics of the firm?
    - Alan McKinlay
  - 02.30 - 03.00 Coffee / Network
  - 03.00 - 03.45 Question 3: What is the point of strategy in the internal dynamics of the business school?
    - Stefano Harney
  - 03.45 - 04.30 Question 4: Ontologically, what is the status of strategy as practice?
    - Keith Hoskin
  - 04.30 - 04.45 Coffee Break
  - 04.45 - 06.00 Strategy as Practice: the Prospect and its Critique
    - TBC

*Evening: drinks and then trip to K2 Jazz and Balti Restaurant*

- **Day two**
  - 09.00 - 09.45 Question 5: Politically, what is the status of strategy vis a vis stakeholder models of the organization?
    - Andre Spicer
  - 09.45 - 10.30 Question 6: Epistemologically, what makes one strategic discourse better than another?
Stephen Ackroyd

10.30 - 10.45 Coffee/ Network

10.45 - 12.00 Plenary session: The futures of strategy
Chris Chapman, John Hassard, Ian Clarke, Gerry Hanlon

12.00 - 01.00 Farewell lunch