Theme

Strategy has become a major research field in management over the last 30 years. During this time, its development has tended to focus increasingly on organizational strategies as opposed to the activities of people in organizations as they define, elaborate, and implement strategies. Those interested in Strategy as Practice emphasize what people do in relation to the development of strategies and are therefore centrally concerned with issues of practice within organizational contexts. This has led many of them to draw on or refer to sociological and linguistic theories and research related to practice. However few would claim a high level of academic expertise in these and cognate fields. Likewise, many social science scholars lack the opportunity to engage directly with researchers and ideas within the rapidly expanding field of management studies. It is this apparent gap that motivates this symposium – which will provide an opportunity for Strategy as Practice scholars who have advanced this broader set of strategic concerns to engage with leading scholars on communities of practice and related issues outside the immediate field of management.

As many strategy researchers know, Lancaster University's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Management School has some distinguished members who have contributed significantly to work in areas such as communities of practice, discourse analysis, actor network theory, ethnography, critical theory and/or on other topics directly relevant to strategic questions. The Institute for Advanced Studies – established as an initiative of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences to promote scholarship that pushes beyond departmental and disciplinary boundaries – together with the Centre for Strategic Management – a centre established in order to advance the cross disciplinary study of management strategy – are co-sponsoring this symposium. The aims are:

- to provide an opportunity for fruitful engagement and productive exchange between Strategy as Practice researchers and leading social scientists who have expertise in relevant areas of social theory and social inquiry.

- to provide a catalyst for the identification of possible synergies and future informal and funded research collaboration.

To this end, Gerry Johnson (Director of the Centre for Strategic Management) and Bob Jessop (Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies) would like to invite you to participate in a high-profile symposium to explore these issues with the agenda of enabling strategy researchers to gain a better understanding of relevant social science theory and research and, in turn, to interrogate it on the basis of their own theoretical and research interests.
Participants

Some of the participants from Lancaster involved in these research conversations will include:

- Frank Blackler – activity theory, collaborative intervention –
  http://www.lums.lancs.ac.uk/owt/profiles/110/
- Bob Jessop – cultural political economy, knowledge based economy –
  http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/faculty/profiles/26/16/
- John Law – actor network theory, science and technology studies –
  http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/faculty/profiles/27/16/
- Andrew Sayer – social theory, political economy, critical realism –
  http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/sociology/profiles/16/16/
- Lucy Suchman – ethnography, science and technology studies –
  http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/sociology/staff/suchman/suchman.htm
- Ruth Wodak – discourse studies, critical discourse analysis –
  http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/profiles/265

The invitation is for you to join with them in this event.

Structure

This will be a small symposium (consisting of 30-40 participants) purposely structured so as to allow for greater opportunities for intensive intellectual exchange and networking than is possible in larger and less personal forums. Rather than having extended formal presentations of papers, participants leading social science and management scholars – will instead engage in a series of discussion groups centered upon the opportunities that can be realised from a closer and more disciplined linkage between various strategy as practice research programmes and their cognate fields in the social sciences.

Discussions will be preceded by plenary scoping presentations in which distinctive features of various research programmes are highlighted with potential implications to management and organizational research identified. This will be then the starting point for discussion break-out groups and round tables focused on your research. We expect these smaller group discussions to be lively and provocative as each will feature a mix of social scientists who are leaders their respective theoretical fields as well as experiences and early stage strategy researchers. These discussions will be followed by a feedback sessions to the plenary in which the salient issues are summarised and the implications for the current research and research plans of strategy researchers.

There will be a reception for participants on the evening of 20th February and the symposium itself will commence at 9.30 am on 21st, ending by 4pm on 22nd.

Application

We ask that potential participants / applicants provide a two page submission that addresses the following:

- Begins with a statement (no more than 100 words and in lieu of an abstract) of how your research applies to the Strategy as Practice research agenda and how it relates to the agenda of the symposium.
- Outlines the purpose and design of your current area of research or a proposed area of research (i.e. not a completed piece of research with e.g. a working paper).
- Identifies issues or questions that might usefully be pursued in the context of the symposium
This proposal should be written in such a way as to acknowledge that you are entering a conversation: i.e. it should not only be about what you might gain from the symposium, but also what others in the conversation might find interesting, stimulating or gainful. In so doing it should be borne in mind that the conversation will be not only with those who are interested in strategy as practice, but also other social scientists. Assuming we receive more applications than we can accommodate in the symposium, selection of participants will be based on the following criteria:

- Its relevance to the development of Strategy as Practice research
- The extent to which it fits with the skills and interests of others taking part in the event
- The extent to which it might provide stimulating conversations between those in the event
- Evidence of the academic quality of the research

Proposals should be sent to Fran Riley (f.riley@lancaster.ac.uk) and be received no later than 9th November 2007. Applicants will receive notification of their acceptance by 7th December 2007.

Conference fees and other details

Conference fees will be £180 per participant. Bursaries to cover travel, conference fees and accommodation are available for doctoral and early career researchers. Accommodation for attendees will be arranged at the Lancaster House Hotel (http://www.elh.co.uk/hotels/lancaster/index.php)