

**Proposal to become an Interest Group:
Strategizing Activities & Practice**

Steering Committee Members

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Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of the proposed *Strategizing Activities & Practice* (SAP) Interest Group are:

- i) To enable the growth and visibility of a body of scholarship that is showing significant potential for scholarly contribution in opening up a venue for exploring strategic management as it is practiced within and across organizations
- ii) To enable further development of an emerging community of international scholars
- iii) To meet the development needs of this community of scholars through recognizing and advancing their particular methodological and epistemological traditions
- iv) To increase the vibrancy of the Academy through a body of scholarship that enables connections to, yet has no exact overlap with, many other divisions

Domain Statement and unique contribution to the Academy

Strategizing, Activities & Practice

To advance knowledge and understanding of strategy as something people *do* and not just something organizations have, and therefore the work involved in doing strategy. Empirically the focus is on the day-to-day-work, activities and practices of strategists, with an interest in how this work socially accomplishes a wide range of individual and organizational outcomes, and also relates to broader societal and institutional trends. The focus on strategists extends beyond concerns with upper echelons and even middle managers to include other influential players such as consultants, non executives and business school gurus, and beyond considerations such as demographics to a consideration of how aspects such as training, knowledge, identity and emotions can affect an individual's strategy making activity. The focus on the work of strategists includes both understanding at a micro level in

traditional areas of strategy process and content research and the generic practices (e.g. planning routines, discourse, tool-use) by which they are accomplished. Methodologically this research focus generates particular challenges in terms of closeness to strategic practitioners. Thus the interest group encourages methodological innovation through, for example, collaborative and mixed method approaches, action research interventions, executive development and coaching based relationships, video and narrative approaches. Theoretical pluralism is also encouraged with recognition of the potential contributions from a wide range of sociological and organization theories such as practice based, institutional, discourse, sensemaking, routines and cognition.

This domain statement makes clear that a Strategizing, Activities & Practice Interest Group would draw on many different perspectives, placing us in a space between existing divisions both empirically and theoretically. As a result, we can connect with many divisions to make the academy a more vibrant community and enable connections between divisions, yet we also need our own space to build on what is distinct and provide adequate developmental resource in terms of, for example, PDWs and Symposia.

Why the Strategizing, Activities and Practice Interest Group is Distinct from other Divisions

The label “practice” refers to the empirical focus of this field on the *work* of strategy, and the diverse theoretical perspectives that can inform this, which is different from the emphasis in the BPS division, and moves beyond the focus in the Practice Theme Committee of informing managerial practice. The diverse theoretical and methodological interests, combined with the focus on individuals ***and*** their work, makes it hard for individuals interested in this domain to position themselves within any one existing division. A poll of the members of the steering committee revealed membership of a wide range of divisions including most frequently BPS, ODC, OMT, RMD, MOC and CMS. This wide ranging membership is due to similar *empirical* interests with BPS (and at times ODC) on strategy and strategic change, yet in terms of the way we study these topics an *intellectual* tradition more concerned with a study of work and therefore more shared with, for example, ODC, Management Consulting and OMT Divisions. The theoretical plurality with which we study the work of strategy, drawing on not just “grand theory” but also a wide range of management and organization approaches to the topic of doing strategy, also provides an overlap with OMT (e.g. institutional theory, discourse, practice, identity) and with MOC (e.g.

sensemaking, emotion). In addition, the nature of the methods employed and the attempts to be innovative create an overlap and interest with RMD. Thus there are significant overlaps with other divisions, but no one (or even two) natural homes at the academy for SAP research and community members. It is the empirical focus on the work of strategy, and the methodological and theoretical traditions attached to this, that makes the SAP group distinct.

Need for Developmental Resources

The lack of a natural or close home at the academy for SAP papers and symposia results in submissions spread across a wide range of divisions, including BPS, CMS, OB, OMT, MOC, MED, Management Consulting, OCIS, and RMD. This in turn raises development issues to do with resources and time, which are at the center of this proposal for a separate SAP Interest Group. The wide dispersal of submissions, despite the generosity of the BPS Division in creating a subtrack on SAP, has certain implications. The dispersal of papers across many different divisions as a tactic based on whichever seems most likely to be sympathetic for that particular submission ensures that papers and some symposia do get accepted. However, this then in terms of the academy schedule deprives us of a cohesive set of discussions, or even the ability to identify SAP symposia and papers since they are mixed in with many others. This, of course, in turn, has development implications and deprives the community of visibility. Additionally, existing divisions have many topics to cover. Hence, they may be reluctant to accept 2 or more SAP symposia and papers to one conference, even where all have adequate reviews, on the basis that they need to allocate space to a range of topics. An SAP Interest Group would provide the basis for SAP topics to be developed. In addition, our members have particular development needs that could be met through PDWs, yet as a track within another division it is hard to get adequate PDW space or time, with even PDWs that are accepted getting limited time. Thus whereas we would like to run several PDWs each year, we instead put all our resources into submitting just one very strong PDW to ensure we do get at least one PDW accepted for our members.

Finally, there are implications for the review process. For example, if papers are submitted to the BPS Division, we can currently specify SAP as a key word, but then it can be difficult to find other key words to provide a good match. For SAP paper submissions to receive constructive reviews we need to be able to specify a more precise empirical focus, plus a methodological focus (e.g. case study, ethnography, action research as is possible within RMD and ODC), plus a theoretical focus (e.g. discourse, institutional theory, etc. as is

possible within OMT), but such precision is not possible as a sub-domain since key word options cannot be shared across divisions.

We stress that we would expect our members to continue to also belong to a wide range of other divisions, and that PDWs and Symposia would be submitted to SAP as well as other Divisions and Interest Groups. We see our positioning as similar to that of the Management Spirituality and Religion Interest Group in that an SAP Interest Group would be home for the diverse range of academy members with an interest in SAP yet also enable them to be members of other relevant divisions. For example, our members are involved each year in the PDW sponsored by RMD on Process Research. We would expect such cross-divisional collaborations to continue.

Demonstrated Evidence of a Body of Scholarship

The SAP field was initiated with an EAISM conference on “Strategy, Activity and Practice” in Brussels in 2001. Since then, with an initial focus on activity in Europe, there have been many small and informal workshops. For example, in the UK alone there are 2 or 3 such workshops a year, at which individuals interested in SAP get together to discuss different themes, with other regular workshops across Europe. In France, a series of high-profile seminars have been organized in Paris for several years. A North American workshop series is being launched in 2010 beginning in HEC Montreal, with a workshop at Brigham Young University planned in 2011. A website dedicated to SAP was also established in 2003 (www.s-as-p.org) which has some 3200 members, from over 40 countries, of which the main ones are the Australia, Brazil, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, UK, and the USA. In addition, regular conference tracks have been initiated at British Academy of Management (BAM), European Group for Organization Studies (EGOS), European Academy of Management (EGOS) and the Strategic Management Society (SMS). SAP is a standing working group at EGOS (the track has been the most popular track at EGOS for the last 4 years), and a Special Interest Group at BAM and SMS. The 2010 SMS special conference in Finland is also on strategy-as-practice. In fact, the Academy is now one of the few, if not the only, major conference at which the growing SAP field is not represented, despite the fact that is the conference where the largest number of individuals interested in the field are likely to be.

There have been five special issues and one forthcoming, each of which has an international group of guest editors, as follows:

- Johnson, G., Melin, L. and Whittington, R. (2003). Special Issue: Micro strategy and strategizing: towards an activity-based view. *Journal of Management Studies*, **40.1**;
- McKiernan, P. and Carter, C. (2004). Special Issue: The millennium nexus: Strategic management at the cross-roads. *European Management Review*. **1.1**;
- Balogun, J., Jarzabkowski, P. and Seidl, D. (2007). Special Issue: Strategizing: the challenges of a practice perspective. *Human Relations*, **60.1**
- Rouleau, L. Allard-Poesi, F. and Warnier, V. (2007). Special Issue: Le Management Strategique en Pratiques. *Revue Francaise de Gestion*.
- Cailluet, L. and Whittington, R. (2008). Special Issue: The Crafts of Strategy. *Long Range Planning*
- Cornellison, J., Floyd, S. and Wright, M. (2010) Strategy trajectories, practices and processes, *Journal of Management Studies*, Forthcoming.
- Balogun, J., Jacobs, C. Jarzabkowski, P. Mantere, S. and Vaara, E. (2011) Strategy as Discourse: Its significance, Challenges and Future Directions”, *Journal of Management Studies*, Forthcoming.

There have been three foundation books already published and one forthcoming book, all of which have begun establishing a common terminology, research agendas, research methods and a body of empirical work to advance the field:

- Jarzabkowski, P. (2005). *Strategy as practice; an activity based approach*. London, UK: Sage
- Golsorkhi, D. (Ed) (2006). *La fabrique de la stratégie. Une perspective multidimensionnelle*. France: Vuibert
- Johnson, G., Langlely, A., Melin L. and Whittington, R. (2007). *Strategy as Practice: Research Directions and Resources*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press
- Golsorkhi, D., L. Rouleau, D. Seidl and E. Vaara. (2009). *The Handbook of Strategy as Practice*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, Forthcoming.

In addition, the SAP perspective has now been incorporated into three text books:

- Ambrosini, V., Jenkins, M. and Collier, N. (2007) *Advanced Strategic Management: A Multi-perspective Approach*, Second Edition, Palgrave McMillan
- Johnson, G., Scholes, K. and Whittington, R. (2007) *Exploring Corporate Strategy*, Eighth Edition, Prentice Hall.
- Welge, M., Al-Laham, A. (2008) *Strategisches Management. Grundlagen - Prozess -Implementierung*. Stuttgart: Gabler.

Evidence that Academy members are making or are likely to make scholarly contributions

To illustrate the extent to which the community of SAP scholars is already making scholarly contributions to the Academy and elsewhere, Appendix 1 lists Academy Conference PDWs, Symposia and Best Papers, and also a list of some peer reviewed publications. A more complete list of publications by SAP members can be found on the SAP website. Listing all the activity is beyond the scope of this proposal. Thus we have restricted the conference presentation activity that we list to Academy PDWs, Symposia and Best Papers. Our members present many papers each year at the academy conference, and also at conferences such as EGOS, EURAM, SMS and BAM (where we have tracks and interest groups) and others such as Critical Management Studies

The PDWs put on at the Academy have generated significant interest and have been well over subscribed.

Evidence that the full proposal has been circulated widely

The proposal was initially drafted by the three members of the nominating committee between January and March 2009. It was then circulated for comment to the rest of the steering committee in April. Following the inclusion of comments from the committee the proposal was circulated to a wider group of individuals active in the SAP field in May 2009. These individuals although not on the steering committee will provide a future stream of candidates to run the SAP IG, and provide leadership and ongoing support to the SAP community. These others have already been involved in the establishment and leadership of the community through, for example, running conference tracks and workshops. A final version of the proposal was then produced and was given to people for comment at the EGOS SAP track in July 2009 (approximately 70 people) and also made available for comment to

individuals attending the SAP PDW at the Academy in August. After this, the proposal was posted on the SAP website for signatures.

Background statement on how the proposal developed

It was first suggested that there should be an SAP Interest Group at the Academy back in 2004, as tracks and interest groups were being created in other places such as EGOS and SMS. However, initial research and conversations suggested that new Interest Groups were not often supported. In addition, Joe Mahony of the BPS Division offered the SAP community a track within BPS through conversations with Gerry Johnson. This offer was gratefully received and has provided some sense of a home for those interested in SAP at the Academy. We have run our PDWs through the BPS division along with support from other divisions, for example.

However, as we discuss above, the SAP field does not fit within any one existing Division at the Academy due to its distinctive empirical, theoretical and methodological positioning. Furthermore, we feel that given the size of the SAP community now, we do not receive adequate resources as a track within a Division. We have also been informed that the Academy is still interested in new Interest Group proposals. We were encouraged by Karen Golden-Biddle to discuss the possibility of an SAP Interest Group with Ann O'Leary-Kelly. Julia Balogun first contacted Ann to get details on how to propose an Interest Group in August 2008. Ann has also copied Jim Walsh in on some of this correspondence. Julia then circulated the details to other individuals active within the SAP field and based on their enthusiasm formed the Steering Committee. Julia has been in contact with Ann and Kerry Ignatz, including a conference call in early 2009, to discuss how best to put a proposal together. Julia has remained in touch with Ann to inform her of the progress made on the proposal since then.

Appendix 1

Academy Conference PDWs, Symposia, Best Papers and Peer Reviewed Publications

Academy Conference PDWs, Symposia, Best Papers

Best Paper Award's / Proceedings

- 2001 Balogun, J. & Johnson, G. *From Intended Strategies to Unintended Outcomes: The Impact of Change Recipient Sensemaking*. Best Paper award: MOC Division
- 2002 Whittington, R. *Practice Perspectives on Strategy*. Best Paper Proceedings: OMT Division.
- 2004 Jarzabkowski, P. *Actionable Strategy Knowledge: A Practice Perspective*. Best Paper Proceedings, OMT division
- 2004 Whittington R, E. Molloy, M. Mayer and M. Smith. *The Practice of Organising: Negotiating the Standardisation and Routinisation Traps*. Best Papers Proceedings, ODC Division
- 2004 Schwarz, M. *Knowing in Practice: How Consultants work with clients to Create, Share and Apply Knowledge*. Best Paper Proceedings, MC Division
- 2005 Jacobs, C. and Heracleous, L. *Creating Shared Understanding – The Role of Embodied Metaphor in Organization Development*. Best Paper Proceedings, ODC Division
- 2006 Jonsson, S. and Regnér, P. *Normative Barriers to Imitation: Social Complexity of Core Competences in a Mutual Fund Industry*, Best paper Proceedings, BPS Division
- 2006 Jacobs, C., Statler, M. and Roos, J. *Performing Strategy – Analogical Reasoning as Embodied Practice*. Best Paper Proceedings, ODC Division
- 2007 Jacobs, C. And Steyaert, C. *Configuring the user – The case of Gird computing*. Best Paper Proceedings.
- 2008 Jarzabkowski, P. & Kaplan, S., *Using Strategy Tools in Practice: An Exploration of 'Technologies of Rationality' in Use*. Best Paper Proceedings, BPS Division
- 2008 Jacobs, C., Oliver, D. and Heracleous, L. *Constructing Organizational Identity through Embodied Metaphors*. Best Paper Proceedings, ODC Division

PDWs

- 2006 *Strategy as practice: Putting the Manager Back into Strategy*
Organizer: Shameen Prashantham

Speaker: Gerry Johnson, Richard Whittington, Ann Langley

Discussants: Julia Balogun, Ian Clarke, Steve Floyd, Gerard Hodgkinson, Paula Jarzabkowski, Leif Melin

2007 *Researching and Publishing Strategy as Practice*

Organizer: Richard Whittington

Presenter: Julia Balogun, Martha Feldman, Royston Greenwood, Steven W Floyd, Ann Langley, Leif Melin

Facilitator: Paula Jarzabkowski, Gerry Johnson, Eero Vaara

2008 *Strategy-as-Practice: Methodological Challenges for Studying Strategy-as-Practice*

Organizers: Linda Rouleau, Veronika Kisfalvi, David Seidl, Curtis LeBaron

Speakers: Karen Golden-Biddle, Ann Huff, David Oliver

Facilitators: Julia Balogun, Claus Jacobs, Paula Jarzabkowski, Ann Langley, Dalvir Samra-Fredericks, Richard Whittington

2009 *Conversation and Sensemaking in Strategy Practice: Methods for Analyzing Video and Audio Recordings*

Organizers: Curtis LeBaron; Paula Jarzabkowski; Richard Whittington

Presenters: Jeffrey Bednar; Jane E. Dutton; Paula Jarzabkowski; Ann Langley; Curtis LeBaron; Feng Liu; Sally Maitlis; Linda L. Putnam; Andreas Paul Spee; Richard Whittington

Moderators: Gail T Fairhurst; Dalvir Samra-Fredericks;

Symposia

2004 Balogun, J., Bromily, P., Jarzabkowski, P., Johnson, G., Langley, A., Priem, R. & Tsoukas, H. *Challenging Traditions in Strategy: Strategizing and Strategy as Practice – a micro perspective*

2006 Bourque, N., Floyd, S., Johnson, G., Mintzberg, H. & Prashantham, S. *Ritual Theory and Strategy Development Episodes - Practices, Context and Outcomes*

2007 Balogun, J., Beech, N., Johnson, Huff, A. P., Rouleau, L. & Sims, D. *Strategists' Identity and the Impact on the Practice of Strategy*

2007 Jarzabkowski, P., LeBaron, C., Phillip, N. & Whittington, R. *Strategic Conversations: A Multi-level Conversational Approach to Studying Strategy as Practice*

2008 Balogun, J., Cailluet, L., Jarzabkowski, P., Grant, R., Peck, S. & Whittington, R. *Resurrecting Strategic Planning*

- 2008 Dunn, M., Felin, T., Foss, N., Ketokivi, M., Kilduff, M., Mantere, S., Moldoveanu, M., Powell, T. *Why Should Organizational Scientists Care About the Philosophy of Science.*
- 2009 Balogun, J., Floyd, S., Langley, A., Rouleau, L., & Stensaker, I. *Researching the Strategic Middle Manager*
- 2009 Jacobs, C., Heracleous, L., Samra-Fredericks, D., Mantere, S., Phillips, N., Vaara, E. and Willmott, H. *Strategic Management and Language*
- 2009 Langley, A., Abdullah, C., Chanal, V., Jarzabkowski, P., Spee, P., Sirpa, V., & Vaara, E. *Communicative dimensions of Strategic Planning*
- 2009 Reid, W., Alvarez, J. L., Beard, A., Fjellvaer, H., Gronn, P., Langley, A., Svejenova, S., & Vives, L. *Dimensions and Issues of Dual Leadership*

Published peer reviewed papers

- Ambrosini, V., Bowman, C. and Burton-Taylor, S. (2007). Inter-team coordination activities as a source of customer satisfaction. *Human Relations*, **60.1**, 59-98.
- Angwin, D., Paroutis, S. and Mitson, S. (2009). Connecting Up Strategy: Are Senior Strategy Directors (SSDs) a Missing Link? *California Management Review*, **51.3**, Spring, 74-94.
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- Hendry, J. (2000). Strategic decision making, discourse, and strategy as social practice. *Journal of Management Studies*, **37.7**, 955-977.
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