

The Practice of Strategy

Autumn 2023

Module:	03SM22MO0052
Time:	Wednesday, 9-12h (20.09., 04.10., 18.10., 01.11., 15.11., 29.11., 13.12.)
Room:	PLM F 103/104 (Plattenstrasse 14)
Lecturer:	Dr. Tania Räcker
Exam:	None
ECTS-Points:	3
Course webpage:	www.om.uzh.ch (see under teaching)
Language:	English
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Description

While strategy is often understood as something organizations have, the strategy-as-practice perspective emphasizes strategy as something people in organizations do. In other words, strategy is seen as a social practice that is constituted by the daily activities of strategy actors. Taking this perspective, in this seminar we will discuss a range of important topics in strategy research, including the activities of different strategy actors (top and middle managers), the dynamics of strategic decision making, the process of strategic change, and the practices and tools used in strategizing.

This seminar is primarily research-oriented and aims to provide students with the foundations to understand the practice-based approach to studying strategy. Based on papers published in top international journals, we will discuss concrete research exemplars as to how strategists – top or middle managers – produce, reproduce and change strategy.

This seminar is highly participative. In each session, students are evaluated for actively taking part in discussions. During the semester, students are in charge of presenting papers of one session and to animate debates in another one.

Objectives of the course

At the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Understand the practice approach to studying strategy.
2. Understand how practices shape important aspects of strategy.
3. Understand the role of strategists in the strategy process.

Seminar prerequisites

None

Seminar Evaluation

1. Presentation of papers – 20%
2. Animating the debate surrounding the presentation of papers – 10%
3. Active discussion of papers in each session and presence – 30%
4. At the end of the seminar, you have to submit a thesis of 8-10 pages (1.5-spaced, 12 points), which critically discusses the papers examined in the course. Deadline for submission of the thesis is **January 15th, 2024** – 40%.

Schedule and Reading Materials

1. Strategy: A Strategy-as-Practice Perspective

September 20th, 9h00-12h00

Readings:

- (1) Jarzabkowski, P., Balogun, J., & Seidl, D. 2007. Strategizing: The challenges of a practice perspective. *Human Relations*, 60(1): 5-27.
- (2) Whittington, R. 2006. Completing the practice turn in strategy research. *Organization Studies*, 27(5): 613-634.

2. Top Managers in Strategizing

October 4th, 9h00-12h00

Readings:

- (1) Ma, S., & Seidl, D. 2018. New CEOs and their collaborators: Divergence and convergence between the strategic leadership constellation and the top management team. *Strategic Management Journal*, 39(3): 606-638.
- (2) Garg, S., & Eisenhardt, K. 2017. Unpacking the CEO-board relationship: How strategy-making happens in entrepreneurial firms. *Academy of Management Journal*, 60(5): 1828-1858.

3. Middle Managers in Strategizing

October 18th, 9h00-12h00

Readings:

- (1) Splitter, V., Jarzabkowski, P., & Seidl, D. 2021. Middle managers' struggle over their subject position in open strategy processes. *Journal of Management Studies*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12776>.
- (2) Guo, Y., Huy, Q. N., & Xiao, Z. 2017. How middle managers manage the political environment to achieve market goals: Insights from China's state-owned enterprises. *Strategic Management Journal*, 38(3): 676-696.

4. Strategic Decision Making

November 1st, 9h00-12h00

Readings:

- (1) Eisenhardt, K. M. 1989. Making fast strategic decisions in high-velocity environments. *Academy of Management Journal*, 32(3): 543-576.
- (2) Kaplan, S. 2008. Framing Contests: Strategy Making Under Uncertainty. *Organization Science*, 19(5): 729-752.

5. Strategic Change Process

November 15th, 9h00-12h00

Readings:

- (1) Gioia, D. A., & Chittipeddi, K. 1991. Sensemaking and sensegiving in strategic change initiation. *Strategic Management Journal*, 12(6): 433-448.
- (2) Huy, Q. N., Corley, K. G., & Kraatz, M. S. 2014. From Support to Mutiny: Shifting Legitimacy Judgments and Emotional Reactions Impacting the Implementation of Radical Change. *Academy of Management Journal*, 57(6): 1650-1680.

6. Strategy Meetings and Workshops

November 29th, 9h00-12h00

Readings:

- (1) Hendry, J., & Seidl, D. 2003. The structure and significance of strategic episodes: Social systems theory and the practice of strategic change. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40(1): 175-195.
- (2) Jarzabkowski, P., & Seidl, D. 2008. The role of meetings in the social practice of strategy. *Organization Studies*, 29(11): 1391-1426.

7. Open Strategy and Synthesis

December 13th, 9h00-12h00

Readings:

- (1) Hautz, J., Seidl, D., & Whittington, R. 2017. Open strategy: Dimensions, dilemmas, dynamics. *Long Range Planning*, 50: 298-309.
- (2) Dobusch, L., Dobusch, L., & Müller-Seitz, G. 2019. Closing for the benefit of openness? The case of Wikimedia's open strategy process. *Organization Studies*, 40: 343-370.

WWF Statutory Course Policies

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. Anyone caught cheating or engaging in unethical behavior will be reported to the Dean's office according to the guidelines on academic dishonesty set forth by the University of Zurich.

Don't forget to officially register yourself using the registration tool (Modulbuchungstool) of the University of Zurich.

Note: The information in this syllabus supports the official information in the electronic university registration tool (VVZ – Vorlesungsverzeichnis). In cases of doubt, the official information in the VVZ is decisive.

Class communication

The provision of course material and the official communication for this seminar will take place on OLAT. If we publish information on the OLAT course page, we consider you to have been informed.

Students with disabilities

Students with disability should contact the lecturer and the disability office as early as possible to make the necessary arrangement.