

The Practice of Strategic Management

Autumn 2026

Module:	03SM22MO0052
Time:	Wednesday, 9-12h (16.09., 30.09., 14.10., 28.10., 11.11., 25.11., 09.12.)
Room:	PLM F 103/104 (Plattenstrasse 14)
Lecturer:	Benjamin Grossmann-Hensel, 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, 2027** – 40%.

Schedule and Reading Materials

1. Strategy: A Strategy-as-Practice Perspective

September 16th, 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) Jarzabkowski, P., Seidl, D., & Balogun, J. 2022. From germination to propagation: Two decades of Strategy-as-Practice research and potential future directions. *Human Relations*, 75(8): 1533-1559.

2. Top Managers in Strategizing

September 30th, 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 14th, 9h00-12h00

Readings:

- (1) Balogun, J., & Rouleau, L. 2017. Strategy-as-practice research on middle managers and sensemaking. In S. W. Floyd & B. Wooldridge (Eds.), *Handbook of Middle Management Strategy Process Research*: 109-132. US: Edward Elgar.
- (2) Splitter, V., Jarzabkowski, P., & Seidl, D. 2023. Middle managers' struggle over their subject position in open strategy processes. *Journal of management studies*, 60(7): 1884-1923.

4. Strategizing in Strategy Spaces: Meetings & Workshops

October 28th, 9h00-12h00

Readings:

- (1) Seidl, D., Guérard, S., & Raecker, T. 2025. Meetings and workshops as strategy practices. In D. Golsorkhi, L. Rouleau, D. Seidl, & E. Vaara (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Strategy as Practice*, 3rd edition. Cambridge University Press.
- (2) Birollo, G., Rouleau, L., & Wolf, C. 2024. Middle managers' relational dynamics in the context of acquisitions: Balancing strategic interdependence and organizational autonomy. *Journal of Management Studies*.
- (3) Raecker, T. 2025. Space. In B. Grossmann-Hensel, P. Jarzabkowski, R. Kratochvil, D. Seidl, P. Spee, & R. Whittington (Eds.), *Elgar Encyclopedia of Strategy as Practice*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

5. Strategic Decision Making

November 11th, 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) Von Krogh, G., Ben-Menahem, S. M., & Shrestha, Y. R. 2021. Artificial intelligence in strategizing: Prospects and challenges. *Future of strategic management*: 625-646.

6. From traditional to open strategizing

November 25th, 9h00-12h00

Readings:

- (1) Langenmayr, T., Seidl, D., & Splitter, V. 2024. Interdiscursive struggles: Managing the co-existence of the conventional and open strategy discourse. *Strategic management journal*.
- (2) Langenmayr, T., Splitter, V., Tienari, J. & Vesa, M. Forthcoming. Moving from the business case towards an equity-based approach: Theorizing diversity and inclusion in Open Strategy. *Organization Theory*.

7. Strategizing in the face of grand challenges and synthesis

December 9th, 9h00-12h00

Readings:

- (1) Seidl, D. & Werle, F. 2018. Inter-organizational sensemaking in the face of strategic meta-problems: Requisite variety and dynamics of participation. *Strategic Management Journal*, 39(3): 830-858.
- (2) Bansal, B., Durand, R., Kreutzer, M., Kunisch, S. & McGahan, A. 2024. Strategy Can No Longer Ignore Planetary Boundaries: A Call for Tackling Strategy's Ecological Fallacy. *Journal of Management Studies*.

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.