

The Practice of Strategy

Autumn 2019

Module:	MOEC0137
Time:	Wednesday, 9-12h (18.09., 02.10., 16.10., 30.10., 13.11., 27.11., 11.12.)
Room:	UNK-E-2, Universitätsstrasse 84, 8006 Zurich (sessions 1-4) SOE-F-11, Schönberggasse 11, 8001 Zurich (sessions 5-7)
Lecturer:	Tania Weinfurtner
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. The seminar concludes with a reflection on the practical relevance of the practice-based research on strategy.

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, 2020** – 40%.

Schedule and Reading Materials

1. Strategy: A Strategy-as-Practice Perspective

September 18th, 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 2nd, 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 16th, 9h00-12h00

Readings:

- (1) Balogun, J., & Johnson, G. 2004. Organizational restructuring and middle manager sensemaking. *Academy of Management Journal*, 47(4): 523-549.
- (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

October 30th, 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 13th, 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 27th, 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. Practical Relevance and Synthesis

December 11th, 9h00-12h00

Readings:

- (1) Sandberg, J., & Tsoukas, H. 2011. Grasping the Logic of Practice: Theorizing through Practical Rationality. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(2): 338-360.
- (2) Splitter, V., & Seidl, D. 2011. Does practice-based research on strategy lead to practically relevant knowledge? Implications of a Bourdieusian perspective', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 47(1): 98-120.

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 at the VVZ is decisive.

Class communication

E-mail is the official method of communication for this lecture. If we send an e-mail to your registered address 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.