

**Panel Symposium****“Practising Strategy and Entrepreneurship: Two sides of the same coin?”**

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**Sponsors:** SAP – Strategizing, Activities and Practices  
ENT – Entrepreneurship  
OMT – Organization and Management Theory

## **Practising Strategy and Entrepreneurship: Two sides of the same coin?**

### **Overview of the Symposium**

Practice theories have gained traction across several domains as they provide a novel lens to investigate the taken-for-granted and yet consequential nature of everyday practices in constituting organizational phenomena (Jarzabkowski, Kavas, & Krull, 2021; Nicolini, 2009). Practice theories provide the core tenet to debates on strategy-as-practice (SAP) (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Kohtamäki, Whittington, Vaara, & Rabetino, 2021), entrepreneurship-as-practice (Thompson et al, 2022; Thompson & Byrne, 2020), routine dynamics (Feldman, D’Adderio, Dittrich, & Jarzabkowski, 2019; Feldman, Pentland, D’Adderio, Dittrich, Rerup, & Seidl, 2021), and practice-based institutionalism (Jarzabkowski, Smets, Bednarek, Burke, & Spee, 2013; Lawrence, Leca, & Zilber, 2013; Smets, Jarzabkowski, Burke, & Spee, 2015; Suddaby, Seidl, & Lê, 2013), to name but a few. The proposed symposium provides a platform to demonstrate and reflect on the value of practice theory by exploring the intersection of strategy and entrepreneurship research and how the two may inform each other through a practice theory approach.

SAP scholars have drawn from a range of social theories of practice (Seidl & Whittington, 2014), to study the everyday practices of strategy making from multiple perspectives, including discourse (Wenzel & Koch, 2018), texts (Spee & Jarzabkowski 2011; Vaara, Sorsa, & Pälli 2010), narratives (Vaara, 2002), sensemaking (Balogun, Bartunek, & Do, 2015; Rouleau, 2005) and material practices (Jarzabkowski, Burke, & Spee, 2015). These studies have contributed greatly to knowledge on strategy making (e.g., Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Vaara & Whittington 2012; Kohtamäki et al, 2021), including understanding the strategic role of actors at different organizational levels and explaining different processes of strategy making. For example, scholars

have explained the practices of participating in strategy-making across different levels (Mantere & Vaara, 2008; Jarzabkowski, Lê, & Balogun, 2019), and the strategizing challenges faced by actors at each level from front-line workers (e.g., Balogun, Best & Lê, 2015) to middle managers (e.g., Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Splitter, Jarzabkowski, & Seidl, 2021), to top managers (e.g., Ma & Seidl, 2018). In doing so, SAP research has also explained how strategy processes are constituted, from strategic planning (e.g., Spee & Jarzabkowski, 2017) to strategic change (e.g., Balogun, Bartunek & Do, 2015), to enacting mandated strategies (e.g., Jarzabkowski et al., 2019), to externally-oriented practices involved in acquiring partners (e.g., Deken, Berends, Gemser, & Lauche, 2018), resolving problems collectively (Seidl & Werle, 2018), and shaping competitive dynamics (Jarzabkowski & Bednarek, 2018).

Yet, despite this long-standing interest in how strategy phenomena are constituted, SAP scholarship is still seeking ways to explain how ‘things’ become strategic, beyond those that are already designated as strategy by managers in organizations (Jarzabkowski et al, 2021; Mackay, Chia, & Nair, 2021). A few studies show how ideas and products emerging at the periphery of organizations are retrospectively reconstructed as an organization’s strategy, as with Regnér’s (2003) explanation of Ericsson’s move into mobile telephony, and Gond, Cabantous & Kirkorian’s (2018) identification of the practices through which CSR has become an official strategy for some companies. However, despite over two decades of SAP research, we still lack theoretical explanations of why some ideas and activities gain momentum to become part of an organization’s strategy, and indeed, how people recognize or act upon potential new ideas in order to make them consequential to the organization’s strategy (Jarzabkowski et al, 2021). We thus believe that SAP scholars have much to learn from Entrepreneurship-as-Practice studies, in terms of how to identify

and follow novel practices inside established firms, tracing them from emergence or ideation to their fruition as ‘value-yielding’ activities that are labeled ‘strategy’.

Entrepreneurship-as-Practice (EAP) research has flourished in recent years as scholars have generated important insights about how various entrepreneuring practices originate, are performed, diffuse, and are interwoven to form new organizations and create new value (Champenois, Lefebvre, & Ronteau, 2020; Teague, Tunstall, Champenois, & Gartner, 2021). As such, a central aspiration of this research approach is to situate embodied and collective action within its context in order to better explain the process of entrepreneuring (Thompson, Verduijn, & Gartner, 2020). By adopting a practice theory lens, entrepreneuring is theorized as inherently transpiring as part of and within nexuses of many practices, which, in turn, are reproduced and renewed through their collective performances that go beyond merely entrepreneurs’ actions or cognitive states (Campbell, 2019; Selden & Fletcher, 2019). Rather, entrepreneuring exists in and through the collective performance of an interwoven texture of practices, drawing upon material objects, that may lead to novel practices and/or their diffusion (Lent, 2020; Ramirez-Pasillas, Lundberg, & Nordqvist, 2021). A venture is viewed as a larger net of practice-arrangement bundles that are tied relationally to the similar nets (other ventures) via competition or cooperation, as well as to those that compose local and state governments, foundations, incumbent firms and the broader ecosystem (Hydle & Billington, 2020; Thompson & Byrne, 2020).

The current development of EAP resembles diffusion of practice theories in other fields in that scholars have experimented with applying practice theories to study entrepreneurial phenomena. What remains less developed is how new practices enter into use and how the practices of resourcing, organizing and strategizing of the nascent practice initiates its trajectory. There remains an opportunity to pick up the threads relating to strategizing in practices and their

relations in order to explore the ways in which entrepreneuring and strategizing are inherently interrelated. In thinking about the origination of new practices, entrepreneuring literature may open up a space to contribute to practice theories and strategy as practice literatures, rather than applying them.

With practice-based approaches gaining traction in the entrepreneurship field, this panel symposium aims to deepen the conversation between EAP and SAP scholars. Practice-based scholarship is particularly useful to help address some of the most fundamental questions facing entrepreneuring and strategizing, such as how the everyday activities of entrepreneurs and managers, their situated actions and interactions, impact the development, creation, scaling up, and strategic management of organizations (Anderson, Dodd, & Jack, 2010; Hill, 2018). In entrepreneurship studies, for example, scholars have highlighted the critical role of embodied activities (Antonacopoulou & Fuller, 2020), along with interaction with material objects, in sparking and refining imaginative and creative acts (Cornelissen, 2013; Elias, Chiles, & Crawford, 2021; Thompson & Byrne, 2021). Others, such as Dimov and Pistrui (2020), have pointed out the sequential nature of the entrepreneurial process action such that entrepreneurial actions are influenced by prior actions and through changes in the entrepreneur's perception; and that social context is not as something that is passively perceived (by the focal entrepreneur) but as something (and someone) with which the entrepreneur actively interacts.

Drawing on the points of view and experience of such EAP and SAP scholars, this panel symposium aims to foster active dialogue, not only between panel members, but also with the audience, on the trajectories of these currently distinct fields overtime, including the pros and cons of joint or separate trajectories moving forward.

**Panel Symposium Format (90 minutes in total):**

Panelists will address the following questions:

- Panelists' point of view: what is the novelty of practice theories for research on strategy and entrepreneurship?
- Dialogue: What are potential intersections of strategy and entrepreneurship research?

The format of the panel symposium is the following:

- Brief introduction to the session, topic and panelists (5 minutes)
- Panelists' point of view on the intersection of strategy and entrepreneurship research as well as the potential for practice theory (total: 25 min; 5min per panelist)
- Dialogue between panelists (30 minutes)
- Q&A from the audience (30 minutes)

**Interest to Sponsors****Relevance for SAP**

This symposium focuses on the mutual benefits of incorporating Strategy-as-Practice (SAP) research with the study of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship pertains to the activities and processes related to the creation of a new venture, new value and/or new practices under conditions of uncertainty. A focus on entrepreneurship offers an opportunity to expand the scope of phenomena considered by SAP scholars to studying those everyday activities related to founding and scaling up a business, which often constitute extreme cases of emergence. SAP scholars will also benefit from considering how entrepreneuring practices shape strategy making, even in large and presumed stable companies.

**Relevance for ENT Division**

Members of the Entrepreneurship Division, regardless of career stage, will find this symposium particularly relevant as theories of practice are increasingly being utilized to study a variety of entrepreneurial phenomena. Starting with the concept of ‘entrepreneurial’, which stresses entrepreneurship as a process of organization-creation, researchers are addressing core topics, issues and assumptions in the field by focusing on entrepreneurship as occurring in and through relationship between practices. Nevertheless, how these relations might be understood as also producing strategizing is less understood. There remains much to gain from connecting entrepreneurship to strategizing literature to broaden and connect concepts in relationship with observable instances of practices.

### **Relevance for OMT Division**

The symposium addresses scholars who have a keen interest in the adoption of practice theories, which have been prevalent across several debates in OMT such as routine dynamics, institutional theory, to name but a few. In addition, the symposium speaks to a growing interest within OMT to investigate the phenomenon of entrepreneurship – the emergence of new firms and ventures in a range of commercial and social contexts - through the lens of organization theory.

### **Relevance to the Meeting Theme**

The symposium embraces the theme of the 82<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting, ‘Creating a better world together’. It offers an opportunity for scholars to engage across two domains, strategy and entrepreneurship. Despite a close connection of the phenomenon, recognised in seminal work such as Penrose, strategy and entrepreneurship grew into two distinct scholarly domains. Taking ‘practice theory’ as a central lens, this symposium demonstrates complementarities of strategizing and entrepreneurship to foster stronger scholarship that generates insights on business organisations and inform managers.

## **The promise of EAP for SAP in studying how practices become consequential**

Paula Jarzabkowski, *The University of Queensland & City, University of London*

The radical agenda of SAP research has been waylaid by a focus on activities that managers in organizations have already defined as ‘strategy’. Early SAP scholars aimed to apply a practice lens to studying actors at any level, inside or outside the organization, as potential strategists (Whittington, Jarzabkowski, Mayer, Mounoud, Nahapiet, & Rouleau, 2003), and to study how situated activities, including those beyond existing strategy processes, become strategic (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007). However, in their efforts to dialogue, and gain legitimacy with, mainstream strategy research, SAP scholars increasingly defined practices as strategic according to whether they could easily be identified as “consequential” to an organization, meaning practices that were already attached to known strategy processes, or to influencing pre-identified strategy outcomes. As we note in a recent paper, this obsession with consequentiality detracted attention from activities that might not be labelled strategy, and yet which might become strategy in hindsight (Jarzabkowski et al., 2021). I will consider how EAP, with its focus on venturing, and on following activities that shift course frequently, can provide insights for SAP scholars wishing to re-embrace the radical SAP agenda.

**Bio:** Paula Jarzabkowski is Professor of Strategic Management at University of Queensland and City, University of London. Her research focuses on how strategizing practices in paradoxical and pluralistic contexts shape market and society dynamics. She has a particular interest in taking a practice lens on the ‘grand challenges’ affecting society, most recently in disaster risk financing. She ‘enjoys’ the challenge of publishing ethnographic, practice-based work in journals, such as *Academy of Management Journal*, *Organization Science*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *Journal of Management Studies* and *Organization Studies*.

**The process of entrepreneurship**, Dimo Dimov, *University of Bath*

Entrepreneurial process is a manifestation over time of entrepreneurial action, which can be described in simplest terms as an agentic push towards an envisioned future. Such action needs to be tethered to the social context in which it occurs and thus can be done through understanding its recursive and discursive nature. In the first sense, action is a recursive expression of the deliberation of what to do next in the light of what transpires. Such deliberation is grounded in a mesh of social orders and practices. Its discursive elements can be seen as entries (what one takes as true) and exits (what one intends to make true) in a social language game of giving and asking for reasons.

**Bio:** Dimo Dimov is Professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation at University of Bath, UK and founding editor-in-chief of *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*. His research focuses on entrepreneurial thinking, process, and practice, bringing an eclectic mix of perspectives. His research has been published in *Journal of Business Venturing*, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Academy of Management Review*, among many others.

**Creating (better) worlds: Future making as a joint agenda for EAP and SAP**, Chris Steyaert, *University of St Gallen*

Practice-based approaches have become increasingly important to focus on the processuality of entrepreneurship as ‘entrepreneurship’ (Steyaert, 2007) while developing the intersections between practice and process approaches to strategy remains a critical challenge (Burgelman et al., 2018). To set-up a closer dialogue between EAP and SAP, I propose to advance the processual scope of practice-based approaches as a possible joint agenda to understand the making of (better) futures. Starting from the related warnings that practice-based studies should avoid ‘practice architecturism’ (Janssens & Steyaert, 2019) and ‘micro-isolationism’ (Seidl & Whittington, 2014),

I will emphasize the need to study the ways practices are continuously associated and interwoven based on the idea that scenes of (entrepreneurial or strategic) actions are nexuses where various practices intersect. This implies that entrepreneurial and strategic practices should not be studied in isolation but in how they become associated and how these connections are changing, as a nexus of practices is continuously altering in smaller and larger ways (Hui, Schatzki, & Shove, 2017). Furthermore, as both entrepreneurship and strategy are interested in opening or changing futures, such processual and connectionist interpretation of practice theory can encourage both SAP and EAP-scholars to study ‘larger’ social phenomena (Seidl & Whittington, 2014) and their history-making processes (Steyaert, 2007). By looking into the effects of changing connections for ecological, societal or institutional change, a joint agenda between EAP and SAP might look out not only for new futures but especially ‘better’ worlds (Steyaert and Katz, 2004).

**Bio:** Chris Steyaert is Professor for Organizational Psychology at the University of Sankt Gallen, Switzerland. He is interested in the interplay between creativity, diversity and reflexivity to study entrepreneurial and organizational creation in relationship to societal and ecological change. Drawing upon processual, practice-based, and queer-theoretical approaches, he has co-authored articles based on empirical analyses of cultural, creative and ecological entrepreneurship in journals such as *Academy of Management Review*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Organization Studies*, *Organization*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, and *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*.

**An editor's perspective from the organization theory**, Joep Cornelissen, *RSM Erasmus University*

Practice theory has emerged as an important theoretical approach for both strategy and entrepreneurship research. As a theoretical approach, it combines fundamental strands of thinking in social theory (e.g., Schatzki, Giddens, DeCerteau, etc.) with more inductively developed classifications, frameworks and typologies within both the strategy and entrepreneurial domains. In this context, and with research in both domains expanding in parallel, questions arise about the best way forward for both fields to theoretically progress. What would be the next steps in the theoretical development of the practice agenda within and across both fields? What possibilities and opportunities for theoretical advancement are there? And in what ways can theoretical ideas and insights be cross-fertilized across both domains and how will this influence the development of both fields? I will provide a perspective on these questions, discussing possibilities for theory development in these fields as a whole as well as for individual scholars wishing to develop a theoretical contribution at the interface between both fields.

**Bio:** Joep Cornelissen is a Professor in Management at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University and Chair in Strategy and Organisation (part-time) at the University of Liverpool Management School. He is the Editor-in-Chief of *Organization Theory*, a former Associate Editor for the *Academy of Management Review*, a former General Editor of the *Journal of Management Studies* (2006-2012) and serves on the editorial boards of the *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, the *Journal of Management Studies* and *Organization Studies*.

**An entrepreneurship editor's perspective**, Melissa Graebner, *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

The field of entrepreneurship has long fought to define itself as a distinct intellectual domain with unique conceptual underpinnings. Much of the discussion about the distinctiveness of entrepreneurship vs. strategy scholarship has focused on the construct of “opportunity” as the defining concept of entrepreneurship. Opportunity recognition has often been conceptualized as a single event, as opposed to an ongoing process. However, recent research on how entrepreneurs develop and modify their ventures’ strategies suggests that opportunity recognition is an iterative process that is intertwined with strategizing. Entrepreneurs begin with an inchoate conception of an opportunity and a rudimentary strategy; both are updated in light of new information and feedback from potential customers, teammates and other resource providers. Thus, a practice lens offers a means to reconnect the fields of entrepreneurship and strategy by describing the ways in which opportunity and strategy co-evolve. I will discuss promising directions for future research that brings these perspectives back together. This will include suggestions for research questions, settings and methodological approaches that may prove fruitful.

**Bio:** Melissa Graebner is Professor of Business Administration at the Gies College of Business at the University of Illinois. She is also Director of the Initiative for Qualitative Research in Innovation and Entrepreneurship (INQUIRE) and Co-Editor of *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*. Her research interests include entrepreneurial strategy and qualitative research methods. Her work has appeared in journals including *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *Strategic Organization and Organization Science*. She is a Fellow of the Strategic Management Society.

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