



TORONTO

SMS 41ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 18-21, 2021

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

IMAGINATION AND INSPIRATION:

CREATING STRATEGY BREAKTHROUGHS IN A DISCORDANT WORLD

PROGRAM CHAIRS

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Imagination and inspiration in business scholarship and practice are needed today more than ever. Our world of business performance and social welfare faces multiple discordant shocks, including climate crises, immigration barriers, technological expansions and shifts, supply chain disruptions, political realignments, trade transformations, and a global viral pandemic. Tackling these challenges requires novel solutions that build on a dynamic combination of imagination and inspiration.

Imagination and inspiration are intimately intertwined. According to Merriam-Webster, imagination is “the act or power of forming a mental image of something not present to the senses or never before wholly perceived in reality,” while inspiration is “the action or power of moving the intellect or emotions.” Together, these forces can respond to discord by creating new images and then inspiring action in response to the images.

The theme for the 2021 SMS Annual Conference in Toronto encourages individual and collective imagination and inspiration toward tackling the discordant challenges we face in strategy scholarship and practice. The theme signals the desire for novel combinations of imagination and inspiration that proactively respond to and even shape discord.

We seek work from strategy scholarship and practice that explores any of the key changes that are currently disrupting global markets and societies, whether studying the underlying causes of critical trends and/or suggesting strategies that will address the challenges. We want these ideas to spark bold endeavors involving new products, processes, organizations, and sectors. We are particularly excited about imaginative work that moves beyond existing theories, empirics, and practices to help inspire new understandings and actions by businesses and other social actors. Quite simply, we want you to push hard on the boundaries of the traditional conventional wisdoms of which ideas reflect rigor and relevance.

We are suggesting four themed tracks of research and practice within the theme of “Imagination and Inspiration.” We have intentionally kept the descriptions minimal to encourage a broad range of ideas that fall within this general rubric. We invite you to push the envelope with your insights.

Theme Tracks

- A. **Connectivity:** Strategies for the parts of the world with infinite bandwidth.
- B. **The Reality of Climate Change:** What are the opportunities for business organizations to lead in the fight for environmental sustainability?
- C. **Cross-border Flows of Products, Services, and People:** How can business strategy engage with the benefits of open global boundaries?
- D. **Market and Political Transformations:** What are the challenges for business strategy in a world in which both markets and political institutions can regress as well as become more open?

INTEREST GROUP TRACKS

Track E: Competitive Strategy

Track Chair: Giada Di Stefano, *Bocconi University*

The Competitive Strategy Interest Group focuses on firms' interactions within product and factor markets and tackles a broad set of questions regarding competitive strategy across heterogeneous firms and environments. What is competitive advantage? How can a firm build and maintain a competitive advantage in a changing world? What roles do resources and capabilities play in shaping firms and industries over time and in different markets? As one of the largest and most internationally diverse Interest Groups, this Interest Group is aptly positioned to respond to this year's conference theme by bringing a variety of perspectives to the conversation. Competitive Strategy IG members are intrinsically interested in studying competition, how it creates discordance, and how it is managed by firms. But can we go beyond received wisdom and embrace imagination and inspiration to understand and respond to discordant shocks? This year, we invite you to defy our existing understanding of how firms compete and more broadly interact with each other while dealing with the challenges posed by our discordant world.

Track F: Corporate Strategy

Track Chair: Tony Tong, *University of Colorado Boulder*

The Corporate Strategy Interest Group focuses on questions concerning firm scope and firm boundary decisions. Scholars draw on a range of theories and methods to examine how firms manage their business portfolios and organizational structures, as well as how they decide on and implement corporate-level changes through diversification, vertical integration, mergers & acquisitions, divestitures, and other strategic activities. In making these decisions, firms are advised to be alert to environmental changes and to respond strategically. Designing and implementing effective response strategies naturally requires creativity, which fits well with this year's conference theme of imagination and inspiration. Accordingly, along with proposals related to the general domain of the Corporate Strategy Interest Group, we encourage submissions that further our understanding of corporate strategy in a discordant world by combining imagination and inspiration, theoretically and empirically. How do firms respond to discordant shocks by adjusting their resource bundles, business portfolios, internal structures, and external relationships? How do firms renew their capabilities to tackle new challenges brought about by discordances in technological, geographical, and political spaces? How can firms take advantage of such discordances and even shape the environment in their favor?

Track G: Global Strategy

Track Chair: Rian Drogendijk, *University of Groningen*

The Global Strategy Interest Group welcomes submissions on strategic challenges that are specifically relevant to companies operating in the global context. Relevant topics for the Global Strategy track include, but are not limited to, cross-border corporate or business strategy, headquarter-subsidiary relationships, foreign entry and location strategies, and the impact of political and institutional environments on firm-level strategies. This year's conference theme invites us to address the challenges resulting from global discordant shocks like technological and political shifts, climate crises and viral pandemics, which affect the global organization and supply chain and require a rethinking of strategic responses. How do these discordant shocks affect global companies, what are successful and less successful strategic responses, and how do companies develop strategies to prepare for these and future shocks? Specifically, the conference theme inspires us to study the role of imagination and inspiration in framing these global challenges and finding creative and novel solutions to help solve them. How can global organizations for example work to reap the benefits of recombining the creative insights and differences in framing of problems and solutions sprouting from diverse locations? We invite you to think out-of-the-box and submit imaginative and novel approaches to these and other questions related to global firms' strategy creation in a discordant world.

Track H: Strategy Process

Track Chair: Murat Tarakci, *Erasmus University Rotterdam*

The Strategy Process Interest Group welcomes submissions about imagining a better world and inspiring others to develop and implement strategies to achieve this vision. Global challenges such as climate change, pollution, inequality, and discrimination as well as technological and regulatory changes are creating an uneven and unstable business environment. We invite contributions that unearth the theoretical underpinnings of strategy process in a discordant world. The Strategy Process IG focuses on how strategies are formed, implemented, and changed across group, functional, business, corporate, and network levels of analysis. We look forward to receiving work that either questions or unifies current paradigms, theories, and frameworks, along with submissions that contribute methodologically and/or theoretically to increasing our understanding of strategic processes. For example, submissions can address questions that include (but are not limited to): How can organizations develop strategies that achieve both purpose and competitive advantage? How can they address short-term demands and changes while preparing for future opportunities in their strategy processes? What roles do executives and middle managers play in strategy processes? How might grand challenges and technological advances (re)define strategy processes?

Track I: Knowledge and Innovation

Track Chair: Giovanni Valentini, *IESE Business School*

Current global challenges can be easily re-framed as knowledge and innovation challenges. We need new knowledge, and we need to innovate to face them. But how do we create valuable knowledge and innovate today? According to Thomas Edison, one of the greatest inventors of all times, “genius is one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration.” Is that still true? In a discordant world where objectives are new or constantly changing, and often colliding, is perspiration enough for individuals, teams, and companies to succeed? What new knowledge do we need to imagine to address modern challenges? In a connected world, is imagination needed to develop new knowledge or rather to select the right knowledge? How do we turn new knowledge into new firm strategies? Do we actually need new strategies? Does the increasing relevance of Artificial Intelligence allow us (or force us) to focus on imagination? Is inspired action the solution? Is profit enough of an inspiration for the innovation process? And how do we translate all this into reliable corporate processes? We seek submissions that examine these and other pressing questions that will help explain and shape how firms manage their knowledge and innovation strategies in a discordant world.

Track J: Strategy Practice

Track Chair: Julia Hautz, *University of Innsbruck*

The Strategy Practice Interest Group explores the doing of strategy and its link with the broader institutional and societal environment. The focus is on strategy actors, activities, and practices involved in formulating, implementing, and changing strategies. These interests resonate particularly well with the conference theme by building on social theory, which acknowledges human creativeness. Actors may imaginatively engage in practices and form beliefs regarding an anticipated future. While welcoming all contributions aligned with our general interests, we particularly seek empirical and conceptual papers from academics, practitioners, and consultants that engage with questions related to the role of imagination and inspiration in strategy change. We also welcome papers that critically examine the applicability of existing strategizing practices to tackle discordant challenges. It is inevitable that radical changes affect the content of strategy, yet it is less clear how it changes the practice of strategy. Indeed, we may have to rethink existing strategy practices. This includes the role of (digital) tools or the relevance of multiple, heterogeneous actors and their interactions in responding to strategic issues that are discordant and ambiguous, from both business and social perspectives. Fresh stories, sharing of best practices, use of innovative research methods, experimentations, and critical analysis are welcome.

Track K: Entrepreneurship and Strategy

Track Chair: Mahka Moeen, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

The Entrepreneurship and Strategy Interest Group invites submissions that shed light on entrepreneurial strategies, both in new ventures and established organizations, across nascent and mature markets and within high-tech and conventional contexts. The IG’s objective is to advance knowledge for the development of effective strategies by entrepreneurial actors and for adoption of supporting entrepreneurial ecosystems. This year’s conference theme of imagination and inspiration are core to the entrepreneurial process, as entrepreneurial opportunity discovery and creation involve inspiring other actors toward realizing an imagined future. We hope these themes inspire imagination of novel entrepreneurship research studies and designs. Some of the questions that can engage with these themes include but are not limited to: How do entrepreneurs’ imagined futures shape their strategic direction? How do entrepreneurs inspire their ecosystem to support them in realizing their imagined futures? How does diversity in knowledge and experience underpin variation in entrepreneurs’ imagined futures? How do entrepreneurs overcome obstacles in realizing their imagined futures?

Track L: Strategic Human Capital

Track Chair: Y Sekou Bermiss, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

The Strategic Human Capital Interest Group welcomes submissions on the influence of human capital resources (HCR) on firm performance. HCR are individual or unit-level capacities based on individual knowledge, skills, abilities, and other attributes that are accessible for unit-relevant purposes. Thus, we are concerned with how firms leverage HCR to achieve competitive parity and advantage. In concert with the conference theme, we are particularly interested in research addressing such questions as: How can firms creatively manage the coordination and management of strategic HCR amidst recent workplace shifts (i.e., increase in virtual work) to alter competitive balance in the marketplace? How are technological, societal, and institutional disruptions affecting or being affected by human capital mobility? How are employment disruptions affecting and being affected by changes to the way employees are compensated? Is the access to bandwidth connectivity affecting the relationship between employee and employer value creation and capture? Does the disruption of markets and societies impact how HCR are acquired and leveraged? How can firms’ human capital strategies leverage the benefits of open global boundaries? How are disruptions changing the relationship between human and social capital, and what do such changes mean for competitive advantage?

Track M: Stakeholder Strategy

Track Chair: Mary-Hunter McDonnell, *University of Pennsylvania*

The Stakeholder Strategy Interest Group focuses on understanding when, why, and how firms engage with their myriad stakeholders. These interactions can be direct or indirect and can be initiated by the stakeholders, the firm, or external events. Grand challenges that firms and societies face today present critical issues for stakeholder management, as they will differentially impact—and be impacted by—both internal and external stakeholders. Grand challenges thus raises questions of profound strategic and normative consequence for managers, as they will create new market opportunities and challenges for firms to navigate, new public policy problems for governments and nonprofits to address, and new issues of ethics and social responsibility that may affect relationships between external activists and organizations. With the goal of contributing to our understanding of how stakeholder strategies create value, we invite both theoretical and empirical submissions that explore how these macro grand challenges are affecting—and will continue to affect—the formulation and implementation of stakeholder strategies, as well as the outcomes of these strategies, at various levels of analysis, including the individual, firm, and society.

Track N: Cooperative Strategies

Track Chair: Fabrice Lumineau, *Purdue University*

Cooperative Strategies research aims to increase our understanding of key processes and structures that underpin cooperative arrangements as well as their impact on significant outcomes at the group, organization, portfolio, network, and ecosystem levels. We welcome proposal submissions related to the general domain of the Cooperative Strategies Interest Group. We also encourage submissions that focus on the role of cooperative strategies to address discordant shocks, such as internal disruptions, technological and regulatory shocks, political crises, natural disasters, pandemics, or terror attacks. Tackling the challenges of a discordant world requires imaginative solutions and represents exciting opportunities for Cooperative Strategies scholars. What is the role of imagination and inspiration in moving beyond existing solutions—and perhaps even beyond existing ways of framing the problem? What are the novel theoretical and empirical perspectives that help us better understand how organizations anticipate and adapt to these discordant shocks? How does a disruptive environment influence firms' ability to cooperate with partners? How do political, institutional, and other environmental changes affect the formation and outcomes of cooperative arrangements? What organizational processes, governance mechanisms, and experiences do organizations employ to manage cooperative relationships in a discordant world?

Track O: Strategic Leadership & Governance

Track Chair: Aaron Hill, *University of Florida*

Strategic leaders and involved governance are needed now more than ever to help guide organizations through discord on various fronts—yet, such discord also has fundamentally changed the experiences and expectations of the individuals who occupy these roles. In addition to work addressing the central issues of the Strategic Leadership & Governance Interest Group (e.g., how strategic leaders shape organizational strategy and performance; how organizational contexts shape strategic leadership and governance), we seek proposals that aim to inspire novel insights for scholarship and practice. We are particularly interested in the role of imagination and inspiration in moving beyond existing solutions and ways of framing the problem for academics, businesspersons, and consultants. Consistent with the overall conference theme, we hope to push the boundaries of existing theorizing and practice to better understand how strategic leadership and governance shapes, and is shaped by, societal discord.

Track P: Behavioral Strategy

Track Chair: Gerry McNamara, *Michigan State University*

The Behavioral Strategy Interest Group sponsors research that applies related behavioral and social science disciplines to strategic management theory and practices. We promote disciplinary and interdisciplinary research grounded in realistic assumptions about human motivation, cognition, emotion, decision making, social interactions, networks, culture, and organizational systems. Behavioral strategy is highly pertinent to this year's conference theme, as the theme directs attention to creating inspired strategic breakthroughs in a discordant world. Behavioral strategy speaks to both factors that drive and inhibit strategic efforts to break established patterns of behavior and also the process of developing and implementing strategy in a world of decision actors with diverging interests. Along with proposals related to the general domain of the Behavioral Strategy Interest Group, we encourage submissions that explore how leader attributes, decision team dynamics, organizational factors, and interorganizational coalitions influence the cognitive and motivational conditions that allow firms to pursue inspired strategic actions that address the discordant interests of firm employees, leaders, alliance partners, other stakeholders, and society in general.

COMMUNITY TRACKS

Track R: Research Methods

Track Chair: Michael Withers, *Texas A&M University*

Strategy scholars often need to apply imagination and creativity in designing and implementing research studies to address complex phenomena such as competitive advantage and firm performance. This year's conference theme allows us to focus on imaginative methodological questions and approaches, as well as on the reassessment of existing approaches to examine research questions in the field of strategic management. We also have the opportunity to consider study design and methodological techniques to examine breakthrough strategies in a discordant world. In part, we seek research and symposia proposals that use imagination to move beyond existing empirical approaches to inspire new insights and perspectives on how organizations can adapt and respond to the various challenges they currently face. Such methodological advances may require leveraging methods from other fields, combining existing methods in new ways, or developing completely new methodological approaches. While we seek proposals pertaining to the conference's theme, we welcome all those that offer new perspectives on advancing research methods within the strategic management field.

Track T: Teaching Community

Track Chair: Protiti Dastidar, *University of Maryland*

Businesses today face a variety of challenges including pandemics, forest fires, climate change, and the increasing polarization of the political arena. The past decades have witnessed improved global connectivity with cross-border flows of products, services, and people. Will this change? We are currently seeing a rapid contraction in GDP and employment across the world. In today's challenging environment, there is a need for innovative solutions. In line with this year's conference theme, innovative solutions require innovative thinking, imagination, and inspiration. How can we adjust our teaching to address these global changes and develop innovative thinking and agility in our students as we deal with rapid change and uncertainty in the global environment? We invite proposals that address these teaching challenges both at the graduate and undergraduate levels.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS

Proposals (5–7 pages)

Seeking only original and unpublished work.

Deadline for Submission of Proposals: February 24, 2021

For full submission guidelines, please visit

strategicmanagement.net/toronto/call-for-proposals/submission-guidelines

To learn more about the
SMS 41st Annual Conference in Toronto,
please visit **toronto.strategicmanagement.net**

Conference Timeline:

February 24, 2021	Submission Deadline for Proposals
March 3, 2021	Co-Author Confirmation Deadline
Mid-April 2021	Notifications of Program Review Committee Decisions
Spring 2021	Presenter Registration
September 18-21, 2021	SMS 41st Annual Conference in Toronto

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The Society advances the development and dissemination of insights on the strategic management process and fosters contacts and interchange around the world. SMS is membership-based and was founded at an inaugural meeting in London in 1981. Today, it enjoys the support of approximately 3,000 members annually, representing more than 1,100 institutions and companies in more than 70 countries.

Our activities are made possible through the dedicated support of hundreds of individuals who take on a variety of responsibilities, volunteering their time and expertise. Key activities of SMS include the publication of three leading academic journals; annual and special conferences; engagement and networking through Interest Groups and Communities; funding of research through the Strategy Research Foundation (SRF); and awards that recognize scholars, practitioners, and research in the field.



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