



## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

### ***STRATEGY AND SUSTAINABILITY***

CONFERENCE PROGRAM CO-CHAIRS



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Sustainability, the capacity to endure, has become a topic of global concern in recent years, but it has long been a concept central to strategic management. Though much has been learned over the years about how firms develop, acquire, and utilize resources to create sustainable competitive advantage, fundamental changes in competitive environments and in social concerns raise a relatively new and unaddressed set of issues in strategic management research and practice which present an opportunity to revisit our notions of sustainability.

Frequent significant changes in the nature of competitive business environments have challenged what it means to have sustained competitive advantage. Rapid shifts in the political and economic climates of multiple economies, shifting or disappearing industry boundaries, and the emergence of new technologies, including social media, have all influenced the pace and complexity of competitive interaction. Separately and together, these dynamics have called into question established conceptualizations of sustainable competitive advantage. In recent years these changes have highlighted the need for renewed focus on how competitive advantage is sustained, including the processes by which firms utilize their current resources and make choices regarding investment in the future resources that will lay the foundation for their future competitive success.

Recently, increasing attention to ecological and social sustainability has suggested new dimensions for the concept of sustainability in strategic management research. These added dimensions raise questions about how researchers and managers can integrate social and ecological dimensions into business and corporate level strategy in a way that enhances, rather than detracts from, the creation of sustainable advantage. How is the ability to create and sustain advantage influenced by firm responses to increasing pressures from governments, customers, and other stakeholders to operate in a manner that promotes not only economic but also ecological and social sustainability? How will (or should) these concerns influence how a firm competes, the resources it creates and consumes, and the nature of the competitive advantages it attains?

The SMS Annual International Conference for 2013 will provide a forum for considering emerging and evolving notions of sustainability in strategy research and practice. The Conference invites contributions that represent original, interesting and theoretically bold research, as well as innovative empirical studies. The Conference tracks outlined below highlight a few of the potential questions and issues that can be addressed.

# **CONFERENCE THEME TRACKS**

## **Track A: Sustaining Advantage**

Track Chairs: Ioannis Ioannou, *London Business School*  
Anita McGahan, *University of Toronto*

The quest for sustainable competitive advantage is at the heart of strategy research. Firms seeking to sustain competitive advantage face a set of large-scale challenges, including financial instability, economic challenges to sovereignty, the rising costs of healthcare, digitization, globalization, the depletion of natural mineral resources, and climate change, for example. These drivers of change raise new questions for scholars of sustainability: What new business models arise for sustainable competitive advantage? How are challenges to sustainability correlated across firms? What does it mean to have a sustainable advantage in turbulent times, and how should an advantage be measured? What really constitutes corporate performance beyond traditional financial metrics? How can environmental and social performance be integrated in a firm's business model to generate competitive advantage? In what ways do existing competitive advantage theories need to be adjusted to incorporate these new issues around a firm's long-term sustainability within not just the economic but also environmental and social domain? How is a firm's prospect for superior performance tied to the risk that it will not survive change? How should firms respond to new forms of communication, such as social media, to build and sustain advantage? Can the concept of competitive advantage be extended to address differences between firms in social performance? Papers will consider a range of issues and topics that relate to the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of the concept of sustainability and of sustainable advantage at the organizational level.

## **Track B: Stewardship and Sustainable Development**

Track Chair: Kira Fabrizio, *Boston University*

The sustainability literature focuses on stewardship (reduction in resource consumption for its own sake) and sustainable development (meeting the resource needs of the present without compromising the ability to meet future needs) as two avenues that lead to sustainability. Though these concepts are not unknown in strategy, the perspective often differs. For example, reduction in resource consumption is seen as a means of achieving cost advantages through improved efficiency while sustainability refers more to competitive advantage and the firm than to the resources themselves. Adopting a broader perspective of resource consumption and sustainability raises questions such as: In what ways does (or should) the adoption of sustainable business practices influence the acquisition, creation, and utilization of resources? How can the reduction of resource use create advantage beyond cost savings? How can firms influence and respond to stakeholder pressures in a way that builds competitive advantage? To what extent do current theories and practices inform managers about how to respond to pressures to adopt more sustainable business practices?

## **Track C: Social Dimension**

Track Chair: Joachim Schwalbach, *Humbolt-University Berlin*

There is a strong symbiotic relationship between the good of society and the good of the firm. Society grants companies the license to operate and provides factors necessary for competitive success, such as employees and infrastructure. At the same time, successful companies and the jobs, innovations, and economic growth they provide are important to society. This mutually supportive relationship is often overlooked or undervalued by firms in the development of their competitive strategies. The addition of social dimensions in strategic management raises several interesting questions: How much responsibility does a firm have for the health of the society(ies) in which it operates? How do/can firms identify the aspects of the society(ies) in which they operate that are most critical to address? How can firms incorporate social sustainability concerns into their strategies while at the same time creating a sustainable competitive advantage?

## **Track D: General Track**

Track Chair: Kimberly Ellis, *Florida Atlantic University*

Many exciting ideas and questions concerning implications of sustainability and the practice and study of strategic management are possible. What existing theories might be particularly useful for investigating the relationship between sustainable business practices and sustainable competitive advantage?

## **INTEREST GROUP TRACKS**

The SMS has formed different Interest Groups (IGs) that explore important subfields in strategic management. Through this Call for Proposals, each IG invites submissions for the main body of the conference in which authors address aspects of Strategy and Sustainability along with other topics relevant to the IGs' focus. The conference program will include presentations and panels that IGs select in their topical areas, along with the selections from the above conference tracks. Submissions to the IG tracks are open to any interested party.

### **Track E: Competitive Strategy**

Track Chair: Gary Dushnitsky, *London Business School*

The Competitive Strategy IG Track focuses on questions concerning firms' competitive interactions within product and factor markets over time. Within the broader theme of the Conference, we call for contributions aimed at exploring competitive dynamics in the face of growing emphasis on sustainability. Questions to address may include: How might models of competitive advantage be adapted to reflect the multi-faceted objective function of sustainability-orientated companies? How does the increased focus on a "triple bottom line approach" shape extant models of strategic interactions and competitive dynamics? What are the implications to firms' efforts to pursue competitive advantage and/or generate new opportunities for competitive success? How do firms retain competitive advantage when theirs, and their competitors', are increasingly shaped by external stakeholders? All contributions linked with competitive strategy (competitive dynamics, sustainability of competitive advantage) are welcome and submissions on the topic of competitive strategy with a link to the Conference theme are specifically encouraged.

### **Track F: Corporate Strategy**

Track Chair: Laszlo Tihanyi, *Texas A&M University*

The Corporate Strategy IG Track explores research questions concerning the management of the diversified firm, the vehicles of growth and retraction, and trade-offs in alternative vehicles of growth and decline. Sustainability, the theme of this year's Conference, is particularly relevant for the study of corporate strategy. In addition to proposals related to the general domain of this Interest Group Track, submissions are encouraged that investigate the relationship between corporate strategy and sustainability. Submissions answering questions, such as: How do diversified corporations sustain their competitive advantage? What roles current and future resources play in the management of the diversified corporation? Can corporations create sustainable competitive advantage by means of acquisitions? How does the adoption of sustainable business practices influence the growth of the firm? How can corporate strategy contribute to environmental health and economic growth?

### **Track G: Global Strategy**

Track Chair: Elizabeth L. Rose, *Aalto University*

This year's Conference theme of sustainability – in its various meanings – has an important role in furthering our understanding how multi-national firms develop strategies for operating effectively and successfully across various institutional environments. The development of enduring competitive advantage has long been a core issue for global strategy research. Recently, MNEs' role as stewards of natural resources and as active contributors to society has been the subject of scrutiny by various external stakeholders and the focus of increasing scholarly inquiry. Submissions are encouraged that address questions such as: How compatible are the development of sustainable competitive advantage and environmental/social sustainability for globally-operating organizations? How do external pressures for sustainable practices influence MNEs' strategic behavior and performance? How can MNEs prosper economically while providing sustained benefits to society, especially in less-developed economies? Can/should MNEs operate with global corporate norms, with respect to environmental and social sustainability, or work to local norms that may be less demanding? What strategies assist MNEs in transitioning toward more sustainable usage of natural resources?

### **Track H: Strategy Process**

Track Chair: Taco Reus, *Erasmus University*

The Strategy Process IG Track focuses on questions concerning how strategies are formed, implemented, and changed. Research streams encompass a broad range of phenomena, including strategic planning, strategic decision-making, strategy implementation, strategic change, strategy-making, strategy formation, and dynamics of

strategic elements over time. This year, in line with the Conference theme, contributions are encouraged that examine strategy processes related to firms' transition to becoming more sustainable enterprises. Potential questions include: How do organizational changes toward a sustainable company unfold? Are certain characteristics of ensuing processes accelerating organizational moves toward sustainability? How do broader societal processes emphasizing sustainability affect firms' strategy processes? How do strategic decision-makers adapt their strategy processes to the changing demands? Do firms differ in the strategy processes toward adjusting to more sustainable strategies? Are certain strategy processes of firms constraining firms' attempts to enhance sustainability? Are strategy processes that firms have developed to attain sustainable competitive advantage helping or hurting these firms to attain a more sustainable environment?

**Track I: Knowledge and Innovation**

Track Chair: Corey Phelps, *HEC*

The Knowledge and Innovation IG Track focuses on understanding how managers can leverage the knowledge of their organizations and innovate to build competitive advantage. Innovation is central to achieving sustainability. The quest for sustainability is transforming the competitive landscape and stimulating organizations to innovate by changing the way they think about products, technologies, processes and business models. Understanding how the challenge of sustainability can be addressed through innovation requires a broad focus on the multi-level innovation systems in which firms are embedded. Accordingly, contributions are welcome which address various questions related to the theme of strategy and sustainability, such as: When, how, and why do more sustainable products, processes and business models come to exist? What affects their adoption and diffusion? How do firms shape the relevant institutions in which they are embedded regarding sustainable innovation? What non-market strategies do they employ? What new organizational forms and business models are being developed in the pursuit of sustainability? Under what conditions will firms pursue sustainable innovation? Given the uncertainty regarding the returns to sustainability, is it better to be a trailblazer or a follower in adopting sustainable practices?

**Track J: Strategy Practice**

Track Chair: Hanna Lehtimäki, *University of Eastern Finland*

The Strategy Practice IG Track focuses on strategy-making and the ways by which it is enabled and constrained by organizational and societal practices. Proposals of interest should explore the mind-set inherent in utilizing and building strategic resources and the micro-organizational practices that construct the economic, ecological and social sustainability. One may learn from the best-practice for responsible strategic management but should also be innovative in experimenting with novel practices. Submissions are encouraged in the following three sub-themes: 1) Practice: What are the tools and methods of strategy-making for ecological and social sustainability and how are they used? 2) Praxis: How do every-day routines and relationships enable or constrain ecological and social sustainability in strategic management? 3) Practitioners: What is the role of individual practitioners in different levels of management in seeking to build ecological and social sustainability? Fresh stories and novel insights are welcome as well as sharing of best practices, use of innovative research methods, experimentations, and critical analysis. Academics, practitioners, and strategy consultants with an inside view on issues of sustainability are all invited to submit papers and join in on the discussion.

**Track K: Entrepreneurship and Strategy**

Track Chair: Garry Bruton, *Texas Christian University*

Sustainability from an entrepreneurial perspective increasingly includes not only how firms survive (become sustainable), but also how the venture itself impacts the broader society. The recognition that new ventures have costs to society drives the concern for social and environmental sustainability. The tension between economic pressures for sustainable/viable entrepreneurial ventures and societal pressures to create ventures that contribute to sustainability of society is difficult for entrepreneurs to navigate. Submissions are encouraged that address this tension. Some of the questions that may address this tension include but are not limited to: How do entrepreneurial ventures strategically balance the need for economic and environmental sustainability? Concern for economic and social sustainability in mature economies often leads to outsourcing; how does such concern for sustainability in mature economies impact emerging economies? What are the differences in strategic actions in family-controlled entrepreneurial ventures and those established in venture-capital backed ventures that impact sustainability?

**Track L: Strategic Human Capital**

Track Chair: Todd Zenger, *Washington University – St. Louis*

The Strategic Human Capital IG Track examines the role of human capital in generating firm performance. The capacity of the firm to attract, retain, and develop human capital is particularly central to its ability to sustain performance and develop sustainable strategies. Accordingly, the Track invites research that addresses the following types of questions: What is the role of human capital as a microfoundation of sustained firm performance? What role does human capital mobility play in shaping the performance of firms? What role does human capital mobility play in shaping the evolution of industries? What are the relative effects of human capital treatment (within firm human capital development) and selection (recruitment and retention) on firm performance? How do firms manage the value appropriation challenges of “star” employees? Why and how do competitive interactions within labor markets differ from competitive interactions in other strategic factors markets? Scholarship that is interdisciplinary and/or considers human capital at multiple levels of analysis is especially welcomed.

**Track M: Stakeholder Strategy**

Track Chair: Richard Priem, *Texas Christian University*

The recent financial crisis provides stark examples showing how the single-minded pursuit of near-term financial performance can result in long-term problems for firms and in public costs for society. The Stakeholder Strategy IG Track is uniquely positioned – at the intersection of strategic management, stakeholder theory and corporate sustainability – to address some of the most challenging issues of our time. Several sample questions the Stakeholder Strategy IG Track would like to see addressed in this year’s submission process include: How can businesses best create enduring value for their key stakeholders and, thus, sustainable advantage relative to other businesses? What new frameworks can be developed for realizing value creation that is more likely sustainable for the long run? How can the firm’s primary stakeholders – customers, employees, shareholders, suppliers and the general public – be effectively engaged in sustainable value creation? What strategic and stakeholder processes can contribute to shared economic, social and environmental sustainability? What key intersections among strategic management, stakeholder theory, and corporate sustainable development are most likely to contribute to enduring economic, social and environmental value creation?

**Track N: Cooperative Strategies**

Track Chair: Dovev Lavie, *Technion-Israel Institute of Technology*

Cooperative arrangements often enable organizations to sustain their competitive advantage and respond to pressures for sustainability. Cooperative strategies can serve for enhancing efficiency and growth in turbulent times as well as for assimilating sustainable business practices. Therefore, sustainability of organizations and their environments raises important and diverse implications for cooperative strategy research. Proposal submissions are encouraged that relate to the general domain of the Cooperative Strategies IG Track. In addition, we particularly encourage submissions that address questions that are related to strategy and sustainability: How can organizations gain and sustain their advantage by leveraging cooperative arrangements? How do political, institutional, and other macro-pressures for sustainability affect the formation and outcomes of cooperative arrangements? How can organizations, including corporations, non-profit organizations and public sector agencies, use cooperative arrangements as a means of enhancing sustainability in turbulent times? How do cooperative arrangements, alliance portfolios, and networks evolve in sectors that face pressures for environmental sustainability? How can cooperative arrangements be managed and governed to effectively achieve sustainability goals and cope with pressures for sustainability? What are the consequences of these pressures for organizations’ cooperative strategies in the private and public sectors? What processes and capabilities are needed to pursue sustainability goals via cooperative arrangements?

**Track O: Strategic Leadership and Governance**

Track Chair: Karen Schnatterly, *University of Missouri*

Sustainability, especially in an increasingly global and fast-paced world raises interesting questions and challenges for scholars of strategic leadership and governance. In addition to submissions addressing the core issues of the Strategic Leadership and Governance IG Track (e.g., the composition and influence of the TMT and the board of directors, institutional differences around the world, the use and effectiveness of corporate governance mechanisms), particular interest is in submissions that focus on the Conference theme as it pertains to strategic leadership and

corporate governance. For instance: How do the nature, design, and effectiveness of governance mechanisms impact sustainability? What is the role of corporate governance in different institutional environments in investing in future resources? How might increasing pressures from governments, customers and other stakeholders influence the role and functioning of the TMT? Do non-public firms approach sustainability differently, or raise different problems or potential solutions that public or state-owned firms do not? What can public-private partnerships and their complicated governance bring to the question of sustainability? Do different governance practices offer different approaches for managing (or substituting for) pressure from governments? What role does the composition of the TMT play in this relationship?

**Track P: Behavioral Strategy**

Track Chair: Christina Fang, *New York University*

The Behavioral Strategy IG track seeks to ground strategic management in realistic assumptions about human cognition, emotion, and social interaction. We welcome submissions from many methodological traditions, on topics such as bounded rationality in competitive markets; cognition and decision making; cognitive biases and heuristics; cognitive schema and management perception; individual and collective beliefs and ideologies; prospect theory, reference points, and risk-taking; emotions, motivations, personalities, and pathologies; the psychology of bargaining and organizational politics; anomalies in strategic learning; and the social psychology of group decision making. In keeping with this year's theme of sustainability, we encourage submissions that consider questions such as: What are the psychological obstacles to sustainable investment in the future? How do changing social, political, and ecological environments influence individual and group cognition in organizations? What kinds of assumptions does the drive to sustainability make about human attention, learning, and social behavior?

**Track T: Teaching Community**

Track Chair: Margaret Cording, *IMD*

The Teaching Community provides a forum for researchers who teach strategy to improve their classroom effectiveness. This track aims to identify and address teaching-related needs and to provide the means for efficient and effective sharing of teaching experiences and resources. We invite proposal submissions that present innovative, inclusive, and interactive teaching enhancing processes and that emphasize such issues as content analyses of courses, new research on strategy pedagogy, and literature reviews of prior pedagogy research. Target student audiences include undergraduates, MBAs, and executives. We are particularly interested in submissions that emphasize the conference theme by exploring such issues as effective approaches to deeply integrating strategy and sustainability issues in the classroom, tools that promote student exploration of issues around short-term versus long-term decision processes, and limits (if any) to the strategic exploitation of market failures. Special attention will also be given to proposals that share best practices, impart actionable tools, frameworks, and concepts, and/or advance members' knowledge of adult learning processes.

**SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS**

**Proposals** (5-7 pages, for paper and panel sessions)

Only original, unpublished work is sought.

**Deadline for Submission of Proposals: February 27, 2013**

To learn more about the  
SMS 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual International Conference in Atlanta  
and the submission process, please go to:  
[atlanta.strategicmanagement.net](http://atlanta.strategicmanagement.net)

## Timeline:

<b>February 27, 2013</b>	Submission Deadline for Proposals
<b>March 6, 2013</b>	Co-Author Confirmation Deadline
<b>Mid-April, 2013</b>	Notifications of Program Review Committee Decisions
<b>May 15, 2013</b>	Presenter Registration Deadline
<b>Mid-July 2013</b>	Conference Program Available Online
<b>September 28 – October 1, 2013</b>	SMS 33 <sup>rd</sup> Annual International Conference in Atlanta

## a professional society for the advancement of strategic management

The Strategic Management Society (SMS) is unique in bringing together the worlds of reflective practice and thoughtful scholarship. The Society consists of nearly 3,000 members representing over 80 different countries. Membership, composed of academics, business practitioners, and consultants, focuses its attention on the development and dissemination of insights on the strategic management process, as well as fostering contacts and interchange around the world.

The Society is probably best known through the Strategic Management Journal (SMJ) published by John Wiley & Sons. This Class A journal has become the leading scholarly publication in the field of Strategic Management and is consistently rated one of the top publications in the management area. In 2007 the Society launched the Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal (SEJ) and in 2010 the Global Strategy Journal (GSJ). The intent is for these new quarterly publications to soon also become Class A journals and to promote the development and dissemination of advances in the field by maintaining the highest standards of intellectual thought combined with practical relevance, just as their sister publication SMJ has done for many years.



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