



## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

### ***STRATEGIES IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD***

CONFERENCE PROGRAM CO-CHAIRS

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The 29<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference of the Strategic Management Society aims to encourage discussions about research and strategies for addressing uncertainty and the opportunities created by changes in the world. Global competition, new major economic powers, corruption, increasing world conflict, and commodity price changes, among others in the world, have contributed substantial new uncertainties with which firms must contend in crafting strategies as well as executing strategies. Concepts of uncertainty have long been at the heart of many of the core theories used in strategic management to understand competitive advantage as well as organizational boundaries. Increases in the levels as well as types of uncertainty potentially have important implications for the durability of firm advantages, the way firms learn and adapt, approaches for managing innovation and knowledge, and the attractiveness of different strategies and organizational models.

There will be tracks addressing three sub-themes that are of importance to crafting and executing strategies in today's uncertain world. The first is simply the reality of new environmental uncertainties affecting firm strategy and organization. These new realities include the rise of new competitors from emerging economies, increased security and geopolitical risks, and industry convergence and deconstruction associated with technological advances, among others. This track will identify new uncertainties organizations face and begin to identify important opportunities for the practice and study of strategic management.

The second sub-theme addresses external organizational responses to these uncertainties. These may be inter-organizational relationships such as new types of partnerships with entrepreneurs or others for 'open innovation', corporate venture capitalists, and so on. Some might be used to acquire knowledge and other resources or some might represent new portfolios of relationships to advance their strategies. Many such relationships can also involve a mixture of cooperation and competition.

The third sub-theme addresses internal organizational responses to an uncertain world. These responses might include various strategic initiatives to enhance survival as well as the flexibility or robustness of strategies (e.g., corporate venturing, strategic renewal, etc.). They might also include the use of certain techniques in the strategy process that are specifically designed to handle uncertainty (e.g., scenario planning, real options analysis in capital budgeting, game theory, etc.). Some of the uncertainties discussed above might also have important implications for many issues related to organization (e.g., new organizational forms, intra-organizational learning, global organization of R&D, organizational ambidexterity, tensions between global integration and local responsiveness, decision-making models, etc.).

The SMS Annual International Conference invites contributions that represent original, interesting, and theoretically bold research, as well as innovative empirical studies. As reflected in the themes of the conference tracks below, there are numerous potential questions that can be addressed.

## CONFERENCE THEME TRACKS

### **Track A: Environmental Realities in an Uncertain World**

Track Chair: *Africa Ariño, IESE Business School*

In the last ten years, the world has watched rapidly expanding emerging economies, increasing conflict across regions, global warming and pollution, and changing government attitudes toward internationalization and globalization. Certainly India and China represent countries with growing internal markets and the potential and ambitions for competing in the home markets of developed countries. These uncertainties are illustrative rather than exhaustive, and this track aims to identify the most important uncertainties facing organizations and begin to trace out their implications for strategy practice and research.

### **Track B: External Relationships in an Uncertain World**

Track Chair: *Dovev Lavie, Technion*

Strategic relationships between firms as well as between firms and governments or state-owned enterprises are important for coping with an uncertain world and pursuing new opportunities. Strategic alliances, globally distributed R&D units, corporate venture capital, and other structures represent the desire of firms to access resources and capabilities that are distributed across firms and geographic regions. Market and technological uncertainties accompany more complicated patterns of strategic relationships, including multi-partner deals, industry networks and eco-systems, and partnership portfolios. Such relationships raise important questions for the development of firm-level capabilities, the management and governance of hybrid organizational forms, and the means by which firms might organize for innovation.

### **Track C: Internal Organization in an Uncertain World**

Track Chair: *Henk Volberda, Erasmus University*

Changes in the world potentially have many important implications for numerous dimensions of organization (e.g., new organizational forms, global R&D, integration-responsiveness, etc.), as well as the many initiatives (e.g., corporate venturing, corporate transformation, etc.) or techniques (e.g., scenario planning, real options analysis, etc.) that might be used in the strategy process to cope with uncertainty. Some of these approaches have been used for some time with uneven success, and others are just now being adopted by organizations. Questions arise as to how organizations might address new uncertainties and enhance their effectiveness in responding to changes in the world.

### **Track D: General Track**

Track Chair: *Catherine Maritan, Syracuse University*

Many exciting sets of ideas around the implications of uncertainty for the practice and study of strategic management have been offered. Interesting questions include: What theoretical and practical perspectives can be associated with the conference theme “Strategies in an Uncertain World”? Which theories are especially suitable in explaining how uncertainty matters? Based on the stock of empirical research to date, what do we know, and how should we proceed? What opportunities are there for theoretical integration and cross-disciplinary research, and what can strategic management learn from other fields?

## INTEREST GROUP TRACKS

The SMS has formed Interest Groups around some important sub-fields in strategic management. These seven groups each invite interested participants to engage with them in pre-conference activities. In addition, through this Call, each Interest Group invites submissions for the main body of the conference in which the authors address aspects of “strategies in an uncertain world” along with other topics relevant to the Interest Group domain. The conference program will include papers and panels that Interest Groups select in their topical areas, along with the selections from the above conference tracks. Submissions to the Interest Group tracks are open to any interested parties.

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

Track Chair: *Gianmario Verona, Bocconi University*

This track focuses on questions concerning firms and their interactions within product and factor markets over time. What are the dimensions and drivers of business performance? How do businesses interact with one another and with their competitive environments? What is the nature and effect of these interactions? What is competitive advantage and what are its sources? And in the context of the Washington DC conference theme, how do competitive, social and institutional factors affect the uncertainties that firms face within and across industries? What skills and capabilities do firms need to gain and sustain competitive advantage amidst such uncertainties? What combinations of proactive and reactive strategies, exploration and exploitation, should firms undertake and at what speed?

## **Track F: Corporate Strategy and Governance**

Track Chair: *Mason Carpenter, University of Wisconsin*

What governance mechanisms help firms manage and cope with uncertainty? What facets of uncertainty affect the ideal composition of the board? How does uncertainty affect the board's ability to connect executive pay level or structure with firm performance? How does uncertainty affect the desirability of firm growth through acquisition or alliance? Do firms' decisions about the level and nature of geographic and product market diversification change with the level of uncertainty? Does the nature of uncertainty (financial markets vs. product/industry vs. country) affect the desirability of particular corporate strategies?

## **Track G: Global Strategy**

Track Chair: *Björn Ambos, Vienna University of Economics & Business Administration*

How does an extension of operations across national boundaries affect a firm's overall risk exposure? How do MNCs deal with the inherent risk and uncertainty of global presence? Which benefits and pitfalls are associated with international operations? How can the risks that those strategies bear be mitigated? How do MNCs address regulatory spillovers and deal with uncertain and inconsistent policies across its markets? How do subsidiaries of MNCs deal with political hostility towards foreign firms? What organizational responses do firms use to cope with increasing technological and market uncertainties across the globe? How do MNCs manage unexpected changes in prices across markets?

## **Track H: Strategy Process**

Track Chair: *Christoph Lechner, University of St. Gallen*

Strategy process research focuses on the activities, practices and routines that govern the formation of strategies and their performance implications on the group, functional, business, corporate, and network levels of analysis. Which process capabilities do firms have that lend themselves to conditions of uncertainty? What are their performance consequences? Which processes lead to the creation, modification and transfer of capabilities under uncertain conditions? What is the role of politics, consensus-building in strategy processes? Do we have new insights into decision-making under uncertainty? What are factors influencing the evolution of strategic initiatives? How do initiatives form corporate strategies under uncertain conditions? What is the role of emotions and micro-practices in strategy processes? What techniques are designed to improve strategy processes under uncertainty?

## **Track I: Knowledge and Innovation**

Track Chair: *Maurizio Zollo, Bocconi University*

How does uncertainty affect investments in knowledge development? What can firms do to improve their capacity to acquire new knowledge quickly? How do firms manage the internal power-shifts that result from rapid changes in the knowledge required to respond to market requirements? How does uncertainty impact knowledge longevity and transfer? Are there techniques that can enhance knowledge sharing, knowledge development, and innovation creation under conditions of uncertainty? What is the impact of uncertainty on routines and best practices? How can management set strategic directions for innovation processes under uncertainty? What can firms do to mobilize rapid innovations in response to new opportunities?

## **Track J: The Practice of Strategy**

Track Chair: *Veronique Ambrosini, Cardiff University*

This track focuses on activities that contribute to an organization's strategy. It is interested in what people do in businesses, management consulting firms, non-governmental organizations, governmental agencies and universities to plan, pursue, develop and implement strategies. How and by whom are strategy problems identified and conceptualized in an uncertain world? How are potential solutions generated, evaluated, and decided on? What tools and methodologies are available to individuals whose organizational and institutional contexts are uncertain, and are there tools that are better suited to a world where uncertainty reigns?

## **Track K: Entrepreneurship and Strategy**

Track Chair: *David Deeds, University of Texas-Dallas*

Seizing the opportunities created by an uncertain world is the lifeblood of entrepreneurship, but is less than half the battle. Successfully managing uncertainty is the heart of entrepreneurship. Given the centrality of uncertainty to the study of entrepreneurship there are numerous potential questions of interest. These would include what types of uncertainty benefit new ventures versus incumbents? How do we move beyond 'beta' to measure or even categorize the level of 'Knightian' uncertainty that is central to theories of entrepreneurship? How does the level of uncertainty in a market influence the battle between new ventures and incumbents? How do entrepreneurs conceptualize and operationalize uncertainty? How do/should entrepreneurs strategize in the face of "Knightian" uncertainty? How do the strategies undertaken by entrepreneurs, intrapreneurs and managers differ in the face of uncertainty? In an uncertain world is entrepreneurial success based on vision, flexibility or luck?

To learn more about the  
**SMS 29<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference**  
and for instructions on how to submit proposal(s),  
please go to:

<http://dc.strategicmanagement.net>

### **Timeline:**

<b>February 16, 2009</b>	Submission Deadline for Proposals
<b>February 25, 2009</b>	Co-Author Confirmation Deadline
<b>April, 2009</b>	Notifications of Review Program Committee Decisions
<b>May 15, 2009</b>	Presenter Registration Deadline
<b>July, 2009</b>	Conference Program Available online
<b>Oct 11–14, 2009</b>	SMS 29th Annual International Conference

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The Strategic Management Society (SMS) is unique in bringing together the worlds of reflective practice and thoughtful scholarship. The Society consists of more than 2,000 members representing over 50 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. The SMJ has become the leading scholarly publication in the field of Strategic Management. Since its inception it has sought to promote the development of advances in the field by maintaining the highest standards of intellectual thought combined with practical relevance. Since 2007, the Society also publishes the Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal (SEJ).



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