

Call for Papers for a Special Issue

The Design-Strategy Interface: A Vantage Point for Management and Organizational Research

Submission deadline: 16 October 2024

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BACKGROUND

According to Simon (1969), design can “devise courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones”; as such, it helps elaborate – understand, model, and act upon – strategic complexity, influencing the processes based on which *strategic leaders*, across organizational levels, come together and *interface* to form decisions that shape the fate of organizations. As such, design influences how ‘dominant coalitions’ – defined as the powerful groups of individuals who conjointly shape strategy (Cyert and March, 1963) – make decisions. It becomes compelling for firms, teams, and individual strategic decision makers to learn about how to “*design*” their internal processes effectively with the prospect of achieving desirable targets. Design is hereby intended as the distinct, iterative, and learning-based approach that enables the cumulative development of an initial creative act, which can transform a product, a process, or a strategy, into meaningful outputs that tangibly impact organizations (D'Ippolito, 2014). In this regard, design can help explain how strategic leadership interfaces (i.e., the common boundaries and interactions through which strategic decision makers shape strategy) unfold to shape decisions under conditions of complexity (Bromiley and Rau, 2016; Boyd et al., 2011; Georgakakis et al., 2022; Georgakakis et al., 2023; Simsek et al., 2018), how strategic actors innovate through designing decision making processes (Simeone and D'Ippolito, 2022), and how strategy is formed through advanced informational tools (Recker et al., 2023).

In fact, the concept of ‘design’ was one of the first that appeared in strategy research (Aldrich et al., 1984; Mintzberg, 1990), as well as a core one in organizational innovation (Berkowitz, 1987; Hargadon and Sutton, 1997; Rindova and Petkova, 2007), organization studies (Ewenstein and Whyte, 2009; Stigliani and Ravasi, 2012), and organizational behavior and leadership (Elsbach, 2009; Graen et al., 1982; Michlewski, 2008). However,

while the notion of design has been central in the initial developments of management theory and strategy research, its potential to systematically inform ongoing dialogues and resolve contemporary debates in these areas via a multilevel design-strategy interface perspective has yet to be realized.

This special issue calls for contributions that address the *design-strategy interface* by emphasizing interdisciplinary research across areas such as strategy-as-practice (SAP), strategic leadership and upper echelons, innovation, organizational theory, and management. Central concepts surrounding the design-strategy interface include, but are not limited to, designing strategic decision making processes in strategic leadership to disentangle how strategic decision makers (i.e., strategic leaders) interface to influence organizational decisions and actions (Bromiley and Rau, 2016; Cannella and Holcomb, 2005; Georgakakis et al., 2022), strategy as practice (SAP) through design (Knight et al., 2018; Paroutis et al., 2015; Romme and Holmström, 2023), design and innovation (Liedtka, 2015; Simeone and D'Ippolito, 2022), and generally informing management theory through a design-thinking lens (Liedtka, 2000).

We aim to bring together scholars across disciplinary specialisms to develop conceptual and empirical foundations for an important and expanding field of research drawing on a diverse range of methodological approaches.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Design and strategy are two distinct concepts that conjointly explain how strategic decision makers – such as CEOs, executives and boards of directors, middle managers, or foreign subsidiary leaders – interface to adapt and respond to their task demands. On the one hand, design is defined as a distinct iterative approach, which often employs modelling (e.g., sketches, visualization, prototypes) to support various modes of thought (e.g., analytical and exploratory, convergent and divergent) and to identify, frame, and address strategic problems (Cross, 2001; Martin, 2009; Ma and Seidl, 2018). Meanwhile, design-strategy also refers to how top managers or boards of directors learn from the past, through for instance performance feedback (Joseph and Gaba, 2015; Schumacher et al., 2020), to plan and develop policies for the future; this process often draws from the interaction of CEOs with senior executives (Bromiley and Rau, 2016; Georgakakis et al., 2022), middle managers (van Doorn et al., 2022), boards of directors (Boyd et al., 2011), that determine firms' short- and long-term objectives. While the notions of strategy and design are well-established in the literature, they are often considered as distal constructs, with scholars stressing that exploring the design-strategy interface holds potential to advance management theory and strategy research (Knight et al., 2020; Micheli et al., 2019). Given that organizational actions reflect the processes through which strategic decision makers plan and strategize (Cannella and Holcomb, 2005; Hambrick, 2007), designing is critical for predicting strategic outcomes (Wright et al., 2013) as well as in unraveling the strategic leadership interfaces through which strategy is created. Meanwhile, since design associates with the micro-foundational processes through which strategic leaders come together to shape decisions that boost innovation and other desirable processes (Simeone and D'Ippolito, 2022), strategizing intentions can act as antecedents of design (Liedtka, 2000). As such, there is plenty of unpacked potential to contribute to the ongoing conversation around the design-strategy interface with the purpose to clarify and establish their interconnection.

Schön (1983, 1987) characterized 'design' as a reflective practice in which the very process of visualizing and materializing ideas, concepts, and artefacts (e.g., through drawings, sketches, and prototypes) provides the 'designer', and those who participate in the design process, with the possibility for *reflection-in-action*. The micro-level visualizations and materializations produced by design offer the opportunity to communicate with and gather feedback from various stakeholders and to establish a dialogue among different

organizational actors across different levels of the firm's managerial cadre (Simeone et al., 2017). These micro-level specifications informed the SAP domain. Scholars, for example, examined how design processes and artefacts, such as intensive use of visualizations, can support and inform strategy-making (Dalpiaz et al., 2016; Lojacono and Zaccai, 2004; Paroutis and Knight, 2019), brainstorming practices that precede strategy formulation along with other meaning-making processes (Ewenstein and Whyte, 2009; Verganti and Dell'Era, 2013; Verganti et al., 2021). One of the key benefits of this approach nests in the possibility of obtaining multiple divergent, and yet productive perspectives (Eppler and Platts, 2009; Paroutis et al. 2015); divergent perspectives enable design-based learning to solve complex problems (van Aken, 2004) and reduce the psychological uncertainty associated with ambiguous situations (Abdallah and Langley, 2014; Kaplan, 2008).

At the micro-meso levels, CEOs and other executives interact and interface to make strategic decisions and impact firm-level outcomes (such as strategic change, firm performance, and firm internationalization). For example, scholars have underscored the role of the CEO as the architect of the top management team who gives roles to top managers and influences the levels of interdependence in the executive group (Cannella and Holcomb, 2005; Hambrick et al., 2015). In addition, studies have shown that several CEO and top management characteristics manifest in corporate strategic choices (Finkelstein et al., 2009), with the strategic leadership interfaces (SLI) perspective emphasizing the need to unpack how top managers come together to form strategic decisions (Bromiley and Rau, 2016; Georgakakis et al., 2022). Unpacking how CEOs and senior executives, or boards of directors, interactively design the various processes of strategy making, holds potential to shed light on the impact of upper echelons on organizations.

Further, scant attention has been placed to the underlying mechanisms through which experiential learning, a core concept in strategic management and SAP, fueled by integrated design and strategy approaches, can help address complex strategic management issues (Elsbach and Stigliani, 2018, Knight et al., 2020; Liedtka, 2011). Scholars, for example, examined how design can feed into strategy formation or execution: this body of knowledge relies on the notion of design as the set of processes and practices undertaken to identify, frame, and address problems by significantly relying on modelling and other visual and physical representations (Holmström et al., 2009; Martin, 2009; Schön, 1987).

We assert that further advancement requires multilevel specifications where the role of individual actors within teams and organizational context (from strategic leaders, to innovators, founders, and middle managers, innovation teams, strategic decision-making teams) becomes clear (Angwin et al., 2009; Georgakakis et al., 2022, 2023; Knight et al., 2020; Paroutis and Heracleous, 2013; Pitelis and Teece, 2018; Souitaris et al., 2020). Understanding design calls for research that captures multidisciplinary and multistakeholder co-creation (Borthwick et al., 2022; Giacomini, 2014; Tschang et al., 2022). Outputs of design can go way beyond traditional ones to encompass strategic consensus (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992), strategic decision making, top management team structure and interdependence, industrial products or communication materials, complex services, social innovation projects, artificial intelligence technology, policy instruments, social entrepreneurship initiatives and, more broadly, transformative interventions within natural and social ecosystems (Buchanan, 1992, 2019; Liedtka et al., 2013).

A DESIGN-STRATEGY PERSPECTIVE: The need for multilevel and interdisciplinary insights

The special issue aims to advance interdisciplinary theorizing at different levels of conceptualization and analysis – including individual, dyad, team, unit, macro-environment levels – answering key questions about how design influences strategy making. This intends

to contribute to the development of a multilevel design-strategy perspective that clarifies how design as a process may impact an organizational entity. The resulting multilevel conceptualization (Klein et al., 1999) aims at making key theoretical contributions to various fields within and across disciplines. In line with suggestions on multilevel theory building, the conceptualization will embrace different theoretical aspects, including:

1. Interfaces among strategic leaders (including but not limited to, CEOs, boards of directors, executives, middle managers, unit managers, heads of innovation and engineering teams, foreign R&D subsidiary managers) – how they interact with each other, influence each other, and become involved in collective activities through strategy-design (Georgakakis et al., 2023; Paroutis et al., 2015; Van Doorn et al., 2022).
2. How organizations and managerial actors strategically innovate through design tools and processes (Simeone and D'Ippolito, 2022) to respond to the complexity of the external environment (Schneider et al., 2017).
3. How the adoption of design tools can help managers shape organizational culture and values, enriching our understanding of strategy-as-practice (Liedtka and Ogilvie, 2012; Prashantham and Healey, 2022).

Considering the versatility and interdisciplinarity of this area, we welcome studies that follow different methodological approaches, as well as conceptual studies and integrative literature reviews. In the spirit of a robust academic engagement that is participatory and multi-vocal, we encourage innovative, thoughtful, provocative, as well as critical submissions from scholars at all stages of their academic careers.

Below, we list some questions that could be addressed: by no means this is an exhaustive set of questions. We invite submissions that cover other issues and topics that more broadly fall within the aims and scope outlined above.

Strategic leadership and design-strategy

- How does design help strategic leaders (including top managers, middle managers, boards of directors, or strategic decision makers) to deal with disruption and environmental uncertainty in strategy-making and enhance performance?
- How do firms learn from the past to design and plan for the future and avoid disruption and adverse effects?
- How does design affect the way strategic leaders reach decision making consensus and bring about strategic change?
- How can design tools, such as advanced technology, or artificial intelligence, help top managers and boards of directors to formulate strategy and respond to their various stakeholder demands?

Roles of design in facilitating strategy formation and execution

- How do different design methods (e.g., personas, stakeholder/ecosystem maps, customer journeys, etc.) or artifacts (e.g., early sketches, visual mock-ups, physical and digital prototypes, PowerPoint slides, etc.) help analyze the task demands and make faster and better quality strategic decisions?
- How can a design-driven understanding of strategy help organizations formulate the strategy process?
- How can the emotional and experiential component of design (e.g., immersion, scenario simulation) help in developing more empathic strategy, inclusive of as well as capable of being emotionally intelligent, shortening the distance between those who set out the strategies and those in charge of executing them?
- How does the integration of design and strategy practices help managers and other societal actors to tackle wicked problems, such as widespread conditions of social

exclusion, the persistence of injustice in our societies, and the need to address and adapt to climate change?

Experiential learning fueled by design in strategy and innovation

- How does the experiential learning of strategic teams such as entrepreneurial groups, founders, engineering teams, and R&D teams impact strategic innovation?
- How can a design-driven understanding of product or process innovation shape the architecture of the wider ecosystem in which the organization operates?
- In a context increasingly characterized by digital innovation, how can experience-based learning in collective decision-making shape processes of digitalization and subsequent strategy-making?
- While partially recognized by the Strategy-as-Practice literature, more could be done to leverage on the materiality and physicality of design practices for enhancing strategy learning: how can we bridge design scholarly traditions with the efforts put in by ethnographic traditions used in organization studies?
- What are the capabilities that designers should have to act strategically within complex environments? What is the role played by experiential learning in relation to these capabilities?

SUBMISSION PROCESS AND DEADLINES

- Submission deadline: **16 October 2024**.
- Expected publication: 2026.
- Submissions should be prepared using the JMS Manuscript Preparation Guidelines
- (<http://www.socadms.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/JMS-ManuscriptPreparationGuidelines.pdf>).
- Manuscripts should be submitted via the JMS ScholarOne system (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jmstudies>).
- Articles will be reviewed according to the JMS double-blind review process.
- We welcome informal enquiries relating to the Special Issue, proposed topics, and potential fit with the Special Issue objectives. Please direct any questions on the Special Issue to the Guest Editors:
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We plan a number of special issue events to publicize the issue and also create an ongoing dialogue between the submitting authors in a constructive and developmental fashion.

Online Information Session: The editorial team will host an online information session (October 2023, precise date to be announced) to launch the special issue call. Prospective contributors can ask questions about the call, and the recording will be uploaded to the JMS YouTube channel shortly after.

Pre-submission Online Workshop (Workshop #1): The editorial team will organize a virtual special issue pre-submission workshop in March 2024 (date to be announced) with the objective of supporting prospective authors in the development of their working ideas and manuscripts. PhD students and junior faculty are especially welcome to attend the pre-submission workshop. Participation in the workshop does not guarantee acceptance of the paper in the Special Issue and attendance is not a prerequisite for publication.

Post-submission Face-to-Face Workshop (Workshop #2): The editorial team will organize a special issue in-person revision workshop (expected date: Spring 2024). Authors who receive a “revise and resubmit” (R&R) decision on their manuscript will be invited to attend this workshop. Participation in the workshop does not guarantee acceptance of the paper in the Special Issue and attendance is not a prerequisite for publication.

GUEST EDITORS



Dimitrios Georgakakis is Professor and Chair in Strategy and International Business at the University of York (United Kingdom). He has held permanent and visiting positions at the University of St. Gallen (Switzerland) and Texas A&M University (United States). His work has been published in a number of academic journals including *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Journal of World Business*, *The Leadership Quarterly*, *Academy of Management Discoveries*, and *Long Range Planning*. He serves at the editorial review board of the *Journal of Management Studies* and *Corporate Governance: An International Review*. His work has received several awards from reputable international academic organizations – such as the Latsis Foundation, the Academy of Management, the Academy of International Business, the Strategic Management Society, and the European Institute for Advanced Management Studies. He holds experience at the interface with the industry and has worked on research and impact projects with several large organizations such as Credit Suisse, Swisscom, Helvetia Group, Raiffeisen Bank, and several others.



Beatrice D'Ippolito is Professor of Strategic Management and Innovation at the School for Business and Society, University of York, UK. Her research focuses on the emergence and development of mechanisms of knowledge creation and diffusion that connect the micro level of firm dynamics with the meso level of industry evolution. She conducts extensive qualitative and archival research within organizations of small to large sizes, spanning different empirical domains, including design as a driver for innovation, inter-organizational collaborations as vehicles to knowledge creation, and the strategic opportunities and challenges attached to the advent of digital technologies. Her research appeared in various outlets, including *Research Policy*, *Technovation*, *Long Range Planning*, *Industry and Innovation*, *Creativity and Innovation Management*, and *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*. Professor D'Ippolito currently sits in the Editorial Advisory Board of *Research Policy* and *Industry and Innovation* and, as of January 2023, she serves as Associate Editor at *Journal of Management Studies*.



Luca Simeone currently serves as an Associate Professor at Aalborg University, where his focus is on how design and arts can support personal, organizational and community resilience, innovation, transition thinking, long-term strategic orientation and positive and impactful change. He has carried out research, teaching and consulting activities at various universities (Harvard, MIT, Stanford, Polytechnic University of Milan, Malmö University and University of the Arts London), (co)authoring and (co)editing 5 books and other 70+ publications. He has founded and managed successful companies and award-winning design-driven firms operating in

more than 30 countries and with commercial hubs in Milan, Singapore, Toronto and Doha (key Clients include Procter & Gamble, Unilever, Dior, Sony). He also helps private and public organisations (e.g., the European Commission, the World Bank, UNICEF and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research) to define strategies, policies, and funding schemes to foster innovation.



Sotirios Paroutis is Professor of Strategic Management and head of the Strategy and International Business Group at Warwick Business School, UK. His research lies at the intersections of strategy, technology and organizations and examines the discursive, cognitive and visual activities organizational actors employ when dealing with strategic tensions. His work has appeared in outlets such as: *Strategic Management Journal*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Organization Studies*, *Human Relations*, *California Management Review* and *Long Range Planning*. He serves as an associate editor of *Long Range Planning*, an engagement editor of *Strategic Management Review* and editorial board member of *Journal of Management Studies*, *Journal of Management* and *Organizational Research Methods*.



Jeanne M. Liedtka is the UTC Professor of Business at the University of Virginia's Darden Graduate School of Business. Beginning her career as a strategy consultant for the Boston Consulting Group, Jeanne has also served as Chief Learning Officer at United Technologies, and as the Senior Associate Dean of Darden's MBA Program. With interests at the intersection of strategy and design, Jeanne has written eight books and many articles on the subject of strategy, innovation, and design thinking, in both the private and the service sector. Her most recent book, *Experiencing Design: The Innovator's Journey* was published in July 2021. Forthcoming in 2023 is *The Experimentation Primer*.

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