EGOS Call for Papers: Identity Tensions and Strategizing

Following the growing interest in studying identity struggles in relation with strategy, we invite authors to submit their short paper to this forthcoming sub-theme next year in Copenhagen ([link to EGOS website](http://egosnet.org/jart/prj3/egos/main.jart?rel=de&reserve-mode=active&content-id=1442567999321&subtheme_id=1442568069987)). Please see below for full description.

Looking forward to hearing your thoughts on the matter!

David, Virpi and Joëlle

Sub-theme 49: Identity Tensions and Strategizing

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This sub-theme explores the impact of tensions between various aspects of identity on organizational strategizing processes and strategy work. Different understandings of organizational identity (commonly defined as the characteristics that members see as central, distinctive and enduring about the organization) are likely to influence competitive strategy in ways that may diverge from a simplistic focus on profit and efficiency. The “Good Organization” balances values and aspirations to create meaning with which individuals can identify. Strategizing activities, such as strategic planning, strategic change, strategic renewal, and reversal of strategic changes (Mantere et al., 2012) can have implications for the way people think and feel about themselves in relation to their organization, with important consequences for motivation, commitment, and trust (Huy, 2011; Pratt & Foreman, 2000; Voss et al., 2006). Strategy-related events and their associated identity struggles thus appear to be good opportunities to study how organizations balance profits with the greater good, and the tensions that arise when such ambitious goals are at play.

 The strategy-as-practice perspective connects to the processual view on identity, which examines ways in which identity is constructed as a form of ‘work’ carried out by organizational members at times in tension with each other and with other stakeholders (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2013; Schultz et al., 2012). Identity rhetoric has been linked to strategy through notions of time and agency (Sillince & Simpson, 2010), with identity work considered a strategic practice integrating past, present and future temporal orientations (Oliver, 2015). Such a practice involves tensions of various degrees of intensity and control concerning who and what is involved with identity-related strategic decisions (Hatch et al., 2015).

 Identity tensions are also apparent across levels. While there have been numerous studies of identity at a single level of analysis, multi-level identity is attracting increasing interest (Ashforth et al., 2011). Research might focus on the embeddedness of identity in the interplay of individual, social, organizational, and political/historical understandings of “the complex forms of ‘personhood’ that individuals acquire in their passage through particular [organizations and] institutions” (du Gay, 2007, p. 22; see also Laine et al., 2016). At the individual level, “Good organizations” might need to avoid loss of the ‘I’ (Samra-Fredericks, 2010), or negative impacts of identification such as loss of sense of self, paranoia, or reduced organizational creativity (Pratt & Foreman, 2000) in times of strategizing. At the organizational level they might also consider identity as a risk-reducing device when tensions arise around strategic objectives attainment (or non-attainment) (Fumasoli et al., 2015).

 We invite strategy scholars with a variety of theoretical, methodological and empirical persuasions to join us in the exploration of identity tensions and strategizing. A few questions that we would find of interest include:

* What is the role of multiple identities in strategizing processes?
* What practices related with identity and strategy are used in organizations in order to balance tensions, logics or resistances?
* In what ways are strategy and identity construction constrained or “regulated” (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) by others’ attempts to influence them both internally and externally?
* How do strategy narratives draw on and (re)construct the identities of the organization and of different internal and external organizational stakeholders over time in the face of identity tensions related to strategizing?
* How do organization leaders and others navigate individual, group and organizational identity tensions in the course of developing and implementing strategy?
* How do the use of discourse, materiality, practices and space contribute to individual, group and organizational identity construction during strategizing?
* How are fragmentations of and/or holistic (sub-)identities at interplay in the organizations’ distinctively identifiable strategic attempts to control and regulate identities?

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