A Guide to the Future of Strategy?

The History of Long Range Planning

Stephen Cummings and Urs Daellenbach

At forty years old, *Long Range Planning* is the world's longest running academic journal devoted to strategic management. It is also unique among strategy journals in its editorial policy of spanning practical and academic concerns. As such, its archive provides an excellent guide to the consistent themes, fads and trends in the field's development. This article utilizes a number of methods, including the text data-mining tool Leximancer, to examine the themes and concerns of all 2366 *LRP* articles published by the end of 2006. Based on this survey, we outline strategic management's fundamental themes, identify those that may once have been regarded as fundamental but are no longer, and point to the issues that have emerged to become imperatives in strategy over the past decade, to question the conventional view about the 'decline' of planning. Based on our analysis of the changing focus of authors' concerns over time, we identify five emerging themes that we suggest may shape strategy over the next ten years.

> *At twenty years of age, the will reigns; at thirty, the wit; and at forty, the judgment.*
>
> Benjamin Franklin

Introduction

The early years of strategic management saw authors like Chandler, Ansoff and Porter - as well as iconic frameworks such as the BCG matrix, the diversification matrix, and the Five Forces - impose themselves upon our consciousness and spread into other business disciplines. Strategic management was focused and exuberant: a creature of the will.

More recently, we have witnessed an increase in what we might call 'the wit' applied to figuring out what strategy really is and where it comes from. We have seen more attention paid to the creation of strategy and the practices that shape it: different viewpoints have been explored, and multiple schools of thought defined.[1] The fields of strategy and organization studies have spilled over into one another, and the focus on the noun *strategy* has shifted toward an interest in the verb *strategizing*.[2] Many other fields in management now use strategy as a prefix (e.g., strategic

marketing, strategic HR) and people at all organizational levels are encouraged to think and act strategically. Esoteric debates about the 'true' nature of strategy — often impenetrable to most practitioners - have emerged.[3] And this 'wit' has gradually obscured the focus prevalent at the outset - there are now so many varied views of strategy it has become hard to be sure of what we mean when we use the term.

Some have suggested that this denotes a *'crisis'*, and that *'strategic management should have grown up'* years ago.[4] We do not think so - rather, to extend Peter McKiernan's metaphor from his article that looked forward to Long Range Planning's 30th anniversary, where he characterized the field as *'scrambling from adolescence to adulthood'* - we would argue that (as might be typical for one in their thirties) strategic management has exercised its faculties to fully explore its possibilities.[5]

But there may come a point where too much wit becomes self-indulgent: at forty it may be time for judgment - time to settle and move forward. And history may be a good guide to lead strategic management into the future. Associating it with the past, we often overlook how history is also about how we understand ourselves in the present, and how we see our aspirations (and our limitations) for the future. Historical awareness impacts on our future in three ways. First, we must note the tenet that those who forget history are destined to repeat it. Can a greater awareness of those pathways already trodden in strategic management help reduce the possibility of us unconsciously re-inventing the wheel or inadvertently repeating past mistakes, and increase the chances of us recognizing what is essential?

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Second, we should recognize that what we define as historically relevant can promote the actions of some and marginalize those of others, even though there may be much to learn from both. For example, until recently, New Zealand high school history books repeated the Victorian assumption that the native Maori showed *'little strategic awareness'* compared to their British opponents in the New Zealand Wars.[6] But this judgment has been recently revised toward a history that views the Maori as having held a *different*, more fluid, inclusive and emergent view of the strategy process. In fact, this view can be seen as being quite similar to new schools of thought in strategic management, while it is the style of strategy resembling the British Colonial Army's more rigid, conventional view that is now being moved towards the margins. Can examining and questioning how perspectives of strategy have ebbed and flowed increase our chances of avoiding unfairly dismissing one view in favour of some 'new vogue'?

Third, we may also consider how deconstructing traditional histories — by showing them to be based on conventions and habits rather than fundamental truths — can be liberating. Can it inspire the recreation of what is regarded as important in the present and encourage us to 'think differently' for the future?[7] Can rethinking and recasting history free us to reconfigure what we have held as important to strategic management in the past, so as to move in more appropriate directions for the future?

We believe the answers to these questions is 'yes': the fact that others have come to the same conclusion has prompted a number of retrospective studies of strategy over the last few years. However, our article differs in key respects.

Unlike the qualitative or subjective-interpretive work of Bowman et al., Herrmann, and Hoskisson et al., our work is driven by quantitative data. Unlike the bibliometric approach of Ramos-Rodriguez and Ruiz-Navarro or Azar and Brock which surveyed citations (although, as they acknowledge, reasons for citing are uncapturable, and may not align with original authors' concerns), we focus on actual articles in the field. And, unlike Phelan et al. and Furrer et al., who

took as their object work published over the past 25 years in the most academically-oriented journals (which can be somewhat removed from the actual practice of strategy), our source is the one journal unique in its longevity and in its attempt to straddle and combine the realms of strategy research and the world of business.[8] Our article surveys the contents of Long Range Planning (LRP), forty years of writing - and over 2300 articles - on what matters in strategy research and practice.

LRP is, and by some distance, the longest running academic journal devoted to strategic management. It was first published when oil was $3 a barrel and England held the World Cup. Whereas other journals emerged after the development of strategy as a professional part of most organizations, LRP was set up when strategic management was only emerging as a business discipline. LRP is also unique in never having held or promoted a particular view or method. Covering work from up-and-coming practitioners to the most established academics, and from surveys and data analysis to single case studies, LRP may be strategy's broadest church: as such, it provides an invaluable historical barometer of strategic management and a uniquely rich resource to help us achieve the historical aims outlined above.

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This article analyses the themes, topics and issues discussed in the 2,366 articles published in LRP from 1968 to the end of 2006. We begin by examining which themes have been constant across this period, which appear to be fads, and which have experienced a sustained rise, and relate these findings to LRP's most cited articles. We then trace the dramatic decline of some themes and the perspectives that have risen to take their place, and analyse how this dynamic has unfolded. We observe the 'decline of the future' as a guide to strategy and its replacement by a research focus on what happens prior to the point of decision, and a corresponding emphasis on cases replacing models and tools as aids to the pursuit of knowledge. We conclude by tabling five emerging trends for the future: strategic management becoming more comfortable with an eclectic approach, but with an eclecticism built on a smaller number of fundamental elements; strategists becoming more politically astute in their practice; being more aesthetically aware; recognising that strategy is influenced equally by conceptions of the past and of the future; and moving away from dismissing strategic management's archive as limited, simplistic and outmoded (see Table 4 at the end of the article).

Our approach

With the LRP archive as a rich resource for examining the trajectory of our field, how might we best extract meaningful data from its nearly 15 million words? Of the four routes to tracking themes in articles - surveying keywords, focusing on whole articles, analysing titles or examining abstracts - the first was not an option in the LRP case. We may take some comfort in this lack, however: others (such as Furrer et al.) who have attempted to conduct similar exercises with keywords have found the numbers and limited frequencies of the same words made any analysis unreliable. At the other end of the scale, the sheer enormity of the task of trying to extracting themes from the diversity of words appearing in nearly two and a half thousand articles encouraged us to look for more efficient means.

We therefore began our research by creating a database of titles and manually coding those key words that appeared from their frequency to be important or significant. The laboriousness of such manual coding was offset by the fact that titles were easy to scan and reflected the authors' prioritisation of key aspects, and the process was also useful in mitigating the rote counting of terms such as *corporation* when used in senses such as 'The Ford Corporation'.

To check the reliability of this method, we took a sample of 300 articles and contrasted the key words taken from their titles with what independent assessors extracted as key themes from their corresponding abstracts: we found key words from titles almost always matched key themes observed in abstracts, thus making them a highly reliable abstraction. However, the abstracts also pointed to additional themes not identified in the titles, suggesting that we should also survey abstracts. The sheer number and length of this task made it too onerous to perform manually, so we employed the software tool Leximancer, which extracts, counts and relates common concepts from multiple texts. The program provided the additional benefit of generating concept maps, graphical representations of relationships between concepts and how they changed over time, an aspect that we were able to draw on to trace the shift away from talking in terms of *planning* and toward the preponderance of *strategy/strategic* as a key word. While this ground-shift has been mooted and observed, and its nature conjectured upon, for the first time we provide quantitative and graphical evidence to show how it took place, allowing us to discuss how and why this represented a significant change in the nature of our field.

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Despite our efforts in developing this methodology, however, no approach can capture absolute truths about the nature of strategy simply from analysing published articles. Interpretation is required, and thresholds had to be chosen to decide which themes should appear in our figures. However, by looking at what we gleaned from article titles, contrasting this with the data from our analysis of abstracts, and thinking through the similarities and differences, we believe we can offer a useful foundation and stimulus for further debate about the future of strategy.

Constant themes

In order to understand the nature of things, we must begin by asking, not whether a thing is good or bad, […] but of what kind it is? And how much is there of it?   James Clerk Maxwell

Since the early 1990s, there has been much debate about 'what strategy really is', and whether one view of what it is is better than another.[9] Is strategy just plans made by senior executives; or can even the smallest micro-activity be strategic - and if so how do we know which are strategic and which are not? If people are our greatest resource, is all human resource management strategic? Is strategic management really a form of change management, or is all change management strategic management? There appears a great deal of uncertainty — or at least wide-ranging variance of opinion — as to what makes a decision strategic. But can we not say that those key words that have always existed over forty years of LRP have demonstrated sufficient longevity to indicate their fundamental relevance to strategic management? And that they can give some guidance in these debates?

Dividing LRP's 40 year history into ten 4-year periods, we found six key words constantly present in significant numbers in article titles (see Figure 1).[10] By far the most numerous constant is *corporate,* indicating the importance of strategy (or strategic decisions) that relate to shaping the whole organization or business. Related to this is the notion of strategy being about issues of *organization*, a word often used as a synonym for corporate. A third constant theme appears to be indicated by the continued presence of words pertaining to activity beyond the firm: *merger, acquisition, joint venture* and *divestment.*

Perhaps surprisingly for those who now tout the importance of *creativity* and *innovation* in today's particular business environment,[11] these words have always been present in significant numbers in LRP titles, we suggest they indicate an ongoing central concern in strategic
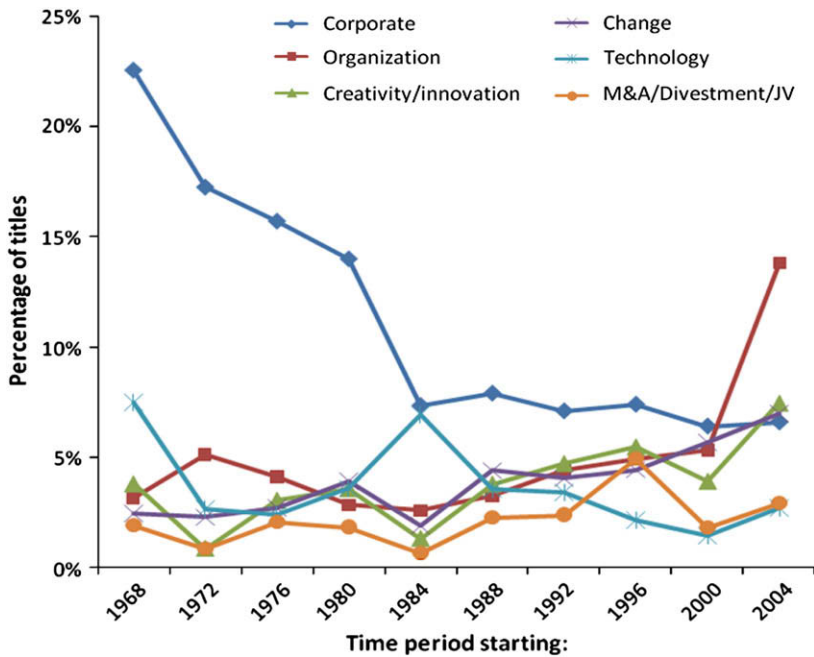
Figure 1. Constant key words in LRP titles

management. The consistent reference to *technology* in LRP over the last four decades illustrates the significance of the wider environment and its impact. And, finally, *change,* too, has been ever-present, and is becoming more frequent in recent volumes. Its frequency would rise more starkly were we to group it with the number of times synonyms such as *development* or *restructuring* were used to denote change.

[the words] creativity *and* innovation *have always been present in significant numbers in LRP titles, and* change, *too, has been ever-present*

While all these terms exceeded our cut-offs throughout our ten 4-year periods, others met some but not all of our thresholds. *Systems* shows strongly in titles in earlier periods, but disappears in the last four years: in contrast, *environment* is discounted - perhaps harshly - because it does not feature in the first four year's volumes, although the consistency of *technology* may be indicative of the importance of the wider business environment. *Analysis* scrapes into most of our four year segments, but for some reason disappears in the early and mid-1990s (we shall return to this in later sections).

Turning our attention to abstracts, and reviewing key words found there, perhaps offers a less direct but more rounded view of which elements have been of constant concern to strategists. Figure 2 shows the key words that occur most often and most consistently in LRP abstracts, and while the frequencies are much higher than for titles (as one would expect) most of the themes we have interpreted from the title data continue to ring true: especially the prominence of *organization* and the importance of the *corporate*. *Change* remains, appearing significantly more often than in titles, indicating that it is more often an underlying constant in strategy, rather than a 'headline' issue. *Creativity* and *innovation* also stay in the picture, but *mergers* and *acquisitions* drop out of sight (consistently below our 5% threshold for abstracts) - again, a 'headline' issue for titles,
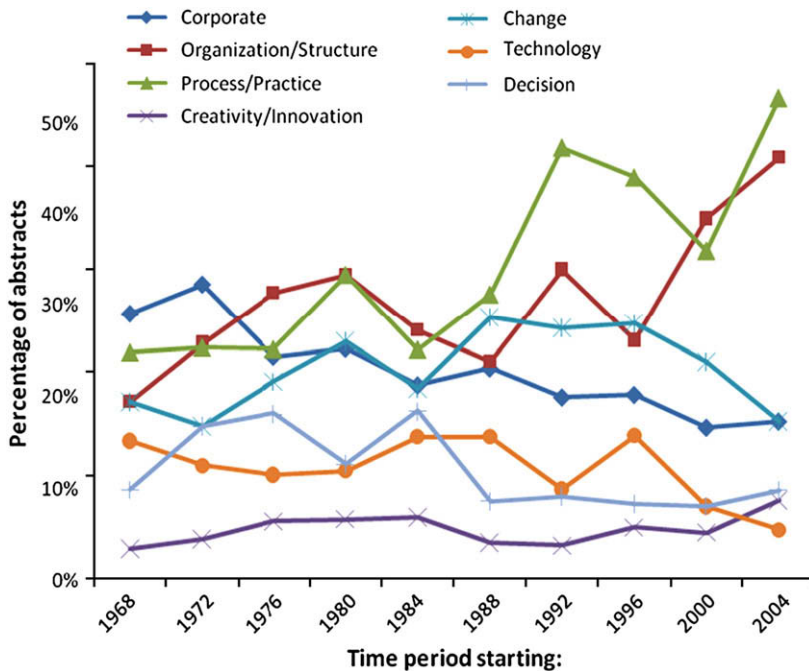
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Figure 2. Constant key words in LRP abstracts

perhaps, but not so significantly consistent overall. *Technology* is still prominent, but seems to be falling away, while *decision* shows up as a steady but underlying issue of importance.

However, the most significant development is the rise of *process*, which, when counted in with *practice* (a term often used in the past decade to denote many of the same themes),[12] is the most prominent key word in LRP abstracts. This may serve to vindicate those who have advocated greater recognition of practice and process in strategy,[13] or it may be that, despite the recent academic interest in these issues, the field as more broadly defined has always recognized their importance. In any event, the greater prominence of both *decision* and *process* in abstracts than titles indicates they are constantly part of strategic considerations, even if they lack the same 'title' appeal as other key words.

Combining our key word data from LRP titles and abstracts enables us to interpret strategic management's most constant (and so perhaps its fundamental) themes, as *processes* and *practices* relating to the *corporate* whole, the *organizing* of resources and how the corporation responds to or manages *change*. Thinking more broadly, one could add to this set responses to or *decisions* about *technology* and other related *environmental* issues, and a recognition of the importance of *creative* or *innovative* developments. Over 40 years, these appear to be strategic management's essential elements, and so actions, thinking or decisions related to one or some combination of these issues may be confidently defined as 'strategic'.

Fads and 'Blips'

Providing an interesting contrast to the constant key words described above are those that have come and gone. As with any field, the lights of particular terms or approaches have burned brightly for a time and then faded from view: in hindsight, we can view them as fads. Surprisingly (but perhaps also comfortingly) significant fads seem to have been few and far between in the pages of LRP. Looking first at titles, if we only include those particular strategic management approaches that appear more than eight times, and register over one percent of total titles in any time period, there are only five significant 'spikes', as illustrated in Figure 3. *Delphi* was perhaps strategic management's first significant fad, and *portfolio analysis/planning* enjoyed a brief time in the sun. *Vision/mission* showed strongly in the 1990s, but seldom appear in titles today,
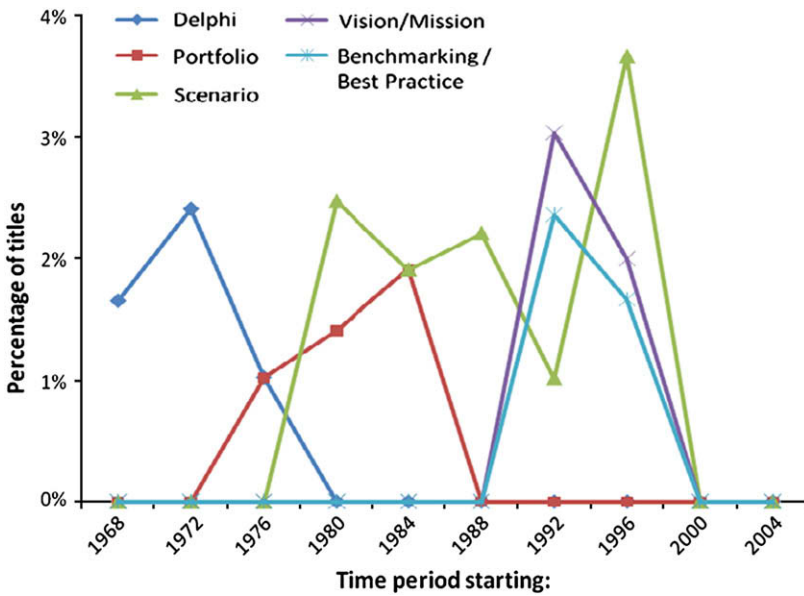
Figure 3. 'Faddish' key words in LRP titles

and *benchmarking (or best practice)* also seem to have become passé, perhaps because their excessive use too often led to strategic conformity and declining performance.[14] Finally, *scenario planning* exhibits a bit more staying-power, perhaps because it is more a thinking tool rather than a prescriptive method. Methods such as *TQM/Quality circles, Business Process Reengineering, the Value Chain, Balanced Scorecards, Cognitive Mapping* and *Management-By-Objectives* did not even achieve our thresholds.

Looking at abstracts for evidence of 'fads', there are some differences worth noting (see Figure 4). *Scenario thinking* or *planning* has been up and down, but it has not gone away, and curiously its rises
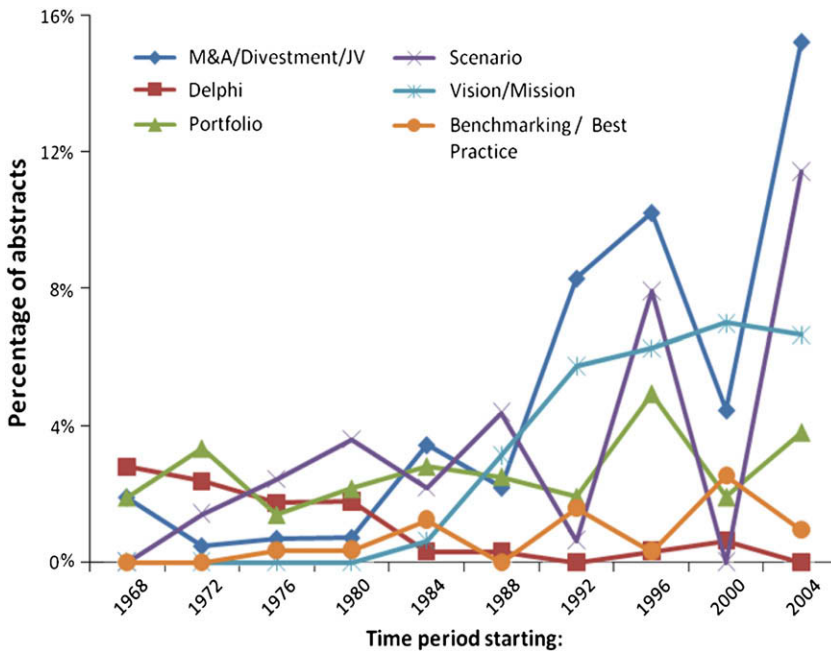

Figure 4. 'Faddish' key words in LRP abstracts

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and falls appear to be in sync with those of *portfolio analysis* - but with a more extreme pattern - and also to alternate with *benchmarking/best practice*, perhaps indicating an oscillation between following leaders and thinking through what might be good practice for each particular organization. *Vision/mission*, while declining as a headline issue, shows up in abstracts as a steadier presence within the strategic management fabric. By contrast, the failure of *Delphi* and *best practice* to maintain a strong presence adds weight to the idea that while certain themes are constant in strategy, and some thinking frameworks have endured, the same cannot be said of specific tools and techniques. Although *M&A* (and associated terms) had dropped out of our list of constants when analysing abstracts, we placed it into this graph to see if its pattern could be categorized as 'faddish': however the exercise led us to identify it rather as a significant issue 'on the rise'.

Issues on the rise

So far we have shown some themes to be constant in strategic management and others to have been somewhat faddish. What about those issues that may have appeared to be fads when first coming to prominence, but which have continued to rise? Many commentators have suggested a number of themes that should be receiving greater attention, including *knowledge* (and *learning*), *networks* (and *relationships*), *culture* and *corporate social responsibility* (together with *business ethics*). The first three may be linked to the rise of the resource-based view of the firm, the recognition of the importance of strategic pathways as emerging from practices as much as plans, the search for sources of competitive advantage that cannot be readily replicated, increasing globalisation and, correspondingly, with new forms of organization[15]; the last to the growing awareness of (and greater concern about) the influence of organizations on the wider social and ecological environments.[16]

Surveying key words in LRP titles over the past forty years confirms this judgment about the rise of *knowledge/learning* and *networks/relationships*. Figure 5 shows starkly how their emergence as key new themes has outstripped all others — remarkably, *knowledge* (or *learning*) is the subject of around ten percent of all articles over the last eight years (even without taking into account related terms like *intellectual capital*). Peter McKiernan's already cited article *Strategy Past, Strategy Futures* predicted *knowledge, networks* and *ethics* as three arenas that would receive a great deal more emphasis in strategic management in coming years: and two out of three isn't bad! His fourth prediction was that *culture*, too, would become more prominent, and we would have expected this too,
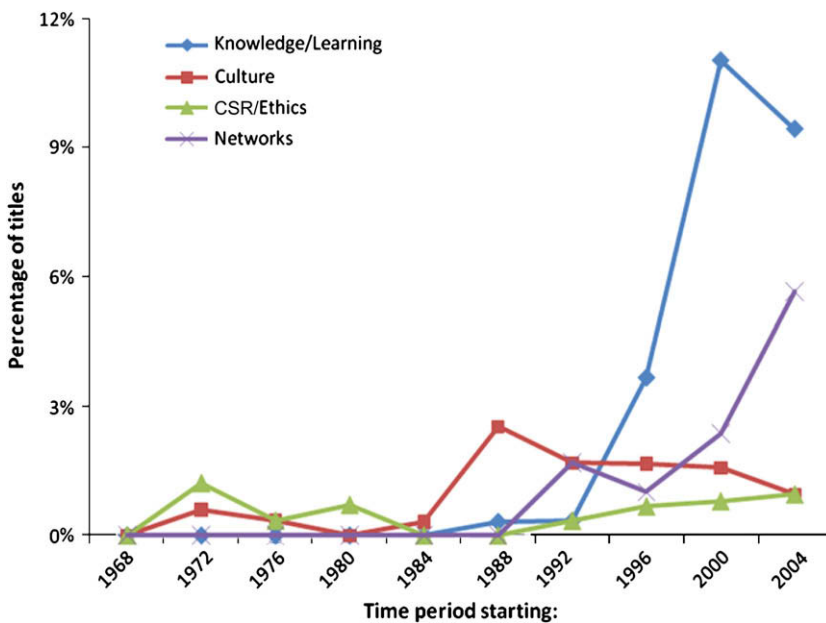

Figure 5. Key words 'on the rise' in LRP titles

given trends toward a more organizational orientation in strategic management: however, Figure 5 does not seem to bear this forecast out. And while it might have been thought that *CSR/business ethics* would be a new and active area of concern in strategy, these themes have not (yet?) caught the imagination to the extent that might have been expected - in fact, they are only just now beginning to match the degree of interest they attracted in the 1970s.

Reviewing abstracts, however, is kinder to Peter's prediction: here, our data show that, while it may not be a headline issue, *culture* has come to be very much a key background element in thinking about strategy (see Figure 6). The paths of *ethics* (noting it was difficult to capture the many variants of *CSR*), *networks/relationships* and *knowledge/learning,* are similar for both titles and abstracts; but our inclusion here of *M&A* and related key words show it following the pattern of being a fourth significant issue on the rise in the practice of and thinking about strategic management, alongside *knowledge, culture* and *networks*.

Expanding knowledge

The confirmation of the rise of *knowledge* as a key area of concern for strategists is reinforced when one analyses citation data. Table 1 ranks the 20 most frequently cited articles published in LRP: to try and avoid any one citation index's bias, the table's final order combines the citations counts for LRP articles from both Google Scholar and Scopus.[17] The most remarkable thing about this analysis is that eight of the top ten cited articles are about *knowledge*, although the rising popularity of *networks* is represented by three other articles on the list.

There are a number of other items of interest in the list. First, it demonstrates how getting in on a topic while it is still 'on the rise' aids being widely cited. The range of the highly-cited knowledge articles in this list stem from the period 1997—2001, and both Figures 5 and 6 show how these articles catch the knowledge 'swell'. In contrast, the 'constant' themes identified in Figure 1 are linked to only five of the twenty on the list, while only one other corresponds to any of the areas identified as 'fads'. Several other themes that have been argued by some to be 'on the rise' appear, with *CSR* and *core competence* each highlighted by one article. The message might be that the key to garnering citations is to write on a theme that is not the norm, nor a fad, but is on the rise - if one can have the prescience to identify one! Moreover, one might observe the power of a good special issue: seven
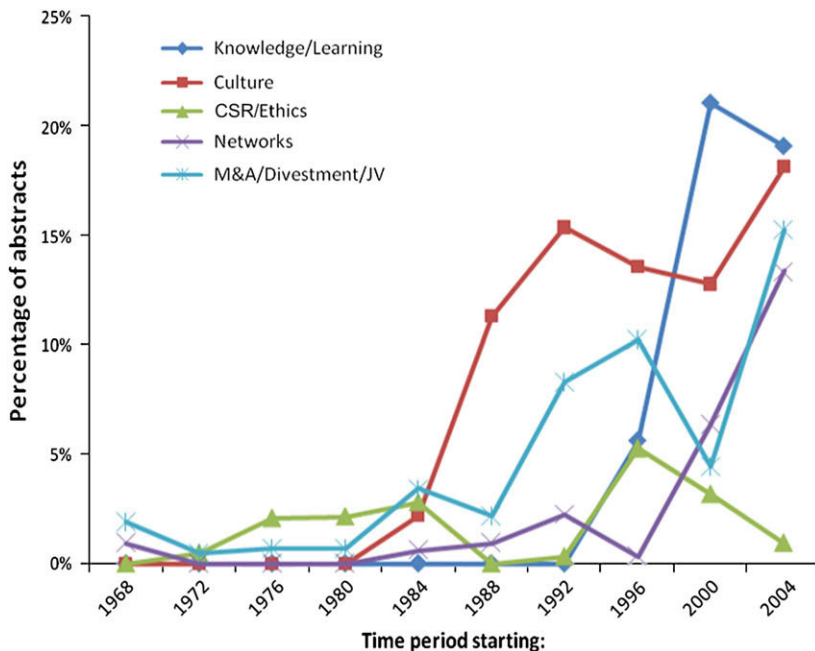

Figure 6. Key words 'on the rise' in LRP abstracts

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Table 1. Most frequently cited *Long Range Planning* articles

Rank	Article Title	Author(s)	Publ. Year Vol./Issue	Total Google Scholar Citations	Per year	Total Scopus Citations	Per year
1	SECI, Ba and Leadership: A Unified Model of Dynamic Knowledge Creation	Nonaka, Toyama and Konno	2000 33/1	786	112.3	198	28.3
2	A concept of corporate planning	Ackoff	1970 3/1	429	11.6	—*	—
3	The new marketing - Developing long-term interactive relationships	Gummesson	1987 20/4	415	20.8	130	6.5
4	Developing intellectual capital at Skandia	Edvinsson	1997 30/3	324	32.4	82	8.2
5	Strategies for Managing Knowledge Assets: The Role of Firm Structure and Industrial Context	Teece	2000 33/1	306	43.7	86	12.3
6	Measuring your company's intellectual performance	Roos and Roos	1997 30/3	300	30.0	65	6.5
7	Understanding knowledge management	Demarest	1997 30/3	295	29.5	88	8.8
8	Knowledge management: A strategic agenda	Quintas, Lefrere and Jones	1997 30/3	269	26.9	70	7.0
9	The knowledge-based view of the firm: Implications for management practice	Grant	1997 30/3	246	24.6	74	7.4
10	Integrating intellectual capital and knowledge management	Wiig	1997 30/3	214	21.4	45	4.5
11	Electronic data interchange: How much competitive advantage?	Benjamin, de Long and Scott Morton	1990 23/1	172	10.1	69	4.1
12	Managing strategic change- strategy, culture and action	Johnson	1992 25/1	170	11.3	47	3.1
13	Core Competence: What Does it Mean in Practice?	Javidan	1998 31/1	161	17.9	30	3.3
14	Managing Corporate Image and Corporate Reputation	Gray and Balmer	1998 31/5	139	15.4	35	3.9
15	Strategic alliances: Choose your partners	Brouthers, Brouthers and Wilkinson	1995 28/3	124	10.3	—*	—*
16	How Corporate Social Responsibility Pays Off	Burke and Logsdon	1996 29/4	122	11.1	54	4.9
17	Strategy as practice	Whittington	1996 29/5	120	10.9	42	3.8
18	Making the most of your company's knowledge: A strategic framework	von Krogh, Nonaka and Aben	2001 34/4	119	19.8	44	7.3
19	From knowledge to action: The impact of benchmarking on organizational performance	Drew	1997 30/3	100	10.2	42	4.2
20	Success factors of strategic alliances in small and medium-sized enterprises - An empirical survey	Hoffmann and Schlosser	2001 34/3	90	15.0	36	6.0

*Scopus did not contain citation data for these two articles.

of the knowledge-related articles are from the same special issue in 1997 and two others are from a single issue in 2000.[18]

Formal planning: A story of decline and fall?

Whatever debates these analyses might encourage as to what strategy *is* or *should be* about, the pages of LRP seem (on the surface at least) to confirm one thing it seems *not* about any more. Strategy used to be about planning: now it is not — or so it would appear. Figure 7 displays the decline and apparent 'extinction' of this word from the journal's pages. Discounting the article that causes the 2004 'blip'(which is actually entitled *Beyond Planning*), no LRP article between 2000 and 2006 included the word 'planning' in its title. It may be that the pendulum has already begun to swing back toward a fruitful middle ground which will see the rehabilitation of planning as a term and a practice.[19]

Many have commented on the (apparent) 'Rise and Fall of Planning'. But the reasons given for its fall have often been speculative or overly simplistic, and have emphasized a revolutionary change — our analysis would suggest instead a more evolutionary transition.[20] We wanted to explore, in greater detail and with the help of some quantitative data, other potential reasons behind the fall.

We wondered if the decline might be down to a drop in the numbers of practitioner contributions, reasoning that although practitioners were still interested in planning, it could be they were no longer contributing this perspective. Placing the decline of the word planning against the percentage of published articles with one or more non-academic contributing authors seemed to add weight to this hypothesis.

But this, too, may be overly simplistic, especially considering recent studies showing how the strategic interests and designations of organizations and practitioners have changed in recent decades. For example, Rob Grant's study of major oil companies has reported the dramatic decline in the numbers employed in corporate planning departments and the decentralization throughout organizations of planning/strategy practice since 1990, while Ocasio and Joseph's analysis of changes in GE's strategic planning approach similarly describes changes in the labelling of things from 'long-range planning' to 'strategic planning' to 'operating system'.[21] Hence, to say that planning has dropped off the agenda because practitioners are no longer contributing to the debate may be to overlook how practice itself has changed, suggesting we should delve deeper.
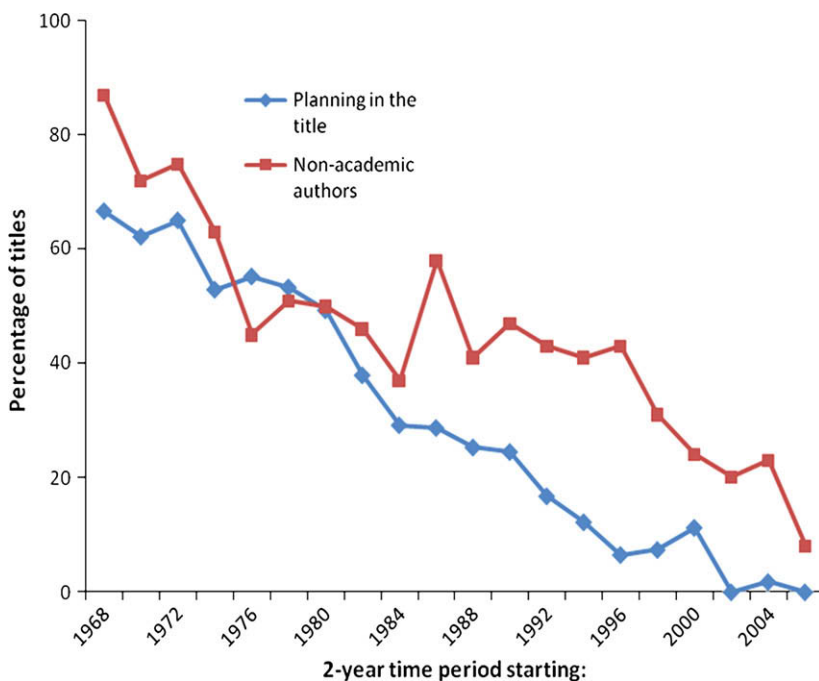

Figure 7. The fall of *planning* in LRP titles against practitioner contributions

the symmetry with which planning *hands over primacy to* strategy *indicates a substantial shift in theory and practice … How and why did this transition take place?*

Grant's and Ocasio and Joseph's work points to an evolution rather than a revolution in practice away from planning towards things that we would more likely associate with strategy: our study concurs. The shape of the decline of the use of the word *planning* in titles - as illustrated in Figure 7 is confirmed when one surveys its appearance in abstracts (see Figure 8). But what is also interesting is the symmetry with which the word *planning* hands over primacy to the word *strategy* in LRP abstracts, which is underlined when examining their comparative frequency rankings in abstracts over forty years (see Table 2). This symmetry reflects a smooth transition from using one word to the other as the primary term to denote our subject, a transfer of emphasis that seems to indicate a substantial shift from *planning* to *strategy* both in theory and practice that, we would moot, reflects the evolution of our field generally. But how and why did this transition take place?

To investigate further, we used Leximancer to produce *concept maps* - graphical representations which plot the main concepts based on their frequency, their centrality, and how often various concepts occur close to one another in the abstracts. In the figures that follow, theme circles summarize related concepts, with the more prominent concepts appearing in smaller type within the circles. The *darker* a circle, the more frequently that concept occurs overall, the *closeness* of concepts refers to how often they appear in adjacent sentences, and the *centrality* of a theme/concept within the map indicates how often it co-occurs with other identified concepts (see the Appendix for further description of Leximancer and its application). These maps appear to reinforce the validity of the key themes drawn from our title and abstract analysis, but their graphical presentation increases our ability to analyse the relationships between them. As Leximancer can analyse large data sets, we investigated abstracts, initially re-organizing our data sets — roughly — into decades to enable us to observe how relationships between concepts changed over time. We paid particular attention to the concepts of *strategy* and *planning*, aiming to learn more about what seems to be our field's defining transition.
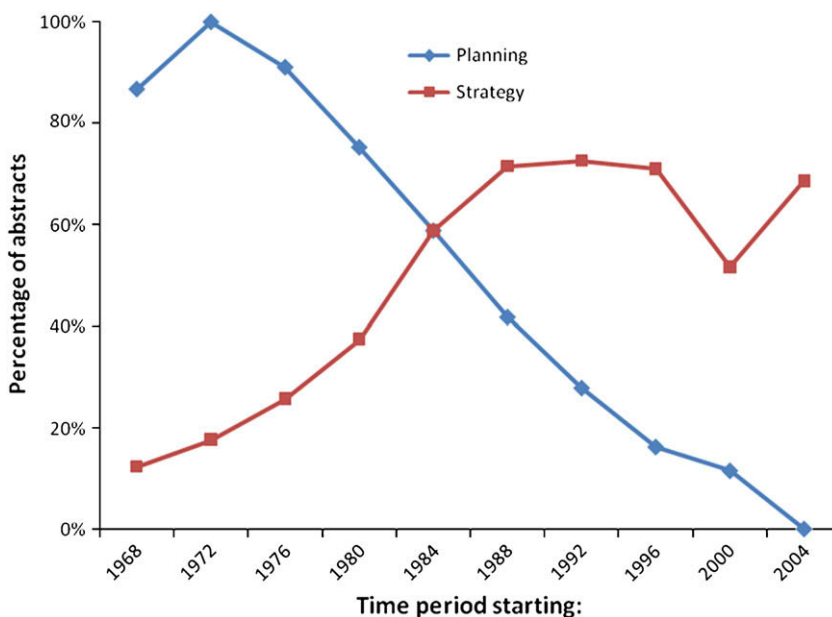

Figure 8. The decline of *planning* and rise of *strategy* in LRP abstracts

Table 2. The rankings of *planning* and *strategy* as key words in LRP abstracts

Years	1968-	1971-	1975-	1979-	1983-	1987-	1991-	1995-	1999-	2003-
Planning rank	1	1	1	1	1	2	4	6	15	40
Strategy rank	—	11	5	2	2	1	1	1	1	1

Figure 9 represents the period from 1968–1979 (the first 12 years were collated together as relatively fewer articles were published in LRP's first volumes). It shows *planning* to be the central concept, intersecting the circles of all the other main concepts. In this period, planning is generally associated with models, analysis, methods, objectives, the long term, policy and decisions. *Forecasting* also figures prominently (something that will not be the case in future decades): while standing out as a main concept in its own right, it is closely linked to planning and development. *Strategy/ strategic* intersects and shares sub-concepts like systems, information, the environment and change with notions of the *corporate* and *development*.

The picture changes in the 1980s (see Figure 10). Our field becomes far more diverse, and *planning* no longer relates to other key concepts to anywhere near the same extent. *Planning* and *strategic* (including *strategy* under the rubric of *strategic*) are now so closely related as to be one and the same, something that is partly related to the widespread use of the term *strategic planning*. *Corporate* has also been included under the rubric of *planning/strategic*, and *process* also appears in this set. *Research* has become more important, and the impact of *technology* is also on the rise. *Information* (largely through the ascendency of *Information Systems*) has risen to a prominent position, interacting with a large number of other key themes, and related (in this analysis at least) to a rise in interest in *control*. We also witness the growth of *industry analysis,* which will be a key leader of change in the field. The field now appears to regard a wider range of facets as being within its scope.
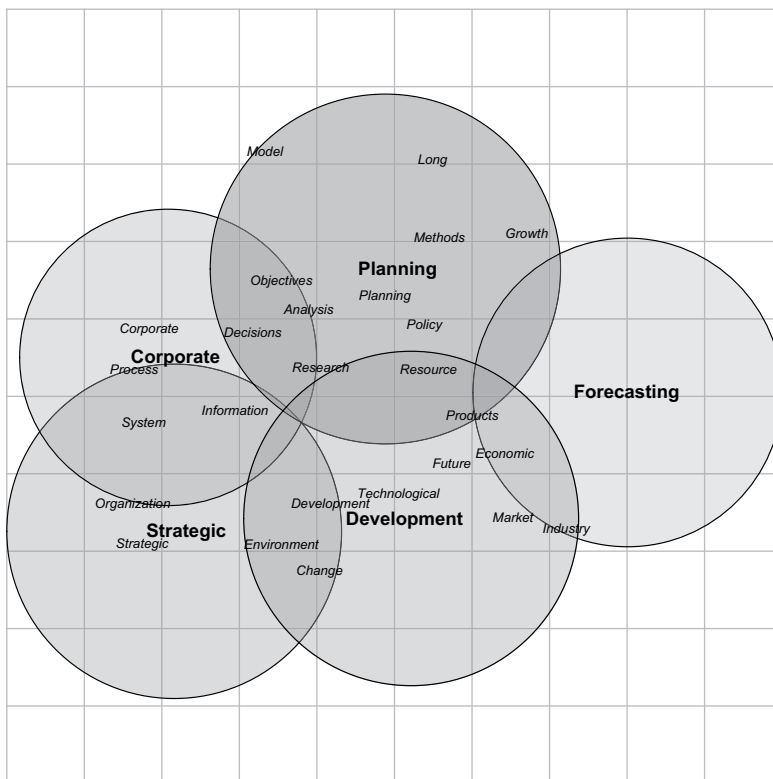

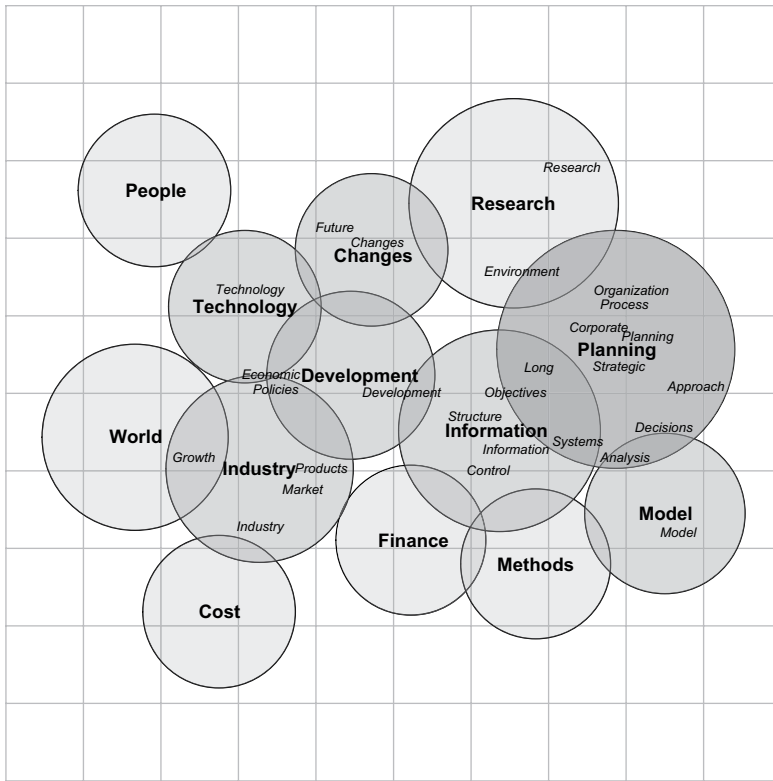**Figure 9. Key words in LRP abstracts in the 1970s (1967–1979)**

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Figure 10. Key words in LRP abstracts in the 1980s (1980—1989)

Figure 11. Key words in LRP abstracts in the 1990s (1990—1999)

Figure 12. Key words in LRP abstracts in the 2000s (2000—2007)

By the 1990s, *strategic* has taken over from *planning* and the diagram can be seen as being formed, loosely, in two 'halves' (see Figure 11). On the right hand side are what we might call concepts internal to the firm: organization, performance and manufacturing; on the left, external elements: *industries* and *competition* (note the rise in importance of *competition,* including *competitive advantage*). In between them we see the aspects that join the two halves: *development* and *change.* Significantly, *strategic* is moving left toward the centre; *planning* is moving right to the periphery. *Information* and *technology* have faded from view: are they of lesser interest, or on their way to becoming fields in their own right?

In the 'noughties' (the 00s — Figure 12) *strategic* has come to the centre, joining internal and external aspects. *Industry analysis* and *competitive advantage* have gone, but they have served a purpose in changing the point of view away from the internal effectiveness and efficiency of planning toward analysing and developing differences within industries and markets relative to the competition. *Strategy* has come to encompass both of these realms, and thus *planning* seems surplus to requirements. In place of the 'Porterian' emphasis on *industry* and *competition* we now see a broader view of the market and the new sources of advantage that have emerged in recent times: *knowledge* and *relationships.* *Process* is important in its own right, connecting notions of *knowledge*, *learning*, *organization* and *corporate,* and we see the rise of *case* and *analysis* where earlier diagrams highlighted *models* and *forecasting.*

While these diagrams provide insights into the general development of interests in the field, they perhaps look at swathes that are too broad to show the movement away from *planning* in sufficient detail. Consequently (while still focusing our analysis on the appearances of these concepts in LRP abstracts) we began to examine the point of transition more closely by looking at four- rather than ten-year periods. We also re-included the terms *management* and *manager,* which we had excluded from the decade graphs above (thinking them to be more agents than themes), to examine how they have moved in relation to *planning* and *strategy.*

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Figure 13 (1983–1986) shows more clearly the split in associations between internally-focused words on the right and external ones on the left. *Managers* and *management* appear at the top of the planning sphere, linked to the sort of things they might be involved with in this context: *data, work, study, research, process* and *decisions.*

In the later 1980s (Figure 14) the terms *strategic* and *planning* split: *strategy* is the more central, spanning from those internal aspects under the rubric of *planning* across to being associated with the analysis of market conditions, *technological change, industry, products* and *positioning* toward assessments of *competitive advantage.* By the early 1990s (Figure 15) *planning* has become a sub-concept of *strategic/strategy*, closer to *process, organization* and 'what managers do' than to external factors, but through this association with *strategy*, more likely to involve some forms of *analysis.*

By the mid-1990s (Figure 16), the scales have tipped. *Planning*'s diminishing importance is signalled by its move further from the centre of events. *Managers* have moved towards the wider environment side of the graph: while still associated with *strategic,* they are increasingly interacting with the broader environment (other *companies, firms, industries, relationships*). And *strategy* is moving ever more towards taking up an all-encompassing central role, bridging internal effectiveness and consistency with environmental or competitive opportunities through analysis and an awareness of *development* and *change* (as noted in Figure 11).

> Grant's survey, cited earlier, concludes that:
> *strategic planning processes have changed substantially over the past two decades in response to the challenges of strategy formulation in turbulent and unpredictable environments. Strategic planning processes have become more decentralized, less staff driven, and more informal… permitting … greater adaptability and responsiveness to external change.* (p. 515)

Our study concurs with Grant and others: there has been a change in orientation away from transferring internal best practice and a centralized, controlled approach. However, in our view, the change in our field may not have been caused by more turbulent environments - indeed, it may be that environments
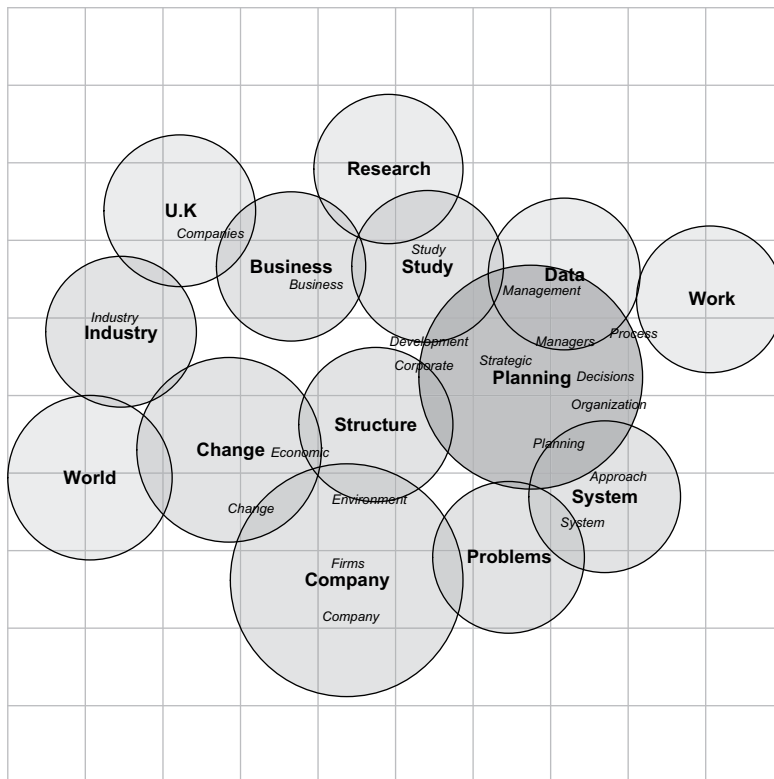

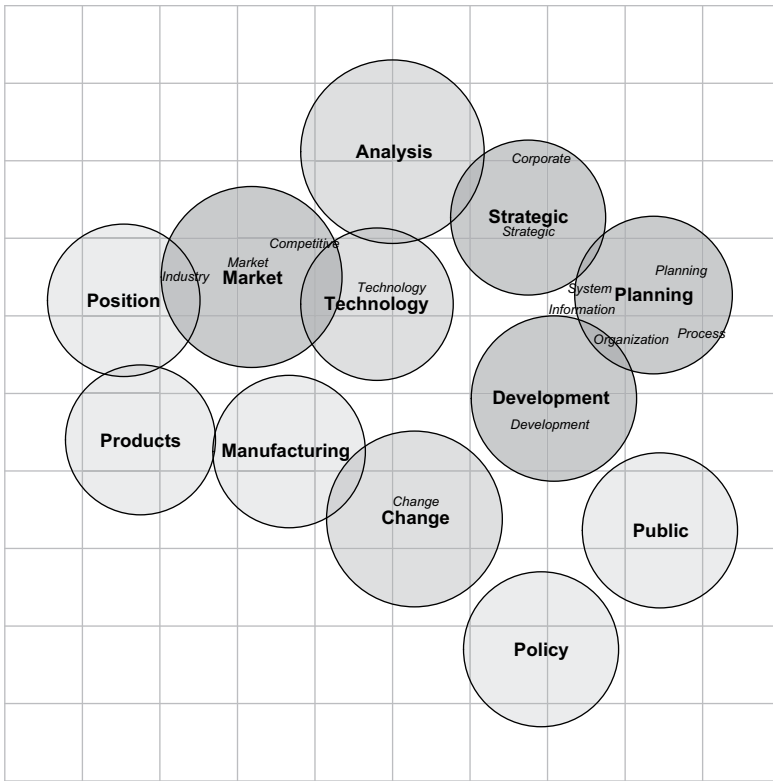Figure 13. Key words in LRP abstracts 1983–1986
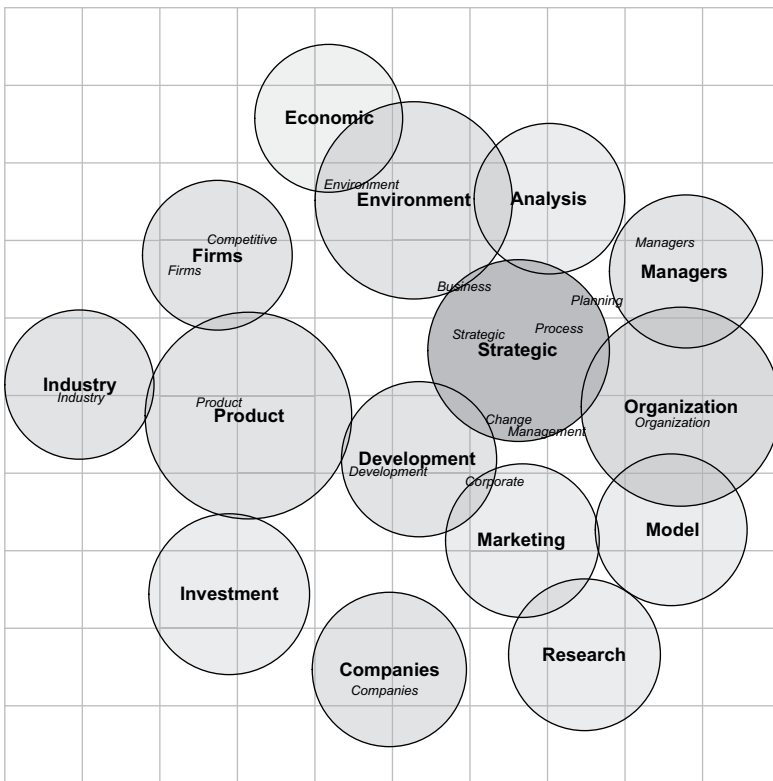
Figure 14. Key words in LRP abstracts 1987–1990

Figure 15. Key words in LRP abstracts 1991–1994
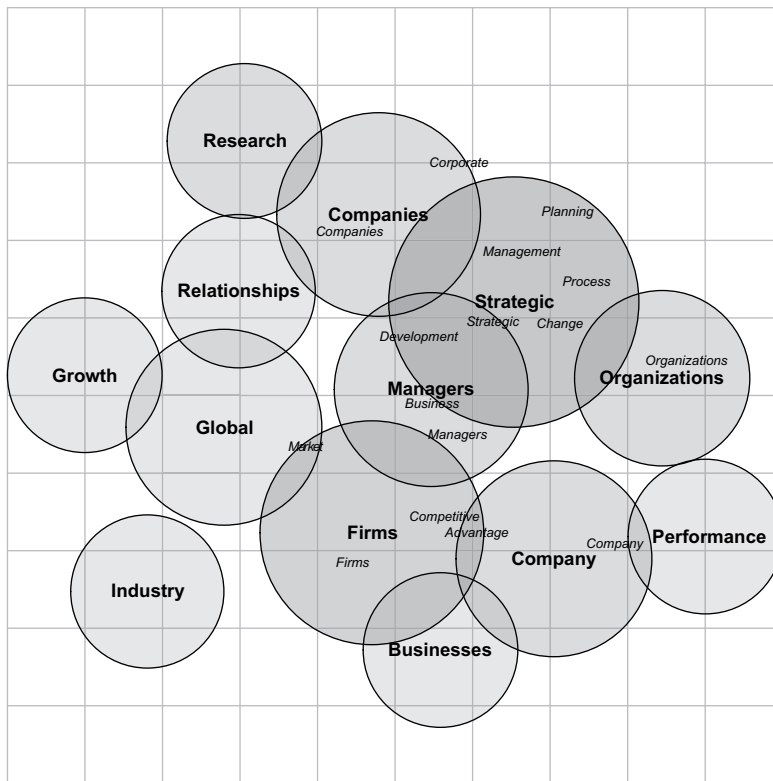
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Figure 16. Key words in LRP abstracts 1995—1998

have always been seen as turbulent. Our Leximancer analysis suggests instead that the change from planning to strategy is related to a new, more complex, way of seeing organizational terrain. The frameworks developed in the 1970s and 1980s enabled us to define a new meso-environment, beyond the firm but within broad macro-environmental concerns like technological change and political systems; a terrain that enabled industry structure, inter-firm activity and relative competitive advantage to be defined, or at least debated, and connected to concerns internal to the firm, like planning. This changed orientation has created a bridge that enabled looking critically at different environments while still mindful of matters internal to the firm, moving planning from being the point of our field to just one facet, and may be strategic management's distinctive contribution to business thinking and practice.

The change from planning to strategy relates to a new way of seeing …
looking critically at different environmental levels while still mindful of
internal firm matters … [This] may be strategic management's
distinctive contribution to business thinking and practice.

The decline of the future and the rise of the 'ante'

The eye altering alters all. William Blake

A related shift in orientation can be seen by looking beyond the fate of the word and concept of *planning* to the decline of other future-focused terms in LRP titles, and the rising frequency of

themes that we could relate to issues 'pre-' the point of decision. Whereas strategic management was once about making decisions in the *present* that aim for particular states in the *future* and the material consequences of these decisions (e.g., plans, objectives), we have witnessed a sharp decline in future-focused key words like *forecasting, long-term* and *objectives* and related key words like *goals, aims* and *targets* (see Figure 17).[22]

Concurrently, there has been a swing toward looking at how *past* context informs *present* strategic decisions. Figure 18 highlights this by contrasting the aggregated prevalence of 'post-decision-focused' key words from Figure 17 with key words that emphasize phenomena that 'pre-exist' strategic decisions: *process, practice, organization* (we could have also added *culture* to this set, for which the trend is similarly upward, see Figure 6). A third line in this figure charts the contrasting consistency of the term *decision*. (The same trends appear in abstracts.)

This illustration supports the view that the field has moved away from seeing strategy as a future-focused *noun*, to strategy as a *verb*, mirroring a shift in interest from the *content* of strategy decisions towards the actual *process* of *strategizing*. However, in the light of the ebbs and flows we have noted thus far, and the broad emergence of what seems to be greater balance between aspects such as internal and external perspectives, we would encourage caution with regard to dismissing future-focused approaches: perhaps the time has come for a 'third way'.

Early strategic management scholars focused on the content of a strategy *in the present, for the future.* This had the advantage of enhancing focus, but was somewhat simplistic in suggesting that the same artefacts, models or prescriptions should be produced and followed by any organization. Recently, a more organizational-oriented view of strategic management, moving closer to organization theory and perhaps further away from industrial economics and the decision sciences, has focussed on *how the past shapes the present.*[23] This view has the advantage of recognizing that organizational strategies are (or should be) unique to time and firm context, and avoid simplistic generalizations. However, the disadvantage is that as organization has increasingly informed our understanding of strategy, we have witnessed an exponential growth in the number of 'schools of strategy', and become less and less sure of what we mean when we speak of strategy. A third way might be to look teleologically at the potential characteristics (rather than particular goals) that strategizing and strategies are aiming at *in the future to give meaning in the present.*

While the classical approach was to look at strategy as something the organization *has,* and 'strategy as practice' aficionados see their perspective as seeing strategy as something an organization *does,*[24] an emergent third way might look at strategic as something an organization *is* or *is aiming to be.* Such a way
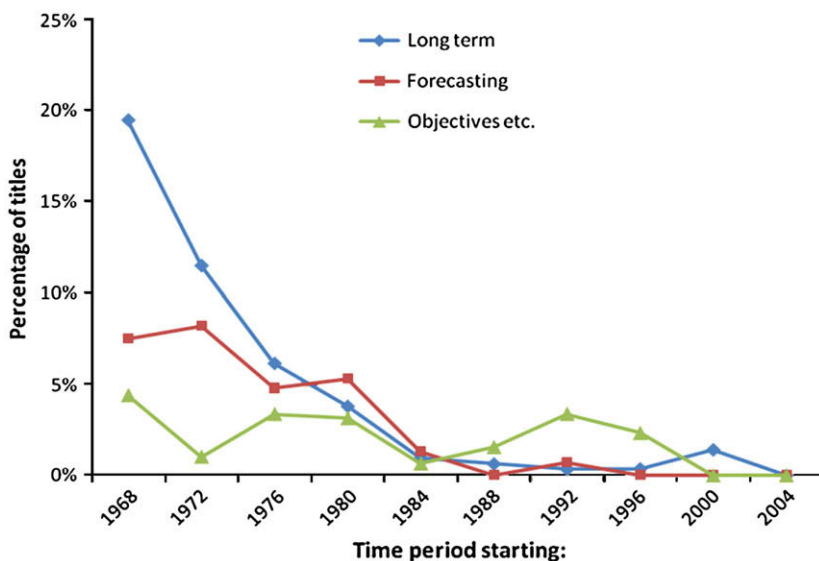

Figure 17. The decline of future-focused key words other than *planning* in LRP titles
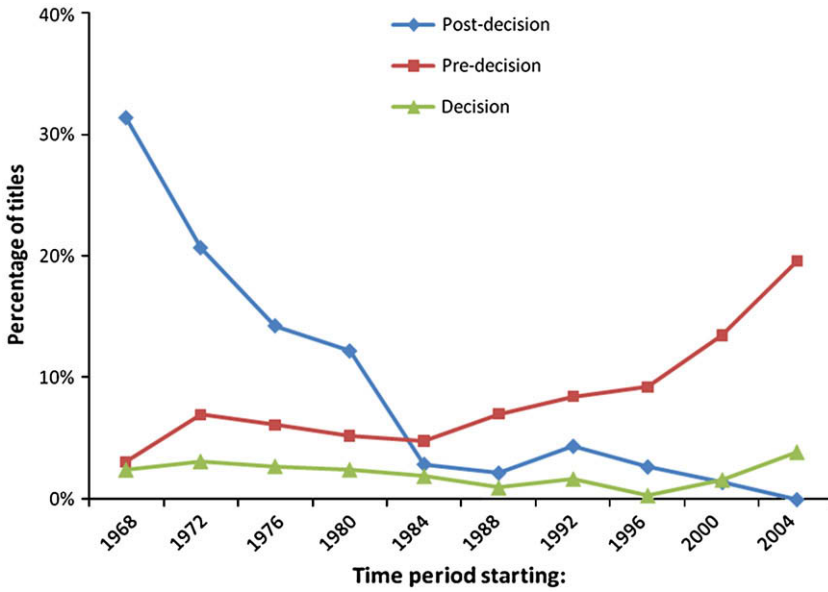
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Figure 18. Declining future-focused key words and rise of the 'ante' in LRP titles

would yield a view of strategy as an adjective or an adverb - a manner of proceeding - a view that incorporates both what one does *and* what particular artefacts are seen as important (see Table 3). This 'third way' could have a number of advantages.[25]

While the types of processes and practices that create organizational strategy can clearly be as many and varied as the organizations themselves, the characteristics they want their strategies to achieve (or become) are more common: a sense of purpose or focus or a greater sense of orientation; greater animation, or the motivation to achieve and exceed expectations; greater integration, or a clearer sense of how the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.[26] From this perspective, instead of wondering whether an organization *has* a good strategy or is *doing* good strategy, one would ask whether an organization *is* becoming more oriented, animated and integrated (or some other generic characteristic). If not, then it does not have a good strategy (and its strategizing processes are likely weak): if so, then it can be said *to be* (or *to be becoming*) *strategized* (or, at least, is on the right course for it). And, because generic potential states, like greater animation and integration, can stem from anywhere - a sense of mission, a culture, a strong brand, a particular process or series of practices, or a clear strategic plan — such a way of seeing may move us beyond past decades' artful debates about whether

Table 3. The altering eye: different language and tense of *strategy*

1960s	1990s	2010?
Strategy as NOUN (i.e., thing)	**Strategizing as VERB (i.e., actions)**	**Strategized or 'becoming strategied' as ADJECTIVE (i.e., quality)/or ADVERB (i.e., manner)**
The big decisions in the present that aim the organization toward particular targets in the future	How past practices/processes create patterns that shape the present and the future	How future desired characteristics (e.g., greater orientation, greater integrated effort) encourage activities in the present (e.g., branding, planning, processes) that build a manner or way of proceeding

strategy is really about *either* process *or* content, planning *or* emergent patterns, future goals *or* what we are doing in the present - or, indeed, even whether firms do or don't actually have a strategy.[27]

Such a teleological viewpoint may give us a clearer view of what we mean by strategy or strategic decisions (i.e., those activities that lead toward future desired corporate or organizational characteristics) without losing the greater wit and complexity of understanding we have gained as strategy has become more 'organizational' over the past two decades.

The decline of models and tools

As our viewpoint alters over time we may also change where we see knowledge about strategy as being derived and, subsequently, what authors seek to provide in their articles. If we are more concerned with the present 'contents' of strategy (e.g., plans and forecasts), irrespective of different historical contexts, and believe that organizations are more similar than different, we will be more likely to develop and believe in prescriptive tools, models and theories. However, if a focus on particular cultures, practices and processes highlights, instead, the uniqueness of organizations (and therefore of their strategies), we are less likely to believe in the power of general prescriptions, and be more interested in rich case studies.

Figure 19 tracks the decline of the key words *tools* and *models* (*techniques* and *theories* follow similar paths but at a lower rate) and the rise of *frameworks* and (particularly) *cases* in LRP titles. We believe the early high numbers of *cases* is due to the high number of practitioners writing for the journal in those years: authors who knew a lot about their own particular companies, but were not involved in broader comparative research. As their contributions dwindle, so does the propensity for individual cases. The common 'valley' in interest in approaches and methods in the 1990s (very evident in the figure) may reflect a descriptive phase in strategy, and perhaps in strategic management's history. Or perhaps it represents a gulf where generalized results became the norm, after which - as this approach failed to explain high-performing firms' routes to competitive advantage - other approaches needed to be sought.[28]

However, this is one domain where abstracts may provide a better guide to what is happening, as approaches will often not be recorded in a title. Figure 20, while confirming the growing ascendancy of *frameworks* and *cases*, also indicates that *models, theories, tools/techniques*, while in decline, are by no means on the way out. What we may surmise from this is: 1) the decline in *tools* and *models* is offset by the rise in *frameworks* and *cases*, and 2) more broadly, that strategy has always been eclectic in approach. It may be that strategic management is less suited to 'one best ways' (see Figures 3 and 4) and more to organizing and to thought provoking categorizations (see our discussion on the *Decline and Fall of Formal Planning*), that
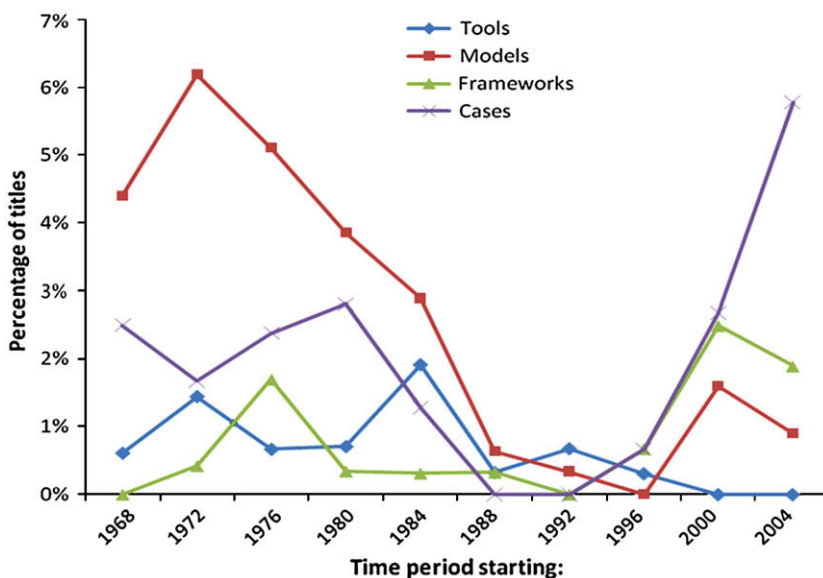

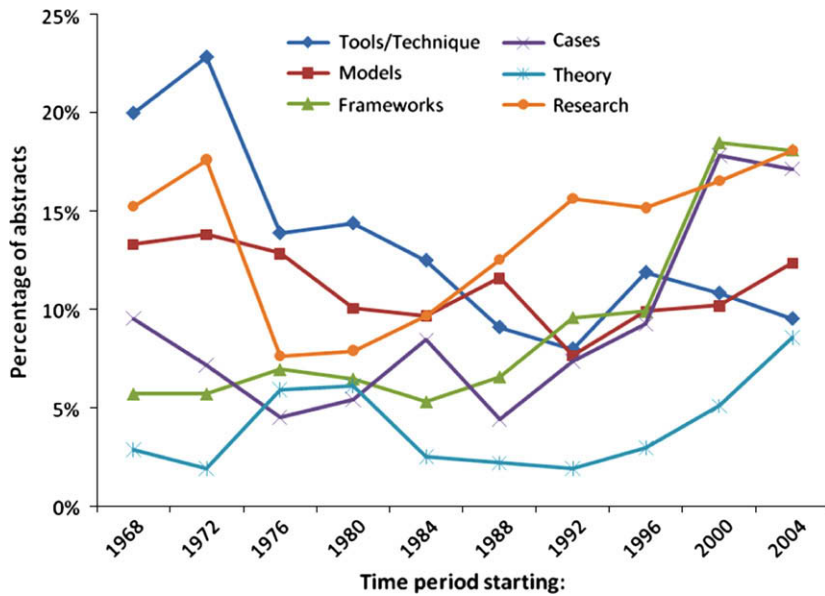Figure 19. Approaches/methods indicated in LRP titles

Figure 20. Approaches/methods indicated in LRP abstracts

strategies *tools* and *models* have been replaced by, or rather reinterpreted as, *frameworks*. The addition of a sixth line in Figure 20, tracking the frequency of research, may indicate an early desire for the field to establish itself as a serious discipline, and its steady rise since the late 1970s as a concern for showing our knowledge about strategic management is being based upon sound investigation.

Finally, there is one particularly positive broadening of perspectives on strategy that we can report: a great increase in female contributors in LRP. It is easy to forget what a male bastion the creation of knowledge about strategy was at the beginning. The first four volumes of LRP featured just one article by a woman: Lady Evelyn Sharp *'of The Small House in Dinton, Nr. Salisbury'* in 1970. But in the last four volumes of our sample, articles with women as authors have made up almost one third of the total.

Discussion

Present foundations

Our findings and observations enable various conclusions about strategic management's historical composition. The primary conclusion is that the themes that have been a constant concern in LRP are:

- questions of the *corporate* whole;
- *organizing* or structuring organizational resources;
- how an organization responds to or manages *change* with regard to *environmental* developments, such as *technological* advances;
- *decisions* that relate to the above;
- *processes* or *practices* that influence such decisions; *and*
- *creative* or *innovative* developments in any of these domains.

If one wants a basic definition of the bases of strategic management, these characteristics provide a good start.

Further, we have identified areas that have risen in our consciousness in recent decades: *knowledge* and *learning, relationships* and *networks,* and (perhaps to a lesser extent) *culture.* Our later charts show that, in the last decade, these themes were the key spheres of investigation in the ongoing search for new forms of advantage. Perhaps we should add these areas to the list of six bases outlined above?

> *strategic management does not lend itself to long-lasting techniques, methods or specific approaches — no particular tool or prescription has stood the test of time.*

At the same time, we have seen that strategic management does not lend itself to long-lasting techniques or methods or specific approaches - there is not one particular tool or prescription for strategic management that has stood the test of time. The fact is that business is too complex and too individualized for this to be otherwise, and what may be a potential source of relative advantage today is likely to become a 'hygiene factor' over time. We should be wary of future buzzwords that claim to have fundamental importance for strategic management.[29]

We have tracked the decline of *planning*, but found this not to be 'a death', but rather the result of a shift in perspective toward *strategy* as straddling a middle-ground between the firm and the wider economy and society, a ground that was 'unstructured' until the second decade of our survey and the emergence of widely-used industry and competitive analysis frameworks. This shift eventually made *planning* just one part of a broader field called *strategy*, that sought to appreciate the six 'foundations' described above in relation to factors both internal and external to an organization.

The shift of view away from planning has also been linked to a general decline in strategy's association with future-focused terms. Whereas most of our endeavours once took strategic decisions and their resultant contents (plans, goals, initiatives etc.) as our objects, many are now more interested in looking at how past practices and processes, as well as culture and other structures, shape strategy. We have noted the strengths and weaknesses of this shift, and proposed a third viewpoint that can use hindsight to help us retain the clarity (or the 'will') of the first aspect and the greater complexity (or 'wit') of the second. This would involve adding to the noun *strategy* and the verb *strategizing*, the adverb and adjective of *being* or *becoming strategized*, and thus recognising anything that helps toward becoming strategized as being part of the strategy process.

Finally, we have questioned what seems to be a decline of traditional knowledge artefacts for strategic management, such as *tools* and *models*, and found our field to have grown increasingly eclectic in its application of a range of approaches. It may well be the case that the processes of *being* and *becoming* strategized can be aided by any artefact that provokes integrative thinking and discussion, be it a framework, theory or case study.

Future trends

If the foundation of strategic management is as we have described above, what of the future? Knowing more about the past forty years, a closer inspection of what might be the emerging key words over the last decade, and a little interpretation, have led us to propose five trends that we think ought - and hopefully will - shape our field over the next ten years. These are outlined in Table 4, and briefly described in the following paragraphs.

A centred eclecticism

We believe that the eclecticism in strategy that we have reported does not reflect a lack of discipline, but rather it is indicative of the particular nature of our field. However, while we can demonstrate a growth in the number and variety of key words over the past forty years, our data also shows this variety stabilising over the past twelve years (see Figure 21), with numbers flattening out (and even declining a little) rather than continuing to expand. Combined with the fact that this period has seen the consolidation of the three most common key words in the pages of LRP apart from *strategy* (*organization*, *process*, *change* are now far in advance of any others), this suggests that a core of what strategic inquiry is about may be emerging. This may help prevent strategic management's eclecticism leading to a field about everything in general and nothing in particular.

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Table 4. Five future trends related to strategy researchers and practitioners

Future trends for	Strategy researchers	Practitioners
1. Centred eclecticism	Greater diversity of approach but centred on the fundamental objects of strategy (e.g., organization, process and change)	More confidence to drive the strategy process by taking, adapting and combining strategy ideas and frameworks
2. The strategist as politician	A greater interest in looking at strategy as a political endeavour	Less focus on command and control, more on influencing, steering, nudging, connecting interests and internal marketing
3. Strategy as aesthetics	A greater interest in exploring the connections between aesthetics and strategy	A greater focus on discerning and promoting those unique quirks and 'beguiling', memorable and compelling traits in organizational strategies
4. Back to the future	A re-appreciation of the role of perceptions of future in strategy (e.g., as related to things such as forecasting, intuition, idealism etc.)	A re-appreciation of confidence, vision, intent and intuition in strategic leadership
5. The past is no 'straw-man'	A deeper awareness of the strategic management archive and an appreciation that current themes may have already been addressed in interesting ways	Greater recognition that good ideas may come from revisiting the past as well as from the 'leading edge'

This emergent 'centred eclecticism' should also be reflected in a re-appreciation of the central role of frameworks in shaping strategic management's gaze. What we have found suggests that the strategy frameworks developed in the second decade of our survey, with regard to competitive advantage, markets and industry analysis, have played a significant role in moving strategic management towards becoming the balancing act between internal planning and external realities that it is today.[30] Indeed, even in new realms in strategy, it seems that those ideas which come
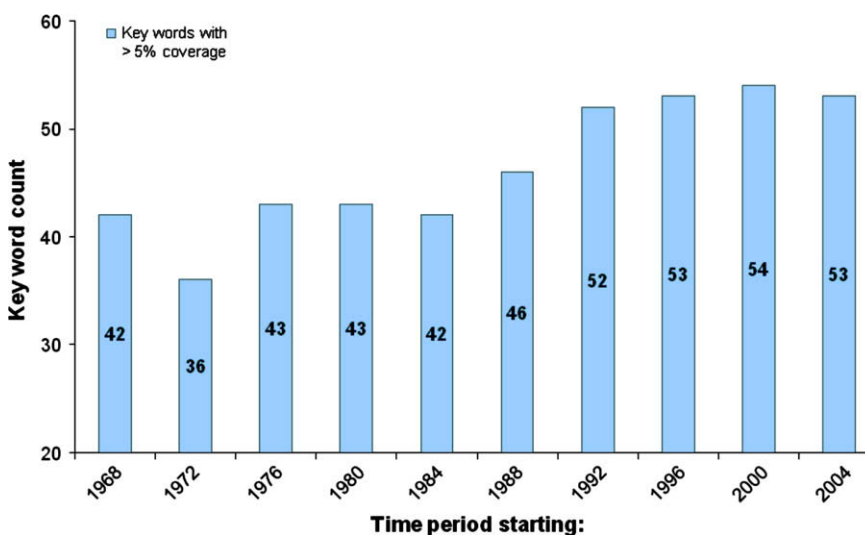
Figure 21. The rise and stabilisation of 'key concepts' in strategic management

with associated frameworks make an impact in our field: Richard Whittington's 1996 article *Strategy as Practice* made it into our top 20 cited works, largely, we would argue, because it was a bold idea summed up in ground shaping framework.

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strategy frameworks have been significant in moving strategic management towards becoming [today's] balancing act between internal planning and external realities

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While frameworks may be substituting for models and tools in strategic management, and are 'holding their own' against cases and other approaches in LRP, they may lose ground to a more recent focus on micro-practices, discourse analysis, case research and statistics in other strategic management arenas. While these are all interesting avenues that should be explored, it would a great pity for frameworks, models and tools to be completely overrun. Indeed, while our field is eclectic, we would suggest that it is the generic, adaptable and terrain organizing framework that 'centres' strategy, marking it out from other business fields.

We would further advocate maintaining a healthy eclecticism in terms of the breadth of those who contribute to debates about strategy. Figure 7 charted the decline of practitioner contributions to LRP, and we believe this movement has been even more pronounced in other strategy-related journals. In earlier times, the idealistic but practical minds that contributed were generally sponsored by big firms that had big departments in which people thought big thoughts. Although expected to provoke practical initiatives from time to time, they were often fundamentally academically orientated, and were encouraged to develop and publish their work in broader forums, like LRP. We should not forget that some of the most popular and long lasting strategy frameworks mentioned at the outset of this article were first thought out by such seasoned senior executives interacting with consultants and academics. The Growth-Share Matrix, for example, emerged when BCG consultants brainstormed and doodled with think-tankers and managers from the Mead Paper Corporation.[31] Now that firms are required to be leaner, more immediately accountable, and more focused on the immediate needs of customers, suppliers or other stakeholders, perhaps something has been lost. How might we retrieve it?

Knowledge and the next frontier: the strategist as politician

As we have seen, one of the biggest trends in strategic management over the past decade has been the rise in interest with regard to *knowledge* as a source of competitive advantage. However, in the next decade, while this will continue to be a key concern, the debate will shift toward how organizations can sponsor and enable knowledge - and particularly the valuable knowledge created by 'free-spirits' - while still retaining their corporate or collective focus. The sharp rise of five related key words over the past decade - *networks, practice, culture, alliances* and *relationships* - indicate that increasing emphasis is likely to be placed on understanding the 'give and take', the politics, of strategy development. Where knowledge creation is key, simple command and control, 'the strategist leading from the front', will not work so well. The 'strategist-as-politician' will have to discern or negotiate mutually agreeable positions, and learn to lead from the middle and create 'cooperative competitive advantage'.[32]

The 'strategist-as-politician' will have to learn to lead from the middle and create 'cooperative competitive advantage'

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Appreciating individuality: strategy as aesthetics

A second cluster of key words on the rise suggests another emergent trend. An increase in the use of the key words *performance* (corresponding with a decline in more generic words like *competitiveness* and *efficiency*), *leadership*, *innovation* and (once again) *practice*, indicate an increasing awareness about viewing strategy as an individualized process, where achieving added value stems from understanding and promoting local, 'home-grown' differences. This correlates with a growing awareness that simply copying best practice ultimately erodes strategic advantage — a further recognition that strategic management has not supported any one generic technique or one-best-way in any sustainable fashion. If this is so, strategic management researchers will want to explore the fields of aesthetics and social anthropology in addition to political science, while strategy practitioners should develop greater confidence to articulating and promoting the unique 'attractiveness' of the organizations they work for or advise, rather than simply following others who have apparently been successful, but in different contexts.

Back to the future

Both politics and aesthetics rely upon an appreciation of how both understandings of the past and conceptions of the future shape attitudes and behaviours today. Similarly, we believe that the next ten years will witness a swing back to examining the role that impressions of future states play in strategy development. Investigating aspects such as intuition, intention and idealism should join with a reappraisal of the value of *forecasting* (albeit in less mechanical forms that hitherto), without losing sight of the knowledge gained in recent decades with regard to how past practices and processes continue to shape strategy.

The straw-man gets a brain

Our final trend is connected to the first four, if one believes that they are all, in some sense, related to a re-appreciation of things that were on the agenda in strategy in earlier times. It questions the practice, common in some parts of our field, of announcing new best approaches to strategy in relation to some perceived conventional 'straw-man' of the past - often referring to some ill-defined age where organizations were seen as planning-mad bureaucracies, and strategy thinkers as removed from human reality. Examining forty years of contributions to LRP has taught us that, for at least thirty years, strategy has been about balancing an understanding of the external environment and internal practices; that it has always held a place for single case studies and considerations of business ethics; it has always, and to a significant extent, been about processes or practices; and it has consistently exhibited a critical and self-reflective dimension. While it may have started out with a planning perspective, it was self-reflective enough to question how complete an answer that process could give, and to redefine itself. While it is useful to mistrust what seem to be emergent dogmas, our analysis suggests that strategic management is fairly 'one-best-way' free.

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dismissing strategic management's past as simplistic is misinformed and rather smug - and will not encourage [the improvement of] knowledge as much as recognising its diverse and vibrant history.

In light of this, dismissing strategic management's past as simplistic seems misinformed - if not rather smug - and will not encourage researchers to stretch themselves to improve knowledge as much as a more straightforward recognition of its diverse and vibrant history. Future writing in strategic management should discover what can be learnt and revitalised from its deepening archives, rather than assuming what was written over a decade (or more) ago must inevitably be limited and outmoded.

If future researchers can follow this line, it may also help our field avoid the narrowing of its range of referencing, a dangerous recent phenomenon which has been linked to the increasing use of electronic data mining, and which is surely detrimental to creative thinking.[33] Indeed, just as increased replication and homogeneity in products and services may have contributed to increasing appetites for revisiting and updating products from past generations, it may be that strategic management, too, could benefit, to some extent at least, from 'going retro'.[34]

It is certain, however, that a greater appreciation of the complexity of our field's history can help us avoid unconsciously reinventing the wheel or ignorantly mistaking fads for fundamentals, and enable us to develop strategic management in ways that can draw on our past without being overly encumbered by it.

Acknowledgements

Appendix

Overview of Leximancer analysis

Leximancer is a data-mining tool that can analyse the large amounts of data in textual documents (see http://www.leximancer.com/product.html). The program is based on the theoretical foundations of ontological relativity and dynamics, compiling bits of information to form and assess concepts. Particular words can be merged together to be counted as a single concept and structured relationships between concepts can be identified, so that both key concepts and relationships can be displayed visually via a concept map (constructed in a similar way to a mind map). The circles on the maps indicate themes that Leximancer chose to summarize the concepts that appear in similar parts of a map.

These capabilities made Leximancer a useful tool for accessing and assessing the information in the forty years of LRP abstracts, with its ability to map its findings particularly helpful. Essentially, the map provides a holistic overview by illustrating the main concepts contained in the text and how they are related. Repeating the analysis for different time frames allowed us to see how the key concepts and maps changed over time.

The concept map

The concept map uses shading, closeness and centrality to describe the information contained within the documents. For instance, the shade of the theme circles refers to the frequency with which concepts within that theme appear in the texts — in our diagrams a darker shade indicates higher frequency. Closeness in the map refers to the extent to which two or more concepts appear frequently in similar contexts (here, adjacent sentences within the abstracts). For example, the concepts *strategic, planning* and *analysis* appear close together in Figure 14, suggesting that *strategic analysis* or *strategic planning* were word combinations likely to be used during this period. Lastly, the centrality of a concept within a map reflects the extent to which it co-occurs with many of the other prominent concepts. That is, a concept will be centrally located on a map if it appears in contexts surrounded by many other Leximancer-extracted concepts.

The process of using Leximancer for this analysis

A number of steps were taken to ensure that Leximancer provided a robust analysis of LRP abstracts. As the program analyses text-based files, we first exported all online article abstracts into a reference library (e.g., Endnote, see www.endnote.com) Article abstracts that were unavailable electronically were transcribed and added to the library. The next step was to convert abstracts

into text documents by setting Endnote to 'annotation' and saving the results as text files. The recurrent journal titles were then removed, and titles and author/volume reference details replaced with four digit codes, allowing Leximancer to distinguish between abstracts.

While we feel that the analysis presented here has followed a robust method, the substantial number of articles published in the last forty years of LRP naturally means that not all concepts present in the articles themselves will have been discussed. Analysing full articles would have undoubtedly elevated some terms that do not feature in our counts and maps. However, given that authors use titles and abstracts to highlight their article's key aspects, restricting our focus to these should still ensure that our analysis reflected their intended emphasis. Our Leximancer analysis also involved some manual merging of terms, but such recoding was informed and preceded by direct review of some abstracts to assess the extent to which it would be valid.

According to Leximancer's software developers, the program can analyse information without previous knowledge of the topic under investigation, thus providing unbiased results. However, although argued as a strength of the program, we found this also represented a weakness at times. For instance, it was not possible for the program to identify concepts such as *corporate social responsibility* or *business process reengineering* (where multiple words combine to form a distinct concept), separately from the individual words that form them. We therefore reviewed how and where these key words and concepts appeared in the original abstracts prior to merging them.

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2. W. H. Starbuck, *Organizational Realities: Studies of Strategizing and Organizing*, Oxford University Press, Oxford (2006).
3. Although it is unfair to single any one article out, and we do not mean to be critical of this approach by academics for academics, think how practicing managers might react to a article like D. Samra-Fredericks, Strategic practice, discourse and the everyday Interactional Constitution of Power Effects, *Organization* **12**, 803−841 (2005).
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7. See for example, the introductory chapter to M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* **2** , Pantheon, New York (1986); F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Vintage, New York (1974).
8. E. H. Bowman, H. Singh and H. Thomas, The domain of strategic management: history and evolution, in A. Pettigrew, H. Thomas and R. Whittington (eds.), *Handbook of Strategy and Management*, Sage, London (2002); P. Herrmann, Evolution of strategic management: the need for new dominant designs, *International Journal of Management Reviews* **7**, 111−130 (2005); R. E. Hoskisson, M. A. Hitt, W. P. Wan and D. Yiu, Theory and research in strategic management: swings of a pendulum, *Journal of Management* **25**, 417−456 (1999); A.-R. Ramos-Rodriguez and J. Ruiz-Navarro, Changes in the intellectual structure of strategic management research: a bibliometric study of the Strategic Management Journal, 1980−2000, *Strategic Management Journal* **25**, 981−1004 (2004); O. H. Azar and D. M. Brock, A citation-based ranking of strategic management journals, *Journal of Economics & Management Strategy* **17**, 781−802 (2008); S. E. Phelan, M. Ferreira and R. Salvador, The first twenty years of the, *Strategic Management Journal* **23**, 1161−1168 (2002); O. Furrer, H. Thomas and A. Goussevskaia, The structure and evolution of the strategic management field: a content analysis of 26 years of strategic management research, *International Journal of Management Reviews* **10**, 1−23 (2008).
9. This debate is charted in S. Cummings and D. Wilson 2003, op. cit. at Ref 1 pp. 1−40; highlights of the debate include the exchange between Igor Ansoff and Henry Mintzberg, *Long Range Planning* **27**(3), (1994).
10. The criterion used was those terms that registered more than 60 times (i.e., > 2.5% of the total titles) and which had consistently appeared at a rate of 1% or greater in every four year segment.

11. R. Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And how it's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*, Basic Books, New York (2002).

12. C. Carter, S. Clegg and M. Kornberger, Strategy as Practice? *Strategic Organization* **6**, .83—99 (2008).

13. A. Pettigrew, Strategy as process, power and change, in S. Cummings and D. Wilson (eds.), *Images of Strategy*, Blackwell, Oxford, 301—330 (2003); R. Whittington, Strategy as practice, *Long Range Planning* **29**, 731—735 (1996).

14. P. M. Natterman, Why best practice does not equal best strategy, *McKinsey Quarterly* **2**, 22—31 (2000); S. Cummings, *Recreating Strategy*, Sage, London, (2002) p. 175—80.

15. J. B. Barney, Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage, *Journal of Management* **17**, 99—120 (1991).

16. For a review of the CSR literature and its development see J. McGee, Commentary on Corporate strategies and environmental regulations: an organizing framework, *Strategic Management Journal* **19**, 377—387 (1998).

17. Citations data are as of mid-2008. Thresholds for inclusion were that articles had to have received *either* at least 10 citations per year and 90 in total on Google Scholar *or* at least 3 citations per year and 35 in total on Scopus. The 'per year' thresholds removed some articles from the list whose higher total citations were probably due to them being published earlier: some more recent articles with high 'per year' citations were excluded due to insufficient total citations.

18. It might be concluded that this demonstrates the danger of relying too much on citations to spot meaningful trends. What we might caution, therefore, is that those articles that have ridden the knowledge and network waves have also had the benefit of coinciding with the rise of the 'citation wave', the past decade having witnessed a large rise in the numbers of citations, and of databases to capture them.

19. For the 2004 'blip', see: S. Miller and D. Hickson, Beyond planning: strategies for successfully implementing strategic decisions, *Long Range Planning* **37**, 201—218 (2004). However, since the end of our analysis period, issue **40**(1) in 2007 included two articles with 'planning' in the title; in 2008, five of the six articles in a Special Issue on *The Crafts of Strategy* (**41**(3)) featured the word in their titles (including three which yoked the two terms in the concept 'strategic planning'); and again this year's first issue (**42**(1)) has one paper including the same joint term.

20. G. Hamel, Strategy as revolution, *Harvard Business Review* **74**(July), 70—82 (1996).

21. R. N. Grant, Strategic planning in a turbulent environment: Evidence from the oil majors, *Strategic Management Journal* **24**, 491—517 (2003); W. Ocasio and J. Joseph, Rise and fall, or transformation? The evolution of strategic planning at the General Electric Company, 1940—2006, *Long Range Planning* **41**(3) (2008).

22. We found similarly downward-sloping trends when we counted these terms in LRP abstracts, although objectives/aims/goal/target did not fall away so dramatically here. A contributing factor in this, however, was the use of such terms to describe the objectives/aims/goals of the article. Indeed, this is a reminder of one of the weakness of surveying abstracts.

23. The relatively new journal *Strategic Organization* explicitly seeks to reflect this changing emphasis, and many 'organizational' journals such as *Organization Studies, Organization Science and Organization* now publish a good percentage of articles on strategy.

24. P. Jarzabkowski and R. Whittington, Hard to disagree, mostly, *Strategic Organization* **6**, 101—106 (2008).

25. H. Tsoukas and S. Cummings, Marginalization and recovery: The emergence of Aristotelain themes in organization studies, *Organization Studies* **18**, 655—683 (1997); C. A. Montgomery, Putting leadership back into strategy, *Harvard Business Review* **86**(Jan), 54—61 (2008).

26. M. Ketokivi and X. Castaner, Strategic planning as an integrative device, *Administrative Science Quarterly* **49**, 337—365 (2004); S. Cummings and D. Wilson 2003, op. cit at Ref 1 p. 1—40.

27. A. Inkpen and N. Choudhury, The seeking of strategy where it is not: Toward a theory of strategic absence, *Strategic Management Journal* **16**, 313—332 (1995).

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31. C. Smith, The big picture, in: D. Angwin, S. Cummings and C. Smith (eds.), *The Strategy Pathfinder*, Blackwell, Oxford, 89−99 (2007).

32. S. D. Reicher, S. A. Haslow and M. J. Platow, The new psychology of leadership, *Scientific American Mind* **Aug/Sept**, 22−30 (2007).

33. J. A. Evans, Electronic publication and the narrowing of science and scholarship, *Science* **321**(18 July), 395 (2008).

34. See for example M. E. Porter, The five competitive forces that shape strategy, *Harvard Business Review* **86**(Jan), 79−93 (2008).

Biographies

Stephen Cummings is Professor of Strategy at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. He received his Ph.D. in organization theory from Warwick Business. His research has focused on the history of management and strategy and how our understanding of this history may enable or limit potential futures in these fields.
Victoria Management School, Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand.
Tel.: +64 4 463 6931 Email: Stephen.Cummings@vuw.ac.nz

Urs Daellenbach is a Reader in Management at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. He received his Ph.D. in strategic management from Purdue University. His research has focused on the resource-based view of the firm with a specific consideration of contexts associated with R&D, innovation and stakeholder perspectives.
Victoria Management School, Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand.
Tel.: +64 4 463 5732 Email: Urs.Daellenbach@vuw.ac.nz