



**The Strategy and Change Interface: Understanding
'Enabling' Processes and Cognitions**

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Management Decision

The Strategy and Change Interface:

Understanding 'Enabling' Processes and Cognitions

Abstract

The aim of this special issue is to better understand the strategy and change interface, in particular, the (sub)processes and cognitions that enable strategies to be successfully implemented and organizations effectively changed. The ten papers selected for this special issue reflect a range of scholarly traditions and, thus, as our review and integration of the relevant literatures, and our introductions to the ten papers demonstrate, they shed light on the strategy and change interface in starkly different ways. Collectively, the papers give us more insight into the recursive activities, and structural, organizational learning and cognitive mechanisms that are encouraged or deliberately established at organizations to allow their people to successfully implement a strategy and effect change, including achieve greater levels of horizontal alignment. Moreover, they demonstrate the benefits associated with establishing platforms and/or routines designed to overcome decision-makers' cognitive shortcomings while implementing a strategy or making timely adjustments to it. We conclude our editorial by identifying some yet unanswered questions.

Keywords: strategy, strategy implementation, change management, organizational change, transformation, dynamic capabilities, microfoundations, strategic projects, processes, cognitions, horizontal alignment, institutions

Introduction

Despite an abundance of theoretical and empirical work over the last three decades on the strategy process in the strategic management literature (Ahearne, Lam & Kraus, 2014; Barr, Stimpert & Huff, 1992; Floyd & Woodridge, 1992; Kouamé & Langley, 2018; Lee & Puranam, 2016; Martinsons et al., 2001; Nag, Hambrick & Chen, 2007; Schendel, 1992a&b; Van de Ven, 1992) and the recognition by change management researchers that organizations can be explained by the modes of organization, transformability, and the dynamics of strategy adopted by them (Chaharbaghi, Adcroft, & Willis, 2005; Dunphy & Stace, 1993), much remains to be learned about the implementation of strategy and the resulting organisational changes. Crucially, many important questions remain unanswered. These include why some organizations can effectively implement their strategies but the majority either cannot and/or do it badly (Hickson, Miller & Wilson, 2003; Hart & Banbury, 1994; Higgs & Rowland, 2005; Kirkpatrick, 2016; Nutt, 1999; Schaap, 2012; Stouten, Rousseau & De Cremer, 2018), which configurations of (sub)processes and cognitions can be linked to high performance in a strategy implementation context (Habersang et al., 2018; Hitt et al., 2017; Sirmon, Hitt & Ireland, 2007; Walter,

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3 Lechner & Kellermans, 2013), and which organisational players are critical and need to be empowered
4 to achieve implementation success (Davison & Martinsons, 2002; Zollo, Minoja & Coda, 2017; Zubac,
5 2016)? Indeed, to what extent strategy implementation should be considered largely an operational
6 matter, that is, a “make-things-happen activity aimed at performing core business activities in a strategy
7 supportive manner” (Thompson et al., 2010: 38), socially constructed by many organizational actors
8 (Balogun et al., 2007) or considered mostly the work of change management specialists, who focus on
9 conducting and reinforcing change to create more adaptive and better performing organizations (Brown,
10 2011; Waddell, Cummings & Worley, 2011), is still open to debate.

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16 However, if strategy implementation is defined as strategic decision-making processes “put into
17 action through the development of programs, budgets and procedures” (Wheelen & Hunger, 2008: 16)
18 while organizational change is the application of behavioral science, specifically as the “planned
19 development and reinforcement of organizational strategies, structures and processes for improving an
20 organization’s effectiveness” (Waddell, Cummings & Worley, 2011: 4), then logic suggests that these
21 questions could be answered by examining the connection between the two disciplines. In other words,
22 these questions could be answered by asking how do the actions traditionally considered the domain of
23 strategic management intersect with those traditionally associated with change management? It is a
24 constant challenge to ensure change is not pursued for the sake of change alone and that any change
25 agenda undertaken helps the organization to achieve its strategic objectives (Kathuria, Joshi & Porth,
26 2007; Liedtka & Rosenblum, 1994). Regardless, neither change for the sake of change nor change to
27 be more strategic could be achieved without the presence of enablers.

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35 Thus, the aim of this special issue is to better understand the interface between strategy
36 implementation and change management. In particular, we aim to advance our knowledge of what it
37 means ‘to enable’ a strategy by encouraging multidisciplinary research and theory development. Thus,
38 we were keen to receive papers that explicate the (sub)processes and cognitions that enable strategies
39 to be successfully implemented and organizations effectively changed. As our analysis of the extant
40 literature reveals and the papers in this special issue demonstrate, this is important because: (i) the world
41 is more uncertain and institutionally complex than ever before, (ii) new management paradigms are
42 emerging to deal with a large variety of ‘mega’ global problems, and (iii) organizations must be
43 increasingly innovative and adaptive to thrive and even survive. We conclude this editorial by clarifying
44 where scope exists to learn more and how such learnings might translate into a theory of enablement
45 over time.

55 **Uncertainty, Mega-Problems and the Paradigms for Adapting and Organizing**

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57 There are many reasons why an organization’s strategies must reflect and respond to the uncertainty
58 in its external environment. Strategic intelligence activities can reduce but not completely eliminate
59 uncertainty (Martinsons, 1993b) and so the planning and implementation of strategy must accept and
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3 address this reality. For instance, it is increasingly difficult, if not impossible to achieve a sustained
4 competitive advantage in some industries. Even large global leader organizations may only be able to
5 achieve temporary advantages in the future. A global leader organization may superficially appear to
6 have a sustainable competitive advantage but closer scrutiny often reveals that it has only achieved one
7 temporary advantage after another (D'Aveni, Dagnino & Smith, 2010).
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11 Problems, such as climate change are already affecting organizations across the world: “The need to
12 manage emerging, mega risks is as important as ever. Alongside major technological, demographic and
13 political shifts, our very world is changing. Shifts in our climate bring potentially profound implications”
14 (Carney, 2015: 1). Climate change will affect every single individual on Earth (IPCC, 2019) and will
15 affect every economy of the world (Nordhaus, 2018). Similarly, the pandemic of late 2019 took the
16 whole world by surprise and is likely to affect most economies and organizations for many years (Boone,
17 2021; Dasborough, 2021; Manoharan et al., Jones, Jiang & Singal, 2021; Rigotti et al., Yang, Jiang,
18 Newman, De Cuyper & Sekiguchi, 2021). Unless organizations drastically change how they operate
19 over the next decades and better manage their risks, including avoid once valuable assets becoming
20 stranded, they will fail; it will be too late to reorient themselves and remain viable (Carney, 2015; Miller
21 & Kirkpatrick, 2021).
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25 It is now incumbent upon managers everywhere to better understand what is involved when
26 transitioning an organization during high-risk periods. This includes determining which capabilities
27 enable durability, rapid re-organization, and adjustment (Hällgren et al., 2018; Maguire & Hardy, 2016
28 & 2020; William, Gruber, Sutcliffe, Shepherd & Zhao, 2017). However, we are still learning about the
29 adaptive strategies that organizations adopt and the capabilities that are best levered in uncertain and
30 immitigable contexts (Packard & Clark, 2019; Shi & Martinsons, 2011). The cognitions and emotions
31 that are relevant and helpful also remain in doubt (Ashton-James & Ashkanasy, 2008. Bromiley & Rau,
32 2014 & 2020; Dasborough & Gregg, 2016; Dasborough, Lamb & Suseno, 2015; Harrison et al., 2019;
33 Martinsons, 2001).
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37 Because organizations are open systems, environmental determinants will impact how the risks
38 confronting them are identified and mitigated and how the change process should be managed (Miller
39 & Leiblein, 1996; Waddell et al. 2011). Every context for change is unique (Martinsons and Davison,
40 2016). Thus, the capabilities that an organization must possess will be shaped by “enabling and
41 inhibiting variables within and outside the firm, including the perceptions and motivations of managers”
42 (Ambrosini & Bowman, 2009: 46). There are many examples of once prominent organizations losing
43 ground or even failing because it did not invest in or commercialise a promising new technology
44 (Christensen & Bower, 1996). Many strategies are not planned but emerge from action-based learning
45 (Martinsons, 1993a). They reveal themselves as the organization implements the planned elements of
46 its strategies, and more is learned about what customers want and competitors have to offer (Mintzberg,
47 1990; Zubac, Hubbard & Johnson, 2009).
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3 Likewise, it is now essential for organizations to develop strategies able to address the broader
4 institutional environment and for their managers to constantly assess how they should behave as part of
5 a membership base, contribute to the development of (industry) standards and/or adopt new standards.
6 The strategies that organizations implement should not only reflect positioning and resource-based logic,
7 but also the institutional reality (DiMaggio & Powell, 1993; Lawrence, 1999). To be able to achieve
8 this end, the capacity to gauge the extent to which the organization should differentiate itself from
9 competitors but also conform and be similar to them must be developed. Strategic thinking at the
10 competitive level (Porter, 1980) must be accompanied by cognition at the institutional level. In order to
11 survive, organizations must conform to prevailing norms and rules (Scott, 1995) while also nurturing
12 relationships (Martinsons, 2008). Managers must also assess the extent to which the organization is
13 constrained by its societal and institutional environment. This includes the societal cultures and
14 institutions of other countries when it operates internationally (Hempel & Martinsons, 2009; Peng et
15 al., 2009). Organizations may need to adopt more reflexive strategies when faced with the management
16 challenges specifically associated with cross-cultural differences (Martinsons et al., 2009) and non-
17 market factors in their external environment (Doh, Lawton & Rajwani, 2012; Martinsons, 2005;
18 Mirkovski et al., 2019).

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20 In addition, organizations are under pressure like never before to enter into alliances and join
21 networks despite their low success rates. This means they must also build alliance and network
22 management capabilities (Kale & Singh, 20019) and be conscious of the informational or other
23 advantages different network structures within the industry represent (Rosenkopf & Schilling, 2007).
24 Industry convergence due to digitization is also evident across many industries. This creates a need for
25 organizations to reconfigure their value chains (Wirtz, 2001) and supply chains (Mirkovski et al. 2019).
26 In addition, it is now imperative for strategies to be implemented that reflect the organization's
27 ecosystem(s), specifically, the (dis)advantages that the complementary resource and product offerings
28 of other organizations may represent (Davison et al., 2014; Jacobides et al., 2018). All of this creates
29 extra layers of complexity, where the ecosystem and not just the industry needs to be considered, as
30 well as the increased burden for strategic decision making (Martinsons, 2001) and the systems that
31 support this activity (Martinsons & Davison, 2007).

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33 Bearing all this in mind, managers must take much into account when implementing a strategy and
34 ensure it could still be advantaging. Not only is it vital that the organization's place within the industry
35 and/or network ecosystem be constantly monitored, making it possible for its various strategic
36 initiatives to be fine-tuned as new information reveals itself, the specifics of how best to ensure 'fit' can
37 be achieved will also need to be considered. This will require managers to develop a sense of which
38 institutions from the broader institutional environment could impact the organization and how. Almost
39 invariably, it will be necessary for the organization's managers to constantly consider how specific
40 capital markets, resource markets, product markets and non-market institutions could impact the
41 organization. The implication is that the corporate (or overall) strategy will be made up of an amalgam
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3 of the organization's financial, resource, customer value creation strategies, and its non-market
4 strategies,¹ with the latter articulating how the organization will be approaching its compliance
5 obligations or methods for satisfying critical stakeholder groups. It will be a constant challenge for
6 managers to be across all of these things and ensure an appropriate level of coordination is able to be
7 achieved across functional or, in more general terms, horizontal lines (Zubac, 2007). **Figure 1** depicts
8 the elements of the institutional superstructure managers need to factor into their strategic plans,
9 including as they adjust them, if the organization, which is an open system, is to achieve 'fit' and achieve
10 its strategic objectives.
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22 **Section 2: The Strategy and Change Interface**

23 The conundrum for managers wanting to effectively address the external environment in the broadest
24 terms possible, is how is it possible to implement a strategy made up of four essential strategies (i.e.,
25 financial, resource, customer value creation, and non-market strategies) using the resources at hand and
26 achieve the organization's performance objectives at the same time? From an institutional view, if the
27 organization is unable to achieve its institutionally imposed performance objectives within an
28 appropriate timeframe, the financial capital invested in it to be transformed into human, resource-based
29 and risk capital will end up being invested into other enterprises or used to pursue other opportunities
30 or interests (Zubac, Hubbard & Johnson, 2012; Zubac, 2018). Unless the organization's various
31 strategies are implemented in an aligned and performance-enhancing manner, the organization's longer-
32 term future becomes more difficult to ensure.
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39 Research has demonstrated the value of monitoring the extent to which a strategy is being
40 implemented in a balanced manner (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). We have also learned much about how
41 vertical strategy alignment is achieved, that is, how business-level and functional strategies are aligned
42 to corporate strategy. However, we know very little about how horizontal alignment is achieved
43 (Kathuria, Joshi & Porth 2007). In other words, as this paper and the papers in this special issue suggest,
44 we know very little about how the four essential strategies - the three market-based strategies and non-
45 market strategies of an organization are aligned and then implemented in a coordinated manner. It also
46 remains a challenge to understand how different people, particularly front-line managers and senior
47 managers contribute to the success of the strategy implementation process (Dasborough & Gregg, 2016;
48 Dasborough et al., 2015; Shi and Martinsons, 2011; Zimmerman, Raisch & Cardinal, 2018) and the
49 trade-offs that they decide to make to advance the strategy (Andersén, 2011).
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58 ¹ It has been assumed in this article that most organizations will have a single articulated financial strategy,
59 resource strategy and customer value creation strategy, and more than one non-market strategy because many
60 non-market institutions could affect it in different ways, requiring very distinct strategic responses.

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3 In contrast, we now know much more about the resources, especially the capabilities that can be
4 linked to high performance and, as a corollary to implementation success (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000;
5 Peteraf, Stefano & Verona, 2013; Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997). Building on this work and his own
6 scholarly contributions, Teece (2007: 1319) developed a framework for explicating dynamic
7 capabilities and their link to (sustainable) enterprise performance. The framework defines the
8 microfoundations of dynamic capabilities: They are “the distinct skills, processes, procedures,
9 organizational structures, decision rules, and disciplines” in organizations. In one form or another and
10 presumably sometimes in combination, these microfoundations are used to (1) sense and shape
11 opportunities and understand threats, (2) seize opportunities, and (3) maintain competitiveness through
12 enhancing, combining, protecting, and, when necessary, reconfiguring the business enterprise’s
13 intangible and intangible assets. Since strategy often takes an emergent form, as Teece and other
14 strategy scholars argue, these are the three fundamental dynamic capabilities necessary to possess and
15 be able to lever to realise a strategy.
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24 Importantly, if one is to take an institutional view, Teece’s framework provides a potential missing
25 piece for effectively conceptualizing how strategies are developed and then implemented through an
26 organization’s resources, specifically by enabling a tightly linked and recursive set of activities, as
27 depicted in **Figure 2**. The circle in the middle of Figure 2 reflects the idea that strategy is institutionally
28 multifaceted and, in order to continuously develop the strategy and implement it successfully, it is
29 necessary to possess and use sensing, seizing and transforming or reconfiguring dynamic capabilities.
30 As the squares to the right and left of the middle circle suggest, these dynamic capabilities will be made
31 up of combinations of individual, organizational enabling (sub)processes and cognitions. Likewise, as
32 the rectangles at the top and the bottom of Figure 2 suggest, the institutions that impact the organization
33 and lead to it needing to change to remain relevant or even survive may do so in either a positive/growth
34 promoting or negative/growth constraining manner or some combination of the two.
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48 **Section 3: Towards a Theory of Enablement**

49 Despite strategic management scholars long held agreement that strategy formulation and strategy
50 implementation are inextricably linked, the strategy process is still largely taught and treated in practice
51 as if formulation and implementation are processes which unfold sequentially. Although there is some
52 logic in doing this, it creates a disconnect between those who develop the strategy and managers
53 working in operations and/or the change and project specialists brought in to assist (Zubac, 2016). This
54 problem is compounded by the fact that managers often use methods for implementing their strategies
55 that are far more prescriptive than they are grounded in evidence (Martinsons, 1993a; Stouten, et al,
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3 2018). In short, allowing for how complicated the world has become, we still do not know enough about
4 how strategy is enabled, including how strategy leads to change and change leads to strategy over time.

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6 The papers of this special issue help us get a step closer to understanding how strategies are enabled.
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8 Each paper provides unique insights into the specific mechanisms used by organizations to ensure the
9 organization's people remain focussed on the strategy and obtain the required knowledge to help them
10 make timely adjustments to the strategy as it becomes necessary. This is over and above the efforts that
11 are normally considered to be *de rigueur* in any change project, especially the ability to reinforce
12 strategic change (Waddell, et al. 2011; Zwikael and Smyrk, 2019). The specific mechanisms explored
13 in the ten papers chosen for this special issue on the strategy and change interface are: (1) structural;
14 (2) organizational learning related; and (3) cognitive. In short, they provide insight into what needs to
15 be considered to achieve high levels of alignment, (improved) fit with the institutional environment and
16 organizational adjustability or agility at the same time. As **Figure 3** shows, each of the papers provide
17 insight into some of the recursive structures and people-centric processes that are key and conducive to
18 achieving the organizational learning and cognitive adjustments continually required to ensure
19 horizontal forms of strategic alignment. In particular, it shows that the corporate strategy and each
20 market-based and non-market strategy must be continuously referenced to ensure alignment.
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35 Likewise, to a greater or lesser extent, each of the papers suggest the change projects that need to be
36 undertaken to ensure that strategic recursiveness becomes possible. This is depicted in **Figure 4**, where
37 it is shown that as an organization becomes more adept, its structures should become better designed or
38 refined and its people better able to deal with the complexity inherent in the institutional environment.
39 Further, its strategies will be increasingly implemented with the objective of turning what might at first
40 appear to be disparate set of initiatives and projects into functional, divisional or organizational
41 spanning structures recognisable as platforms. Their objective is to effectively capture “the collective
42 learning of the organization, specifically how to coordinate diverse production skills and integrate
43 multiple streams of technology” (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990: 4).² However, different (sub)processes,
44 cognitions, or knowledge bases could be associated with these structures and their functioning as they
45 develop.³
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56 ² The concept of a core competence as described by Prahalad & Hamel (1990) evolved around the same time as
57 the concept of a dynamic capability as described by Teece, et al. (1997). Though defined differently, both concepts
58 describe the same outcome, specifically, how capabilities allow an organization to remain competitive and address
59 market and other major forms of change (Barney & Arian, 2001).

60 ³ This is a highly stylized diagram where the shapes representing initiatives/projects, (sub)processes and
cognitions could manifest themselves at organizations in many different ways.

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The papers are grouped and discussed below according to how they shed light on the structures, organizational learning processes and cognitions that need to be put in place to successfully implement a strategy and change the organization as a consequence.

Implementation Structures and Strategic Change

The first paper by Roger Chen, Lian Wang, Eric Li, Guodong Hu, *Microdivisionalization as a way toward dynamic capability*, uses case study techniques to understand if Haier's innovativeness is related to how company headquarters interacts with its microdivisions. The authors found that consistent with Teece's (2007) microfoundations of (sustainable) enterprise performance framework, the innovation routines established at Haier's over 2,000 microdivisions, in conjunction with a loosely coupled relationship with Head Office, are key to explaining Haier's success.

In a nutshell, this arrangement involves Haier's managers at the microdivisions sensing and seizing opportunities as they see fit. They are left alone by Head Office to pursue opportunities provided Haier's corporate strategy – its strategic and operational priorities - are suitably reflected. Head Office clarifies these priorities and imposes discipline through the use of organization-wide platforms. The platforms are designed to ensure a transparent and equitable approval and resource allocation process, and to allow Head Office to understand and evaluate microdivisional performance. This enables poor performing divisions to be disbanded if they are poor performers while high performing divisions to be encouraged and rewarded, including even being allowed to set up as a separate corporate entity as part of the Haier Group. Competition between the divisions is actively encouraged and enabled too. This creates an environment where Haier can nurture the development of an innovation ecosystem, making it possible for the whole group to become even more capability-diverse.

The benefits to Haier are many. By essentially liberalizing the resource decision-making and corporate-level approval process, Haier is able to avoid the drawbacks normally associated with divisionalization, including initiatives and people being thwarted by bureaucracy, internal competition for resources becoming dysfunctional, and strategic knowledge management being disabled (Martinsons et al., 2017). Similarly, as the microdivisions morph to pursue new opportunities, underpinned by newly developed processes and cognitions, the top management team is placed in a stronger position to better appreciate how the Haier Group must change to remain globally relevant as opposed to what would have been the case otherwise. Unlike many of its contemporaries which have undertaken dislocating transformational change, the Haier structures are underpinned by management systems that enable a high degree of organisational adaptability (Martinsons & Hempel, 1995). They render it much less likely that the organisation will need a drastic transformation. By allowing the microdivisions to evolve and morph within Haier, the top management team can better understand

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3 which (sub)processes and cognitions are integral for achieving strategy success, including how the
4 microdivisions should be better supported by platforms and other technology/knowledge bases to be
5 able sense, seize and reconfigure.
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8 The second paper by Jorge Ferreira, Arnaldo Coelho and Luiz Moutinho, *The influence of strategic*
9 *alliances on innovation and new product development through the effects of exploration and*
10 *exploitation*, examines the routines spanning the strategic alliance management capabilities of two SME
11 organizations. Consistent with the alliance and dynamic capabilities literatures, the paper starts by
12 assuming that strategic alliance capabilities are made up of specific alliance management, integration
13 and learning routines, and that successful alliances possess and have successfully combined them.
14 Specifically, the authors seek to understand how, together, exploitation (using existing technologies to
15 make incremental improvements to existing products) and exploration (using new technologies to
16 develop new products) affect product development performance in a turbulent context, and the extent
17 to which inter-organizational knowledge sharing can be considered a moderating factor. These authors
18 also acknowledge that if alliance management is a distinct dynamic capability, it may involve sensing,
19 seizing, and reconfiguring capabilities as described by Teece (2007).
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27 The authors found that knowledge sharing which is directed at better understanding each
28 organization's exploitation and exploration capabilities lead to a greater capacity for developing higher-
29 level or dynamic capabilities which span two organizations. This, in turn, allows the partners to innovate
30 and develop a steady stream of new products. Thus, by deliberately developing learning capabilities
31 with this end in mind and "unpacking the organization and human cognitive processes", more precise
32 results for the strategic alliance can be achieved. Likewise, the paper illustrates the benefits of the
33 partners developing new knowledge. The implication is that the commitment to jointly develop new
34 knowledge is an important criterion when choosing between potential alliance partners.
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39 The paper by Sanjay Bhasin and Pauline Found, *Sustaining the lean ideology*, examines why the
40 implementation of lean strategies habitually fail. The authors acknowledge a key reason may be an
41 inability to appreciate what a transformation embedding a lean strategy at an organization entails. They
42 investigate the relevant literatures with this in mind. The authors found that lean requires an
43 organization's people to understand the "wide-ranging facets of implementation", including how the
44 entire lean system must underpin an organizational reconfiguration or transformation. In other words,
45 to focus on the tools or operational elements of lean is insufficient in the long run. If lean is to be
46 implemented across an organization as part of an overall strategy, its phases, as well as how it supports
47 the overarching strategy is important to appreciate.
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54 Likewise, lean's effects on people and the behaviors it is designed to encourage are also critical to
55 consider. The authors found that for lean to succeed, it needs to be enabled by providing the appropriate
56 infrastructure and cultural supports. The raft of (sub)processes and cognitions that must be combined
57 and coordinated must be communicated and rendered accessible to everyone at the organization. This
58 is with the knowledge that in whatever form lean evolves into and ultimately takes within the
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3 organization, it remains a “dynamic phenomenon and one which is constantly developing.” Moreover,
4 the more effectively lean is implemented, the more likely it can contribute to an improvement in the
5 organization’s overall performance but this is provided it reflects and aligns with the dynamic aspects
6 of the strategy process.
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10 In summary, these three papers have in common the fact that structures were deliberately developed
11 to make it (relatively) easy for people to engage in strategic projects and other strategic work while
12 avoiding the problems normally associated with centralization (excessive bureaucracy, slow decision-
13 making, disincentives to innovate) and decentralization (poor resource allocation, siloing, the inability
14 to implement aligned strategies). For instance, the Chen et al. (2021) paper provides insight into how
15 microdivisionalization, supported by enabling functional and decision-making platforms helped to
16 avoid situations where Head Office was unable to recognize the value of the opportunities and threats
17 the divisions were uncovering, instead allowing Head Office to better sense and appreciate when a
18 technology could be levered across the whole group, seizing and reconfiguring the technological base
19 as required. This is while avoiding the problems associated with centralization and excessive
20 divisionalization (Stinchombe, 1990).
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24 It also supports the finding that “when controls positively influence transparency/alignment,
25 outcome orientation, participation, trust, and timely feedback in headquarters’ relations with SBUs
26 [strategic business units], they exert a positive influence on decision speed. Understanding these
27 mediators helps explain why managers adopt different types of controls” (Kownatzki et al., 2013: 1316).
28 The Chen et al. (2021) paper helps us understand how this new way of organizing, that is, via over
29 2,000 microdivisions, makes it possible for both vertical and horizontal alignment to occur, and how a
30 supportive, internal ecosystem, involving the hierarchy is able to evolve, enhancing the organization’s
31 sensing, seizing and reconfiguring capabilities. However, it was acknowledged by the authors that at
32 Haier, sensing, seizing and reconfiguring were more about mobilizing the right resources and preparing
33 to seize and execute. This can be explained by the fact that the Haier Group had already transformed
34 itself into over 2,000 microdivisions. In other words, we argue that microfoundations of dynamic
35 capabilities logic is best applied at the organizational group level rather at the (micro) divisional level.
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39 Similarly, the fact that Haier encouraged microdivisions to spin-off from the company while still
40 having some control also supports the notion that experimenting with different configurations of top
41 and middle management during a strategy implementation is an enabler in itself; it leads to employees
42 across the organization being supportive of change rather than inclined to oppose it (Heyden et al.,
43 2017). The structures that Haier developed to recognize and reward high performers but also motivate
44 or weed out low performers had a comparable effect, as exemplified by the internal market for targets
45 which was put in place as a complement to the notion of an internal capital market. Despite the
46 downside, such as manufacturing’s reluctance to commit resources to unproven profits, the upside is
47 that the problem of target ratcheting, traditionally a source of resistance, can be avoided
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Importantly, the Haier structure helps to keep everyone close to the customer while giving Head Office the ability to be increasingly sensitive to customers' changing needs and understand what this means for the overall strategy (Martinsons, 1993b; Meyer et al., 2017). The Haier case demonstrates that if microdivisions are encouraged to innovate without excessive Head Office direction and are allowed to be entrepreneurial in every sense of the word, "bureaucracy is not inevitable;" it is possible to lever of a diverse and extremely skilled employee base by innovating fast and making sure serious strategic mistakes are not made because communications are fast, the culture supports competitive target setting and microdivisions collaborating whenever possible, including collaborating formally by entering into contracts (Hamel & Zanini, 2018: 52). Thus, the Haier case demonstrates the benefits associated with encouraging informal networks in the initial stages of fostering an internal innovation ecosystem and allowing more formal relationships later (Kotter, 2012; Martinsons & Hempel, 1995).

In addition to the Chen et al. paper, the other two papers by Ferreira et al. and the Bhasin and Found also demonstrate the benefits of modularity by binding different parts of an organization and working with external alliance partners to achieve a common investment end. By recognizing this and the "non-redployability" or specificity of their complementary offerings and associated resource bases, it is clear that by making the joint objective of value creation the priority, the inevitable existence of incomplete contracts do not constrain; "ecosystems add value as they allow managers to coordinate their multilateral dependence through sets of roles that face similar rules, thus obviating the need to enter into customized contractual agreements with each partner" (Jacobides, Cennamo & Gawer, 2018: 2255).

All of the organizations studied by these authors also demonstrate the many forms platforms and technology/knowledge bases come in and how platforms can be used to encourage entrepreneurship, innovation and value creation across an organization, as well as also across organizations (Nambisan, Siegel & Kenney, 2018). One of the important implications of these papers is that the benefits traditionally associated with the establishment of a division or function or even a separate project can be enhanced through the use of network or a digitally enabled platform. As for the latter, flexible IT policies are required to be able to build transformation capabilities, ensure continual quality control and make it possible for people to work in self-directed teams and/or, when geographically diverse, to gain access to the training, leadership, and the required project artefacts required to be effective (Cha, Hwang & Gregor, 2015). The way in which strategy and change is coordinated in the modern organization will increasingly involve considering how divisions, alliances, and operational excellence can be attained by achieving greater levels of strategic alignment. Some organisations have adopted a balanced scorecard for the strategic management of their information systems (Martinsons et al., 1999) in order to align their IT applications with key business processes. It will also be helpful to encourage and lever off open innovation and internal and external ecosystems for value creation, and utilize the platforms that have been established to ensure higher levels of market responsiveness through their very recursiveness. As **Figure 3** suggests (discussed earlier in our paper), the separate overriding goals of

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3 sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring may underpin how organizations organize and enable coordination
4 across its parts.
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8 ***Organizational Learning and Strategic Change***

9 The paper by Johanna Pregmark and Rita Berggren, *Strategy workshops with wider participation: Trust as enabler*, examines how workshops are used as part of the strategy process to identify the
11 strategies an organization should pursue and how best to implement them. Building on both the trust
12 and strategy as an organization-wide/learning process literatures, it considers the role trust plays to
13 avoid strategy workshops becoming a hollow exercise, where its instigators merely play lip service to
14 the notion that everyone should be consulted when (re)formulating a strategy or implementing it. Rather,
15 it promotes the idea that strategy workshops should be a constructive process. The authors found that
16 strategy workshops are more likely to achieve their objectives if their context dependent nature could
17 be better appreciated by all involved at all stages, that is, while planning, taking part in and reviewing
18 the workshop.
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25 Three enabling themes emerged: (1) opening up the conversation so that everyone felt free to
26 participate; (2) clarifying the participative process, including who would be participating across the
27 organization and how credit would be given to those coming up with the better ideas; and (3) delivering
28 feedback honestly to ensure participants did not feel manipulated or experience post-workshop
29 dissonance. In other words, it was found that if workshops are to be productive and yield useful insights
30 while developing a comprehensive strategy, trust needed to be evident before, during and after the
31 workshop. Not only is it necessary to explain the workshop, engage participants using objective
32 processes and create a politically safe environment during the workshop, participants needed to be
33 assured prior to and after participating in workshops that their ideas were valuable and top
34 management's intent was genuine. Moreover, workshops needed to be conducted in an objective
35 manner and associated with positive forms of affect.
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43 The paper by Wen-Cheng Lin and Hsin-Hung Cheng, *Improving maritime safety through enhancing
44 marine process management: The application of Balanced Scorecard*, extends a well-known framework.
45 It examines how the Balanced Scorecard can render a maritime safety course more holistic and, in turn,
46 lead to maritime safety processes in an organizational setting that were better linked to the
47 organization's functions. The authors found that safety management systems associated with function-
48 based KPIs were easier to monitor and, as a result, more likely to comply with regulations and best
49 practice safety trends. However, the temporal aspects spanning the project development, execution, and
50 review stages were essential to consider to ensure a positive performance outcome. Likewise, it was
51 important to ensure students learned that the financial, customer, internal process, and learning and
52 growth dimensions were not abstract management ideas but tantamount to achieving cost-effective
53 safety compliance, seaworthiness, professional inspection and ongoing marine safety education, and in
54 that order.
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3 The study identified how safety education as an organizational imperative could be better
4 incorporated into lessons. By applying Balanced Scorecard principles to a course, it was argued students
5 can better, including more holistically reconcile a maritime organization's mission with the problem of
6 compliance while creating value for customers. In addition to elaborating upon how courses that
7 develop students' conceptual and critical thinking skills could be better constructed, including
8 supported by cases where their functional elements can be analysed in detail to identify potential
9 compliance problems and value creating solutions at the same time, the paper also identifies how
10 important it is to help students develop their own (idiosyncratic) cognitive frames upon which they can
11 build to progress their careers.

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13 In summary, the papers both by Pregmark and Berggren, and Lin and Cheng emphasise the
14 importance of both sensing and learning, and building new resources by leveraging learned experiences.
15 They show that the ability to compete and be operationally effective continues to be dependent on these
16 things (Muneeb et al., 2019). Effort and set processes are required to be brought into play to ensure
17 organizational learning leads to positive outcomes and new learning can be codified, including be
18 explored further in the organization or in different domains in the future (Walter, Lechner & Kellermans,
19 2013). These papers also demonstrate how important it is to create a positive environment for
20 organizational learning. Consistent with Flores, Zheng, Rau and Thomas's (2012: 661) findings, the
21 "five distinct subprocess of organizational learning, namely, information acquisition, distribution,
22 interpretation, integration, and organizational learning" are positively influenced by "participant
23 decision making, organizational openness, learning orientation, and transformational leadership." The
24 challenge is to identify how these variables can be encouraged and be more effectively realized
25 strategically through the organization's people.

39 ***Cognition and Strategic Change***

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41 The paper by Shinhye Ahn, Cecile Cho and Theresa Cho, *Performance feedback and organizational*
42 *learning: The role of regulatory focus*, examines the effect of firm-level regulatory focus on
43 organizational learning and strategic change. More specifically, it examines the extent to which above-
44 and below-aspiration performance moderates the choice of strategic orientation, that is, if a promotion
45 focus is best associated with the adoption of a growth orientation and a prevention focus is best
46 associated with an efficiency focus. In other words, as intuition suggests, the paper examines whether
47 leaders wanting to maximise their gains are more likely to pursue a growth orientation and leaders
48 wanting to minimise losses are more likely to pursue an efficiency orientation regardless of the
49 performance level achieved.

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51 The authors found that a promotion focus is associated with growth oriented strategic change, a
52 prevention focus is associated with efficiency-oriented change while under positive performance
53 feedback promotion and prevention foci are associated with organizations maintaining the status quo.
54 The results suggest that, as opposed to the intuition in line with the extant literature, organizational

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3 learning through performance feedback has a confounding effect if performance is above aspiration.
4 This means that as a strategy is implemented it may be sometimes necessary to adjust how top managers
5 are incentivized. Similarly, when recruiting a leader, the regulatory focus of applicants may need to be
6 taken into account. Likewise, if a combination of growth and efficiency directed projects are to be
7 implemented over time to achieve the organization's strategic objectives, an appropriate balance of
8 promotion- and prevention-focussed top managers may need to be considered for the tasks at hand.
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12 The paper by Chiara Acciarini, Federica Brunetta and Paolo Boccardelli, *Cognitive biases and*
13 *decision-making strategies in times of change: A systematic literature review*, describes their
14 examination of the intersecting cognitive biases, strategic decisions, and environmental transformation
15 literatures. In short, they examine how cognitive biases are being or could be managed to ensure
16 effective strategic decision-making when the environment itself is transforming. The latter refers to the
17 socio-economic drivers and other megatrends that lead to profound social, economic and political
18 consequences an organization's decision-makers would be foolhardy to ignore. However, it should be
19 acknowledged that as new trends emerge or the organization is impacted by an unexpected event,
20 requiring change, much depends on the processes of diffusion that are used to enable managers to
21 understand their likely impact.
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24 Thus, the cognitive system at an organization, as defined by Seidl (2004) determines the extent to
25 which an organization through its strategic decision-makers has the capacity to effectively respond to
26 environmental change. This capacity depends on the propensity of cognitive biases and the decision-
27 making style of the organisational leader to intrude upon the process (Martinsons, 2001). Likewise, it
28 is tempered by the extent to which these cognitive biases can be detected and measured, and made the
29 subject of some sort of improvement action. As the authors argue, such improvement actions will need
30 to reflect the steps of the decision-making process, the levels of the organization at which the decision
31 is made and the objectives of key stakeholder groups.
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34 The authors found that decision-making could be modelled in *analysis, decision, onboarding* and
35 *control* terms. *Analysis* involves detecting significant environment trends and this is likely to be the
36 most complicated aspect of any cognitive system put in place to aid decision-making. *Decision* is
37 focused on the rapid identification of strategic options. *Onboarding* involves engaging stakeholder
38 groups to achieve consensus about the decision. Lastly, *control* involves monitoring the actions and
39 initiatives as realised over time. Though the implications for research and management are potentially
40 many, it is evident that as organizations become more data-driven, a greater understanding of how
41 cognitive biases of all kinds could impact each aspect of decision-making will be required. Much of
42 this work will involve understanding if the data set is reliable and which information from the data set
43 is pertinent for solving the problem at hand.
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46 The paper by Nimruji Jammulamadaka, *Enabling processes as routines that facilitate cognitive*
47 *change*, describes the findings from an action research study on a reverse mentoring project in a large
48 metal manufacturing multinational in India. This unique paper explains how reverse mentoring was
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3 used to allow the organization's top management team to better understand the benefits of digitally
4 transforming the organization and the role the top management team can play during the transformation
5 process (Zwikael, Levin & Rad, 2008).
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8 The authors found that new cognitions through learning and the establishment of routines may be
9 necessary to ensure the top management team can respond to the strategic challenges before their
10 organization. These challenges specifically relate to enabling the top management team to appreciate
11 what is involved when transforming an organization from an old economy business model to one more
12 adapted to the digital era. However, it was not as simple as expecting members of the top management
13 team to be responsive to what they learned from their younger mentors. Various interventions were
14 necessary, suggesting that learning and cognitive change will take the form of strategy as way-finding
15 (Chia & Holt, 2009).
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20 These interventions involved addressing the specifics of the strategy, the challenges associated with
21 changing cognition through learning, and the dynamic capabilities that would be necessary to develop
22 in the organization over time. Moreover, formulation and implementation were not found to be a step-
23 wise process but a melding of experiences and vistas, including the curating of experiences that could
24 bring about cognitive change geared towards developing (new) dynamic capabilities. Likewise,
25 strategic change does not always equate to the need to replace a top management team; cognitive and
26 cultural inertia, including inertia associated with the existing managerial hierarchy or power structures
27 can be tackled through initiatives and projects, such as the reverse mentoring project described in the
28 paper. Workshops, stakeholder meetings and ongoing communications can also be used to ensure such
29 projects achieve their objectives (Zwikael & Smyrk, 2019).
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36 Importantly, though digitization especially through the establishment of centralized and real-time
37 dashboards is by itself a means for transforming an organization away from an old economy way of
38 doing things, it is important to consider the human side. Managers need to be shown how they can
39 identify, adapt and encode technological solutions across the organization so that they can take charge.
40 The high rate of strategy failure is not just attributable to poor resourcing, leadership or communication
41 but may also be related to the failure to create learning interventions designed to stimulate new
42 managerial cognitive-based experiences.
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47 The paper by Maqsood Ahmad, Syed Shah and Yasar Abbass, *The role of heuristic-driven biases in*
48 *entrepreneurial strategic decision-making: Evidence from an emerging economy*, and the 'sister' paper
49 by Maqsood Ahmad, *Does underconfidence matter in short-term and long-term investment decisions?*
50 *Evidence from an emerging market*, examine how heuristic-drive biases and, more generally, cognitive
51 biases influence strategic decision-making in an emerging economy. The papers were motivated by the
52 desire to understand if heuristic and cognitive biases, as described in the extant literature, are major
53 considerations when wanting to understand the strategic decision-making and the performance
54 outcomes that they yield in an emerging economy.
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3 The paper by Ahmad et al. (2021) combines the theoretical fields of cognitive psychology and
4 heuristic-driven biases to better understand Pakistani entrepreneurs and how they approach strategic
5 decision-making. It was found that heuristic-driven biases can impair the quality of entrepreneurial
6 decision-making in emerging markets. Despite heuristics being beneficial when making some decisions,
7 the authors found that in emerging markets where socio-political factors are associated with high levels
8 of uncertainty, cognitive biases are more likely to negatively impact how heuristics are developed and
9 applied. Compared to entrepreneurs in more developed economies where there is less socio-political
10 environmental uncertainty, entrepreneurs in emerging economies are more likely to make decisions
11 colored by anchoring, representativeness, availability, and overconfidence.
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14 Related to these ideas, the Ahmad (2021) paper focused on examining how underconfidence affects
15 those implementing an organization's financial strategy in Pakistan. The author found that
16 underconfidence does affect strategic decision-making performance. The problem with the reluctance
17 to use heuristics in rapidly evolving conditions is that opportunities and resources may not be fully
18 utilized. In the long-run, low trading volumes and the like will equate to far poorer results compared to
19 similar decision-makers in developed countries. The fear of poor portfolio inclusions and resourcing
20 decisions mean that learning and the investment in more diverse portfolios over time do not eventuate.
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23 Both of the papers on organizations in an emerging economy have important implications for
24 research, management practice and, more broadly, policy. The sooner useful heuristics can be identified
25 and used regularly across an organization with some degree of predictability or a level of assurance,
26 preferably by establishing organizational learning processes and/or easily accessible platforms, the
27 more likely investment strategies will be successfully implemented.
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30 In summary, the papers in the cognition and strategic change group (by Ahn et al., Acciarini et al.,
31 Jammulamadaka, Ahmad et al., and Ahmad, 2021) demonstrate that though we know more than ever
32 before about what is integral for achieving effective strategy and change outcomes, there are a variety
33 of multi-level capabilities that require further research. This includes learning more about their genesis,
34 that is, how successful organizations develop "the requisite skills and supports" to allow them to
35 outperform their contemporaries in a strategic change context. Indeed, much more needs to be learned
36 about the underlying enabling "motivational mechanisms operating on individuals, work groups and
37 the larger organization" and the goals that help to establish more effective behaviours and cognitions
38 that are key (Stouten, Rousseau & De Cremer, 2018: 778). For example, aligning the goals of change
39 initiatives and programs with organizational objectives is a key to ensure the effective operationalisation
40 of strategy implementation.
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43 These five papers also point to the importance of understanding the different "managerial cognitions"
44 that can be linked to high performance, especially what is involved when building sensing, seizing, and
45 reconfiguring capabilities (Helfat & Martin, 2015). For instance, sensing may require specific attention
46 and perceptual managerial cognitions while seizing and reconfiguring may require the presence of
47 specific communication related and social cognitions. Likewise, the papers support the view that
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3 “cognitive flexibility”, that is the ability to match Type 1 cognitive processes to “well-structured”
4 problems and Type 2 cognitive processes to “ill-structured” problems could make all the difference
5 (Laureiro-Martínez & Brusoni, 2016: 1031). Moreover, it is clear the more managers are given the
6 means to be able to identify their own cognitive failings and learn to become more cognitively agile,
7 the more capacity they will have to effectively interpret and successfully implement their organizations’
8 strategies (Helfat & Peteraf, 2015; Kahneman, 2011).
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14 **CONCLUSION**

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16 This special issue brings us a step closer to better understanding the interface between strategy
17 implementation and change management, in particular, what it means ‘to enable’ a strategy. The
18 multidisciplinary insights of the ten papers in this special issue, confirm the benefits of understanding
19 how specific (sub)processes and cognitions are connected and have the capacity to enable an appropriate
20 level of sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring to occur as is required over time. As to the latter, the papers
21 give us insight into the recursive practices being established and levered at many organizations via
22 platforms and other structures to lever their technology and knowledge base while compensating for
23 their people’s likely cognitive shortcomings. They also confirm that in a hypercompetitive, increasingly
24 institutionalised and ever-changing world, horizontal alignment is also necessary; it is not sufficient to
25 think in vertical alignment terms only when implementing a strategy and changing an organization as a
26 consequence.
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34 Importantly, the papers of this special issue suggest that it may be possible in the future to develop
35 a theory of enablement. This theory would explain how people at all levels of the organization and
36 across it can be brought together to deliberately ‘scaffold’ across and between activity domains and
37 distinct (sub)processes to contribute to the organization’s evolution and its people’s cognitive
38 development. This is as the strategy changes the organization and those changes alter the strategy and
39 so on. They also reveal that there are many questions that are yet to be answered. These include can
40 organizations have very different, yet equally effective, approaches by which their strategy
41 implementation and change projects are enabled, and to what extent should organizations adopt distinct
42 models of enablement because they have different histories, different resource bases, and different
43 strategic objectives?
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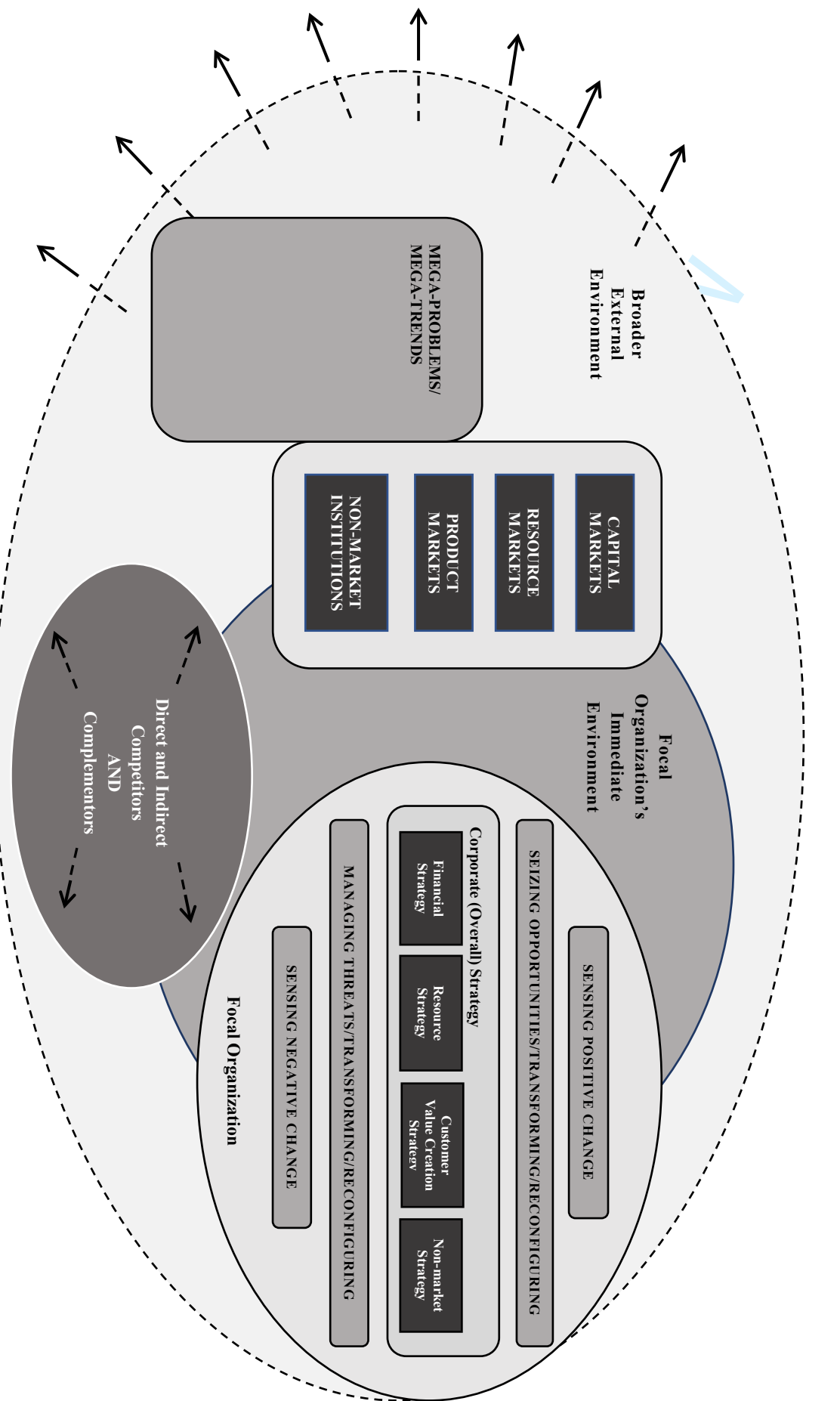


Figure 1: Underlying Contexts and Drivers for (Re)Organizing Strategically

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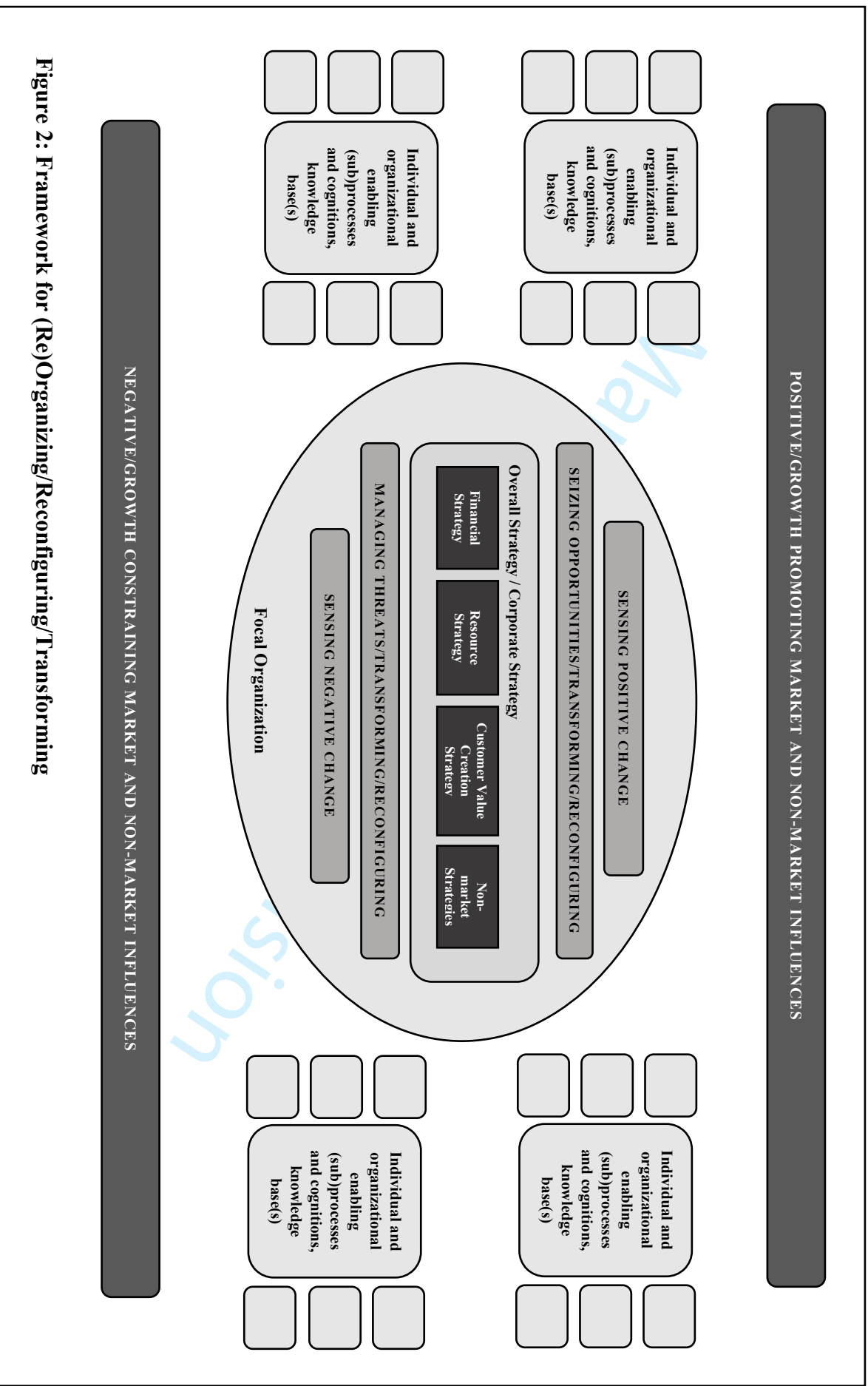
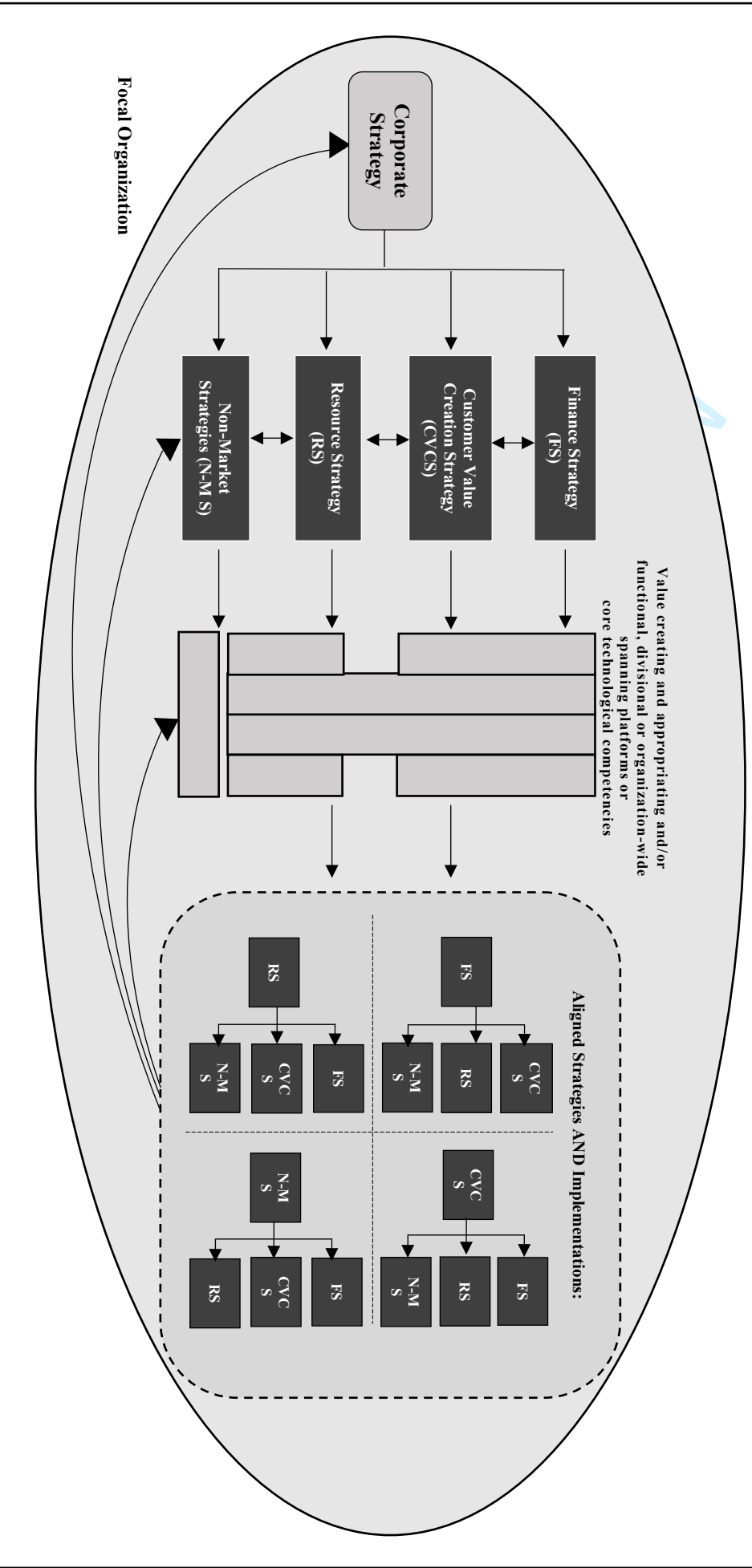


Figure 2: Framework for (Re)Organizing/Reconfiguring/Transforming

Figure 3:
Strategy and Change within the Contemporary Organization:
A Conceptual Model



**Figure 4: A Hypothetical Organization's Evolution:
(Re)Configuring/Transformation Over Time**

