
In this introductory chapter the rationale for and philosophy behind Images of Strategy are outlined. We argue that the conventional twentieth-century history of management and strategy leads us to unquestioningly assume that organizations are, for all people at all times, triangular hierarchies; that strategy is enacted by 'the men at the top', and that it is about long-term planning, directing, organizing and controlling. At a philosophical level, we deconstruct this history before reconstructing an alternative

vision – one based on a broader 'pre-modern' heritage. Here, organization could take many forms and strategy could, correspondingly, be many things and be seen through many images. At a practical level, we use the analogy of how people are oriented and animated by maps to argue that this broader heritage simply reinstates a more pragmatic view of how everyday people use many different frameworks in developing strategy in complex environments over time.

1 Images of Strategy

STEPHEN CUMMINGS AND
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The young lieutenant of a Hungarian detachment in the Alps sent a reconnaissance unit into the icy wilderness. It began to snow immediately, and unexpectedly continued to snow for two days. The unit did not return. The lieutenant feared that he had dispatched his own people to death. However, on the third day the unit came back. Where had they been? How had they made their way? 'Yes,' they said: 'We considered ourselves lost and waited for the end. We did not have any maps, compasses or other equipment with which to ascertain our position or a probable route out. But then one of us found an old tattered map in a seldom used pocket. That calmed us down. The map did not seem to quite fit the terrain but eventually we discovered our bearings. We followed the map down the mountain and after a few wrong turns eventually found our way.' The lieutenant borrowed the map and had a good look at it. 'This isn't a map of the Alps,' he said. 'It's a map of the Pyrenees.'

Karl Weick, Substitutes for Strategy (1987)

The vignette above is extremely popular in courses that deal with strategy. The analogy is immediately recognizable. The notion that the value of a map, just like the value of a strategic framework, model or image, comes not just from its ability to represent the environment objectively in all its detail, but from its ability to focus minds and help people take a particular course, strikes a chord. This analogy, indicating the relationship between a map and the individual process of *mapping* a particular journey, is the key to understanding the unique philosophy of images of strategy.

An organization's strategy can be described as its 'course', its onward movement in space and time, where it goes and where it does not go. Strategic frameworks, images and theories should be to an organization what the map was to the Hungarian soldiers. They can help people to orient themselves or *think strategically*, by offering a language by which complex options can be simply understood, communicated, bounced around and debated, enabling a group to focus in order to learn about themselves and what they want to achieve, and locate themselves in relation to their environment.

They can also foster *acting strategically* by getting people beyond indecision so as to begin the process of mapping and taking a course.

In other words, strategy frameworks, images or maps help people to do their own mapping, thereby kick-starting an oscillating thinking-acting, or ‘strategizing’, process which instils a momentum that brings other choices and possibilities to the fore. It may not get people ‘down the mountain’ in a straight line, but it gets things moving, and when things move other things come into view. In short, the interaction between the general map and the mapping of a particular course *orients* and *animates*, and no course is likely to be effectively taken without a measure of each of these things. Indeed, the question we are most often asked is probably ‘How do you tell a good strategy from a bad one (beyond the obvious *post-hoc* financial measures)?’ The best answer we have is that a good strategy, whether explicit or implicit, is one that both orients a company and animates it (see Figure 1.1).

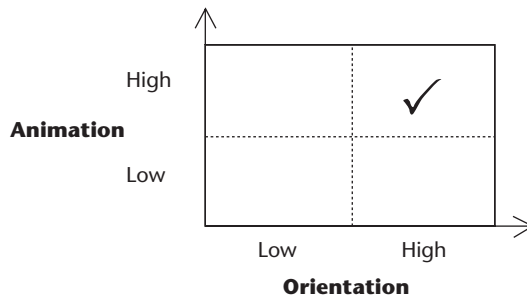


Figure 1.1 Strategy = orientation plus animation

Academic writing on strategy almost disappeared up an alley of its own making in the 1990s. ‘Turf wars’ were fought over which ‘school’, image or set of maps most accurately represented strategy, or by which set of criteria strategic decisions should be made. Some said strategy was instigated at the top of the organizational triangle and required logical forethought and rationally *designed explicit plans*. Others argued that strategy might be formalized by those at the top, but in reality this was where the ‘rubber met the sky’ – strategy actually happened at the ‘base’ of the company. Here salespeople met customers, research scientists met test tubes, and ideas were formulated. Good ideas developed on the ground would then *emerge* into policy from the *bottom-up* (see Figure 1.2).

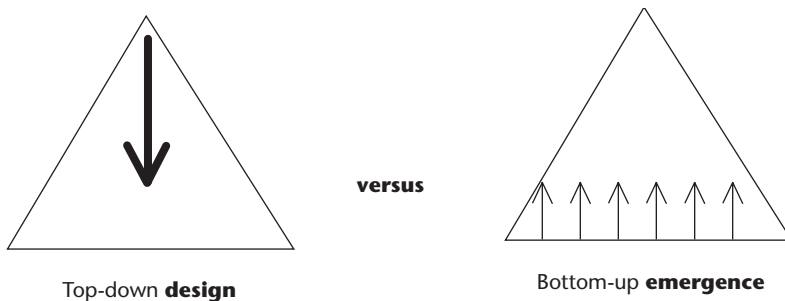


Figure 1.2 Top-down design versus bottom-up emergence

Some claimed industrial economics as the discipline to which we must look for foundations. Others countered that psychology, history and political science were more useful means of grasping the strategy nettle. The disagreements became so fractious that scholars despaired that we could not even come up with a logically coherent definition of the field, and wrote editorials asking: ‘Were the many decades of vigorous development wasted? Does anybody at least *know* what strategy is?’

Thinking through how people use maps enables us not to get caught up in this ultimately fruitless line of debate. Let us say that you have arranged to meet a friend at a small pub in the country. It is about a three-hour drive from the city where you live. How many maps or images would you use to get there? Probably quite a few:

- A motorway map to plan the direction of the route, key interchanges, how long it should take you and so on before you set out.
- A street map of your city to determine the best exit and how you might get there.
- A map indicating the location of service stations if you found you needed to stop for gas or other supplies.
- A more detailed road map would be useful if you encountered roadworks on the motorway and wanted to find a quicker alternative route.
- A map drawn on the back of an envelope by your friend the last time you met, indicating the key turns and landmarks as you leave the motorway exit and approach the pub, would come in handy.
- And, a ‘psychological map’ of the friend who drew that map, indicating why he might draw or pick out things in the way he does would also help.

In addition you will consult road signs along the way and your onboard navigational system if you have one. If you have passengers with you no doubt you will debate some of the options in terms of the maps and signs.

The point is that for even a simple journey no one map exists that captures all perspectives, information and knowledge – attempting to create one would result in an almighty mess – and no single map can be objectively defined as ‘the best’. You get where you are going by *combining* or *going between* your knowledge of where you want to get to and a number of different maps – maps compiled by a number of different people from different disciplinary pictures that provide *differing images*. What helps you in mapping and taking a course is a montage of fragments from these images networked together in your mind for the purposes of that particular journey. In the perilous situation that the Hungarian army platoon found themselves, one map, no matter how dubious, was better than none. In the more ‘everyday’ example described in the paragraph above, many maps or images are better than one.

Images of Strategy argues that it is useful to think of strategy in these terms. We believe that it is not important to ascertain ‘what strategy is’ without logical contradiction; or ‘whether strategy is top-down planning or bottom-up emergence’. It is more useful to see what we can understand about our particular organizations by looking at how strategy develops through each of these images. It is also limiting to think of organizations through the image of the triangle, a traditional notion that the top-down versus bottom-up debate seems to reinforce and an assumption that has pervaded modern strategic thinking, as explored later in this chapter. It is not helpful to argue whether economics or psychology or ethics provides the correct background needed to understand strategy and make strategic choices (that is like arguing that the *London A-Z* is better than a London Tube map). It is more useful to ask how the

various frameworks each provides may help us configure or understand particular strategic courses. It is not useful to argue, for example, that Michael Porter's strategy frameworks are too simplistic to represent accurately the real world. This misses the point that the strength of a simple, not overly detailed map (the back of the envelope, the Tube map), is its simplicity. Indeed, even a map of a related but different terrain (e.g. the Pyrenees may be a mountain but it is a different mountain) can stimulate debate and help orient and animate.

Different images of strategy, like different maps attempting to picture a complex world, project different relationships between objects and structures. Recognizing this immediately calls into question the notion that there should be one best image, school or map of strategy that most objectively represents the way things really are for organizations. Moreover, it questions the approach of many traditional strategy academics who sought to develop ever more exacting representations of the strategy process and present them as better, or more evolved, than others. The detail incorporated into these maps (an example is provided later in this chapter) prevents people from being able to see quickly and debate their own particular situation. In other words getting too caught up in developing all-encompassing world-views or convoluted planning procedures hinders the individual mapping process. Things tend to become bogged down in exacting orientation: all plotting and planning and no animation or action. However, this recognition also questions the response of many academics who took great delight in deconstructing and dismissing all images of strategy as too simple to capture the complexity of business. This is perhaps even less useful to scholars and managers. It is hard to engage in mapping particular courses if you do not have any maps to begin with. Things tend to become all animation and no orientation, a lot of charging about to no end.

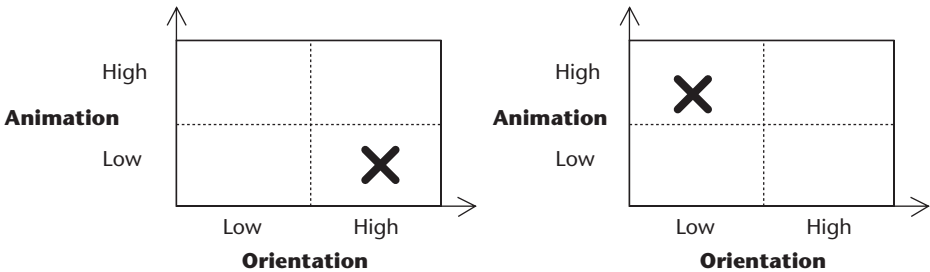


Figure 1.3 Low animation, high orientation; and high animation, low orientation

In this book it is argued that the art of strategy lies both in the combination of frameworks, images or maps and the choice of their focus (e.g., the big picture versus certain detail), toward mapping an organization's particular course. It is like the art of orienteering, like being an explorer moving into territories that are not certainly charted. Interestingly this is the view of strategy that influenced the civilization that gave us the term, the Ancient Greeks. The Greeks likened a military or political strategist (*strategos*) to a helmsmen on inshore vessels who had to *weave* their maps of the territory and their understanding of the prevailing currents with their ship's purpose and their own skill with a rudder. The Greeks likened strategic wisdom to *oscillating* between different positions and perspectives toward a particular purpose. *Images of*

Strategy seeks a return to a similar vision which encourages the reader to connect with *many* perspectives, models or images of strategy in terms of their ability to help you orient and animate organizations, or understand how they are currently animated and oriented. What is meant by this may be further explained by developing the map analogy in the light of the ancients' different approach.

In the sections that follow, there is related the history of what maps have depicted and how people have sought to use them to the history of the meaning of the word strategy. This discussion is divided into three parts:

- the first focuses on an ancient or 'pre-modern' approach;
- the second investigates how this perspective was challenged and changed by 'modern' scientific thinking in the last half of the second millennium and how this informs conventional views of strategy and its recent fractious either/or debates;
- the third outlines an approach more in keeping with a 'postmodern' landscape.

Pre-modern Maps and Mapping: The Subjective Web

Plate 1.1 shows a map that immediately offends modern sensibilities. It appears naïve. It is drawn as if its maker was standing on the ground in the middle of the tangled web that is his or her town. Some things are drawn in (e.g., houses), but others are left out (e.g., elevations). The church is not to scale. However, despite these things (and

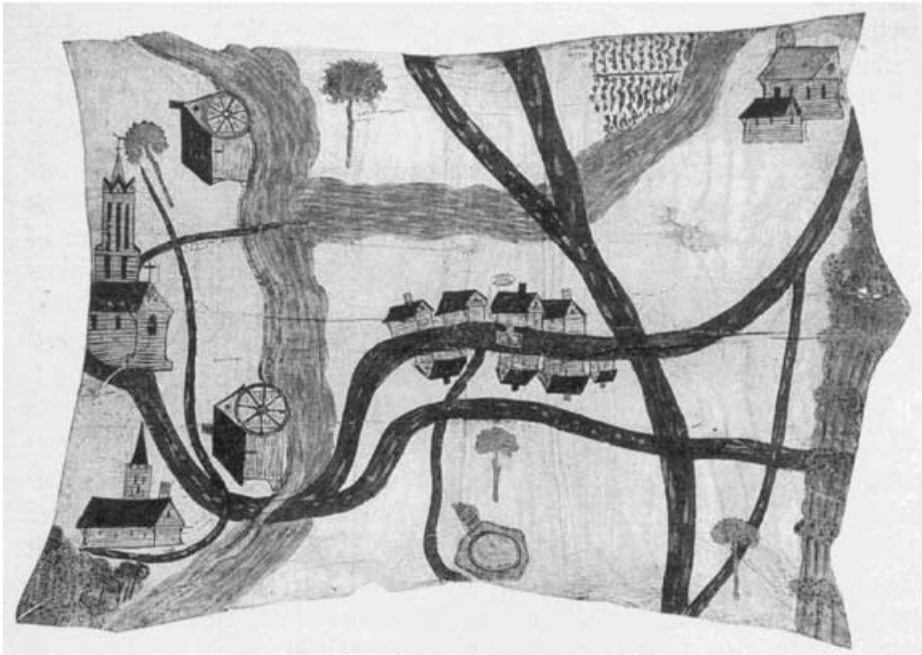


Plate 1.1 The subjectivity of pre-modern mapping: 'Plan des dimes de Champeaux'; a fifteenth-century map

Source: 'Plan des dimes de Champeaux'; Archives Nationales de France.

because of them), this map is, to borrow the words of one young executive who was recently shown the map as part of a perception exercise, 'more real than maps we're used to'.

It is 'more real' because it shows the things experienced in everyday life and it is drawn from a personal perspective. Here the houses and the oversized church indicate their relative importance to the mapmaker and his community. It is 'more real' in the same sense that a map drawn on an envelope by a friend indicating how to find a pub means more than a road atlas. It relates to particular aspects and it is imbued with a personality. This is why it is animating, useful and memorable (indeed even if you leave such a map at home by mistake its mental 'imprint' will likely still guide you). Pre-modern mapping emphasized the personal or sensuous rather than the rational and objective qualities of spatial order. Subsequently, pre-modern maps were involving and organic in the sense that they could be added to, re-interpreted and/or modified in the light of a particular traveller's experiences. A sense of relief could easily be added so that the map depicts hills, valleys or other important milestones and particular indicators of progress (e.g., watch out for the shop near the tree).

But how could the ancients countenance such subjective relativism? It may have been because they lacked a knowledge of perspective or because it was only later that emerging capitalist states would require objective grids to determine land ownership, but it was also due to their different way of conceiving people's relationship with the world. Rather than the prevalent modern view of gaining certain objective knowledge from a detached perspective, over and above particular events, the ancients saw the world subjectively. Because they saw the individual human being as a 'microcosm' of the universal 'macrocosm' (see Plate 1.2) the Ancient Greeks, for example, sought knowledge by finding certain characteristics in themselves before then going on to form relationships with other things by seeing analogical connections. Thus they viewed animals, vegetables and land as intelligent organisms with particular 'personalities' and purposes. Prior to modernity, opium made one drowsy because poppies had a dormant 'gait', not because the drug had a corpuscular structure that acted on physiological structures in such a way as to cause a relaxed state. Similarly, the reason why a paste made from walnut skins cured external head injuries was that the nut of the fruit looked like a human brain. The modern world has since determined other, more scientific reasons, for this phenomenon.

In the pre-modern world, *webs* of knowledge developed by interpreting the signs that linked beings and things. This interpretation required maintaining a 'sympathetic' connection with the experience of, or 'stepping into the shoes of', other beings rather than detaching oneself and breaking down their mechanistic components. Over time, a particular individual would be seen as connected to a particular constellation of stars, which was associated with the stories told of a particular god, and these were linked to the nature of particular plants, and so on (see Plate 1.3).

Given the subjective, interpretative and unfolding nature of knowing, wisdom was also perceived differently by the ancients. From their foundation myths to their belief in *many* personable gods and goddesses (who had particular penchants and were not all-seeing and all-knowing unlike the unitary Judeo-Christian deity), they assumed an unresolvable tension between, and mutuality of, chaos and cosmos (or order). Consequently, the Greeks did not see wisdom as being able to represent the order of things with objective certainty so that things could be predicted and controlled, but as 'metos'. Metos meant the ability to *oscillate* or steer a course between:

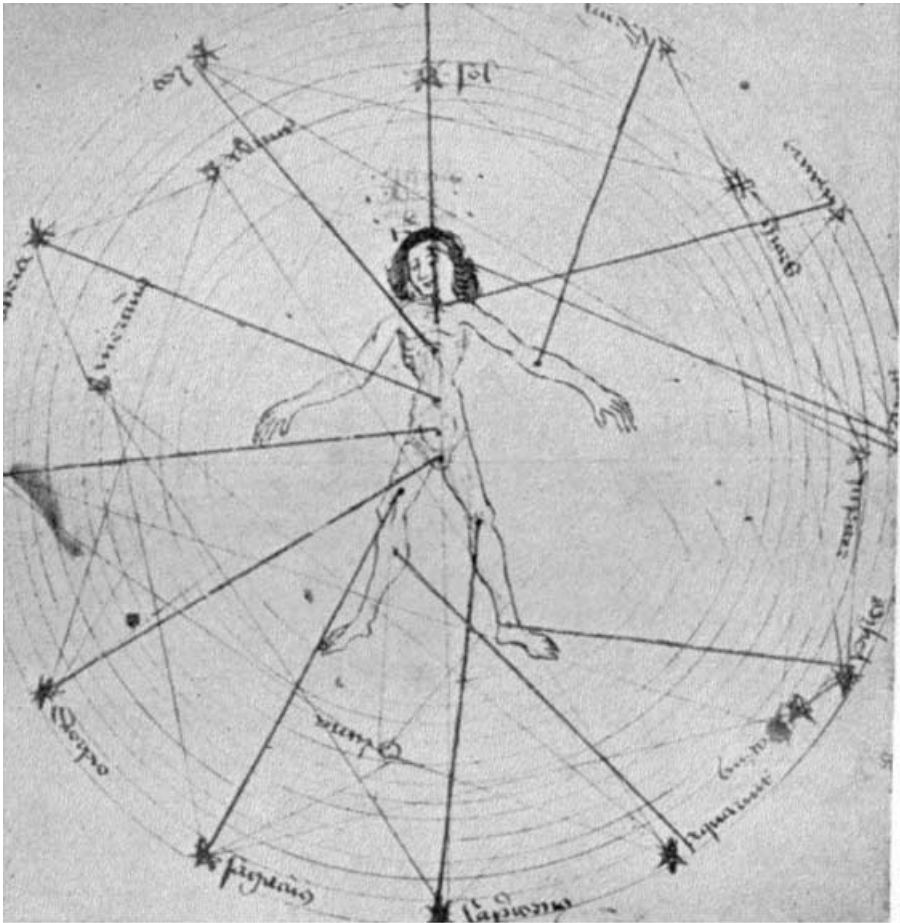


Plate 1.3 Pre-modern microcosmic webs of knowledge
Source: Vienna (Nat-Bibl., ms.2359, f.52v) (web at top right superimposed).

- (1) the world of order or *cosmos*, of forms, laws or maps; and
 - (2) the world of *chaos*, of the multiple, the unstable and the unlimited nature of affairs;
- in order to engage in mapping a prudent course.

Metos was characterized by an ability to bring to bear a number of different frameworks with which to confront particular situations at any given moment and move quickly between these two realms. To be 'polyvalent' or more multiple; to be sufficiently wily to bend one's course of action and be able to go in many different directions as needs be. It is for this reason that Odysseus, so admired by the Greeks, was

given the epithet ‘resourceful’, and lauded as ‘expert in all manners of contending’. His greatness lay in the ability to bring the right interpretation or experiences or image to bear so as to determine the best move for him given the way a situation was unfolding.

These pre-modern approaches to mapping and knowing relate to the original meaning of the word ‘strategy’. The progenitor of strategy is the title of ‘strategos’, developed in 508 BC in conjunction with the democratizing organizational reforms of Kleisthenes who instituted ten tribal divisions as military and political sub-units of Athens. The new units cut across traditional regional boundaries to create a matrix structure with each ‘slice’ effectively the whole in microcosm. Each tribe was to be commanded by an elected strategos – a title developed by compounding: ‘stratos’ (an army spreading out over the ground), and ‘agein’ (to lead).

Kleisthenes’ restructure paralleled increasing military and political complexity. Warfare had developed to a point where sides increasingly relied upon a network of many different types of units fighting on several different fronts, depending on particular circumstances, and direct democracy required responding to many different points of view.

The organizational image influencing this conception of strategy was therefore somewhat different from the modern triangular view. It was contextual and amorphous, more like the web illustrated in Plate 1.3. In keeping with this and with the conception of metos, strategy here was thus about oscillating between order and uncertainty. It was about detached long-term forethought, planning and ordering in advance of corporate action. However, as the frontlines were the best place to read the ‘becoming’ mood of events, to implement plans or to adapt and change plans as events emerged or unfolded, strategoi were at once expected to be at or connected to the nodes where action took place (either physically or relationally). Thus, strategy also happened here, either in the person of the strategos or developed by others better placed to reinterpret things.

Furthermore, given that the organizational form operated on many different fronts at once, depending on particular circumstances, strategy had to ‘spread out’ according to the form that the organization took at a particular point in time. Hence, strategy occurred at all levels and parts of what we would see as the organizational hierarchy, as a blend of what we might call strategy, tactics and operations. The Athenians, given this conception, would have had trouble comprehending the ‘wars’ between the top-down design and bottom-up emergence schools of thought. Strategy was about the interplay of design and emergence, in the same way that metos required oscillating between cosmos and chaos, model and circumstance, map and mapping. Ordered maps or design in advance of action provided necessary impetus, but once underway the art of strategy lay in ‘working with the flow’ as unforeseen opportunities rendered plans less than optimal, just like an expert helmsman.

Modern Maps and Mapping: The Triangle and the Objective Grid

The microcosm was the commonplace means of depicting knowledge relationships in Europe until it vanished suddenly at the end of the sixteenth century. This disappearance coincided with changes in mapping and linked in to changes in deity (from many



Plate 1.4 The objective grids of modern mapping – a sixteenth-century map
 Source: Woodcut world map on an oval projection, from Bordone's *Isolario* (Venice, 1528).

personable gods and goddesses to one all-seeing, all-knowing, all-planning, all-organizing, all-directing, all-controlling God). Moderns imagined how the world would look to God, from outside and above, and were able to apply general mathematical principles to what was increasingly seen by capitalist nation-states, as 'the problem of objective representation' (Plate 1.4). Modern maps hence became universal unchanging grids for the general representation and control of phenomena in space; they were no longer open to subjective interpretation and development.

The ensuing 'mind shift' is often illustrated by the new 'geometry' of Elizabethan portraiture (Plate 1.5), which shows the human mind (and particularly the Crown) over the world of operations, indicating the power over affairs granted by an objective view above the 'big picture'. While monarchs are not so bold as to use this imagery now, it is still utilized by the heads of global corporations and management consultancies (see Plate 1.6).

This triangular conception, with Man's mind best placed at 'the top' to look down upon life's workings objectively, is borne out by the shape of the scientific method that emerged, through a series of development in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

- (1) Galileo's refutation of the Aristotelian view that all things are animated by a unique purpose in keeping with their particular 'personality' and should thus be studied differently;
- (2) Descartes' detachment of matter (best understood in terms of underlying mechanistic functions) from the human mind (the only thing unable to be understood in these terms and subsequently 'over and above' matter); and
- (3) Newton's combination of empirical observation, inductive and deductive logic and hypothesizing toward certain general laws.

These discoveries led to the development of the modern scientific method (Figure 1.4).



Plate 1.5 The modern gaze – Elizabethan portraiture (showing the world as ‘subject’ to the monarch ‘over and above’)

Source: Top – the ‘Armada’ Portrait (1588), reproduced by kind permission of the Marquess of Tavistock and the Trustees of the Bedford Estate; bottom – the ‘Ditchley’ Portrait (1592), showing the monarch standing over a map of England and Wales; reproduced by kind permission of the National Portrait Gallery.



Plate 1.6 The new modern monarchs? Top – chairmen of KPMG and Ernst & Young; bottom – advertisement for a recruitment fair for management consultants

Source: Top – © Adrian Sherratt/Times Newspapers Ltd, London (21 February 1998). This photograph accompanied an article entitled 'KPMG Chief Proposes Far-reaching Changes'; bottom – image from front cover of brochure entitled 'Rekrutierung von Top-Consulting Nachwuchs in Deutschland' (July 2000).

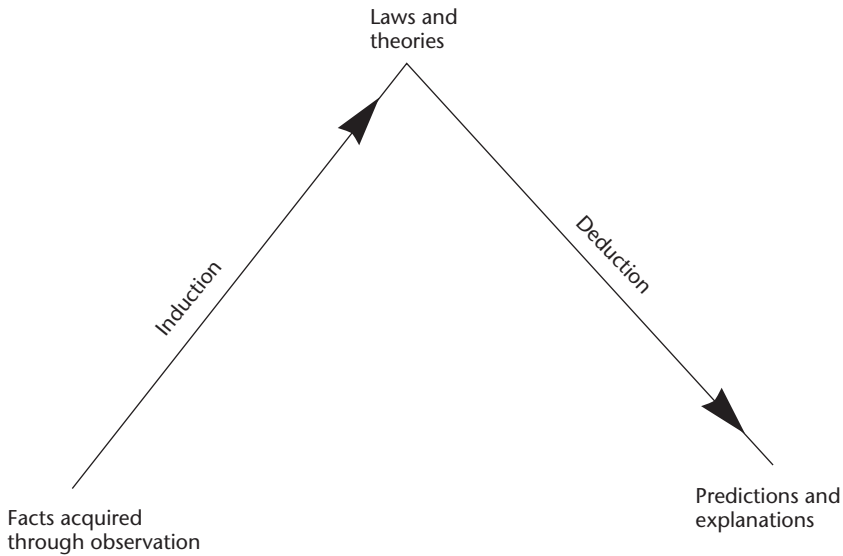


Figure 1.4 The geometry of the modern scientific gaze
 Source: Chalmers, 'What Is This Thing Called Science?' (1999).

In a Europe troubled by religious and civic uncertainty the likes of Descartes' quest for certainty over particular sensual differences was well received. The subsequent discovery of universal material laws by way of the scientific method, like Newton's theory of gravitation, inspired others to apply it in an increasing number of spheres. The existence of many disparate schools of thought in Europe to this point, a manifestation of pre-modernity's acceptance of subjectivity and different interpretations, would gradually be overcome. The late seventeenth century witnessed the development of state-run knowledge institutes (e.g., The British Royal Society, The Académie française), with the expressed aim of 'bringing together all manner of different thinkers from different traditions'. All serious inquiries would be carried out and centralized by way of the scientific gaze.

The organization of the new objective knowledge being gathered would also follow the triangular hierarchical form. Once a unitary scientific method was established, thinkers could forgo time spent developing and justifying methods and get on with specializing and probing particular branches, knowing that others would be taken care of in a similar fashion. The Prospectus of the 1780 *Encyclopédie*, one of a number of new works bringing together the observations of experts in different fields, illustrates the form well. Here 'general manager' of the project Denis Diderot announced that forming the 'tree of all knowledge' was the 'first crucial step' in the volume's planning. While knowledge now had many branches, sub-branches and leaves, they could all be connected back to a unitary stem, a universal strategic plan of attack: scientific 'raison' or reason (Plate 1.7).

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed the replication of arboreal-triangular form toward greater certainty and order of explanation with regard to Man's

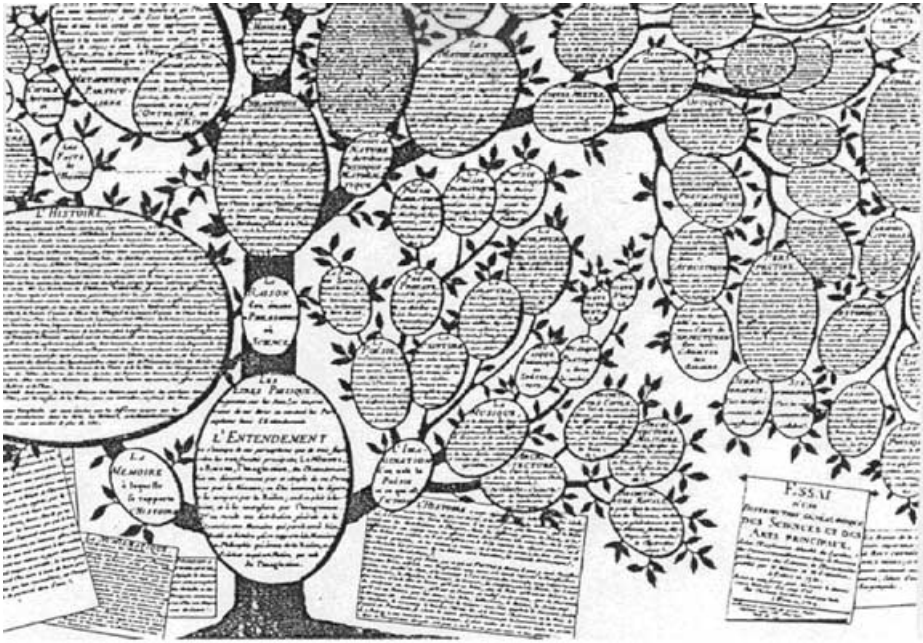


Plate 1.7 The modern ‘Tree of knowledge’ – the schema underlying Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*, with ‘Raison’ as the central unifying trunk

Source: Frontispiece of volume 1 of the index of *Encyclopédie* (Paris: Hermann, 1751–80); only a portion is shown here.

place in the world: from Darwin’s trees of evolution, showing the commonality of our origins, to the biological hierarchies found in textbooks (Plate 1.8). Knowledge or wisdom, given this perspective, was no longer subject to particular circumstances or individual re-interpretation; it was no longer time- or context-dependent; it was no longer about metos. It was about discovering and representing the essential stability that underlies particularities toward *ever more complex and certain images*, furthering the stock of cosmos and reducing chaos, about improving the representational quality of maps and reducing the individual guess work in mapping.

Because corporate strategy, as we tend to understand it today, was born in the middle of the twentieth century, the height of scientific or modernist optimism, it is exclusively fashioned upon these images. Alfred Chandler’s classic 1962 definition of strategy ‘The determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise’, is premised upon the diagram reproduced in Figure 1.5 (a mirror image of Diderot’s Tree); an enterprise that Chandler saw as having ‘two specific characteristics: *many distinct operating units managed by a hierarchy of salaried executives*’. To this day strategy is subsequently seen by textbooks as management at the highest, overriding and most detached level ‘the planning, directing, organizing and controlling of a company’s strategy related (i.e., higher level and longer-term) decisions’. The geometrical image upon which this view was based was fleshed out by Igor Ansoff. Ansoff began his work by identifying a gap between:

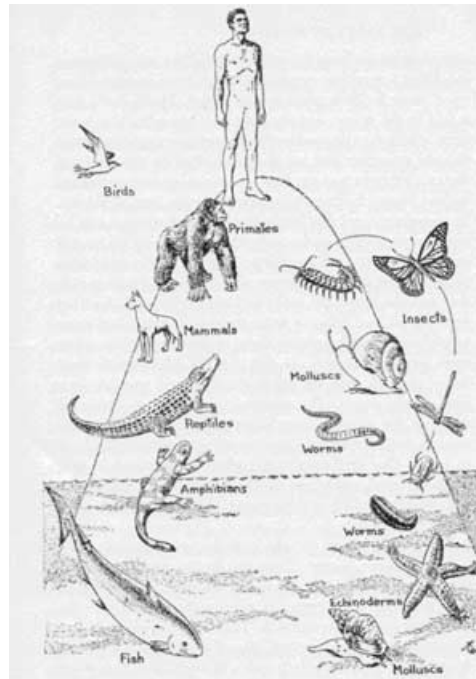
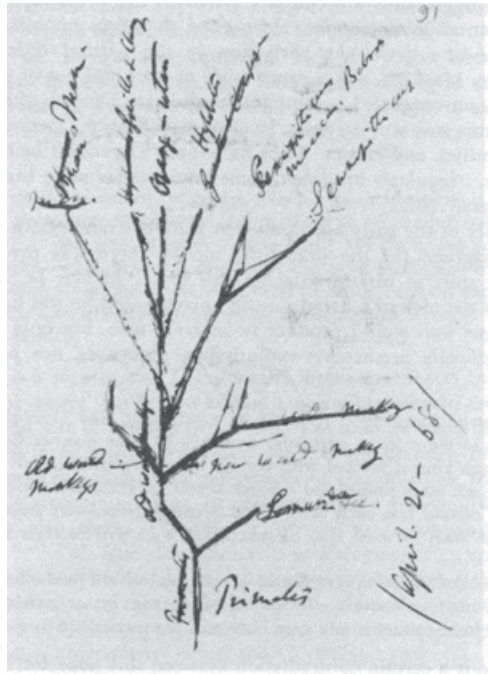


Plate 1.8 Darwin's Tree, showing the relation of Man to other primates and the modern biological triangle
 Source: Drawing by Charles Darwin (21 April 1868), courtesy of Cambridge University Library; J.T. Bonner, *The Ideas of Biology* (Fakenham: Cox & Wyman, 1962).

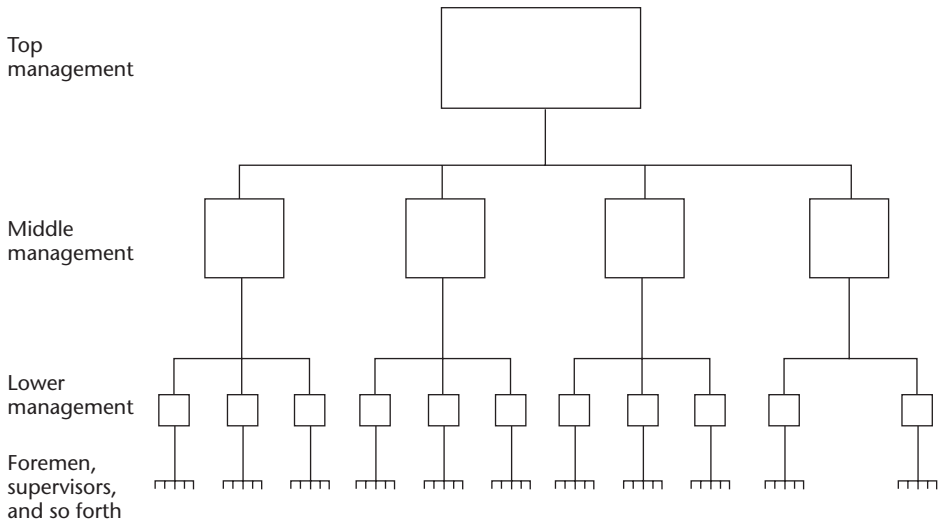


Figure 1.5 Chandler's view of organization
 Source: Chandler, *The Visible Hand* (1977).

- increasingly complex business environments and multi-business firms, which created a desire for foresightful ways of positioning companies in order to exploit environmental change; and
- a current theory set based on the prevailing microeconomic theoretical conception of the firm. This view saw organizations as simply turning resources into outputs through a production function and assumed that managers just manipulated the factors under their control to maximize profits and offered managers little decision-making guidance as to how they could take different positions.

Ansoff defined strategy as 'a rule for making decisions pertaining to a firm's match to its environment' and set out to 'enrich the theoretical conception of the firm'. This 'enrichment' involved adding a layer on top of the microeconomic theory of the firm called 'management process', and outlining three distinctive action or decision areas: administrative or tactical, operational and strategic (see Figure 1.6):

- *Administration* related to establishing the central stem of management and logistic processes.
- *Operations* related to the maximization of operational efficiency within the process parameters set by the administration.
- *Strategy* related to establishing an organization's overall relationship to its environment. It is, therefore, carried out by the 'men at the top' – those best placed to gain an objective 'global' view, forecast and represent changes in the environment and position and control corporate development accordingly.

The classical, or 'design', school thus perceives strategy as separate from, overseeing and proceeding, organizational action in a linear-hierarchical manner. It is about developing the most accurate and objective grid-map of the environment possible, then ori-

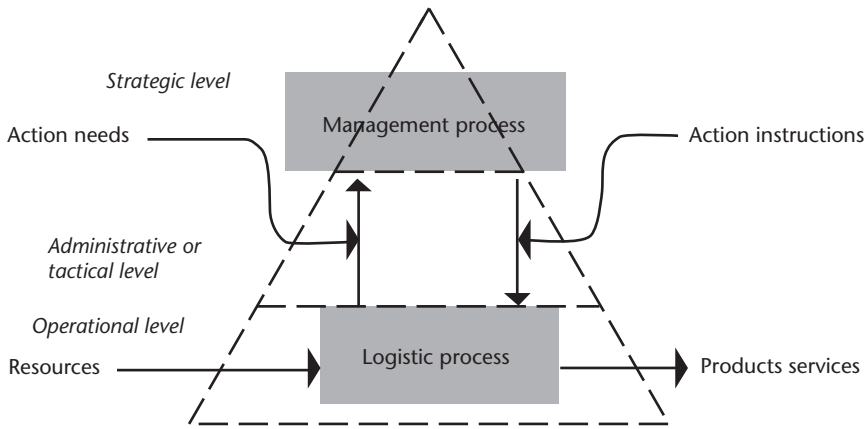


Figure 1.6 Ansoff's development of strategy
Source: H.I. Ansoff, *Business Strategy* (1969) (levels superimposed).

enting or positioning the company, and formulating rational plans as to where the company will move in the future.

Ansoff and Chandler's triangular-hierarchical image matched that of the foundational reports into the organization of business schools – 1959's Carnegie and Ford studies. These reports concluded that in order to counter the disparate 'organic' growth of programmes with differing contributing 'specialisms', it had to be realized that 'economics has traditionally provided the only theoretical framework for the study of business'. Economics then became the central stem to which other courses in a management degree would be connected. Having outlined this central gaze and then using it as a basis on which to determine a properly ordered range of contributing subjects, the studies advocated the standardization of the curricula's super-level or 'sharp end'. They recommended the development of 'capstone courses' that would allow students to 'pull together what they have learned in the separate business fields'. These tips of the educational triangle would become courses in 'corporate strategy'. As Kenneth Andrews noted, the ensuing 'establishment of Business Schools provided the basis for the education of strategic managers and the divisionalized structure of organizations provided the form for them to work within'.

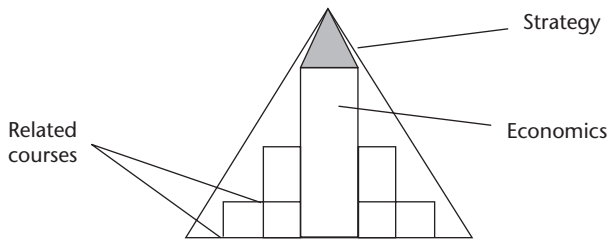


Figure 1.7 Strategy as a capstone

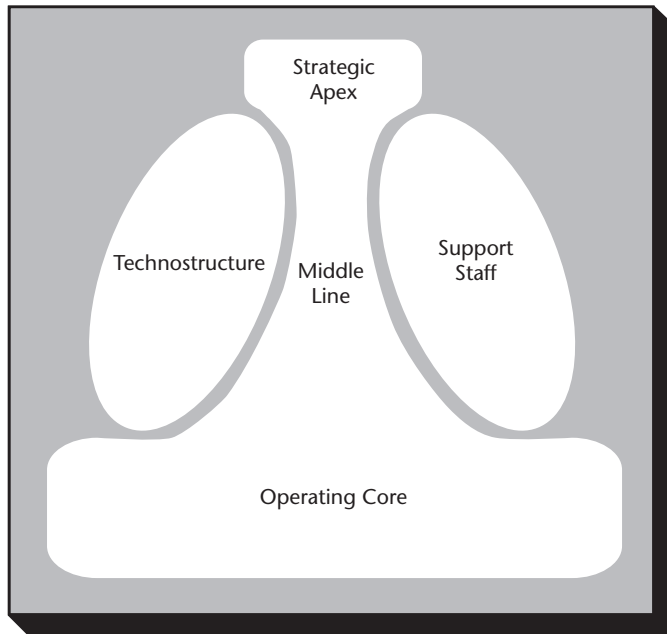


Figure 1.8 Mintzberg's 'organic' organization – the generic underlying functions

Source: H. Mintzberg, *Structures in Fives: Designing Effective Organizations* (© H. Mintzberg, 1983, second edition); reproduced by permission of Pearson Education Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.

It was this triangular-hierarchical view and its promotion of strategy as a top-down environmental map-drawing affair that Henry Mintzberg sought to bring down in the first half of the 1990s. However, in opposing this, 'emergence' theorists reasserted the triangle as the image with which we think strategy.

In the early 1970s, Mintzberg's research found that practising managers were far less rational and foresightful map-makers than the literature on management supposed. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, he led the way in prescribing a more 'organic' view of organizations. Mintzberg sought to get beyond the standard mechanistic 'boxes and lines' hierarchy by seeing organizations as shaped by generic elements (a strategic apex, a middle co-ordinating stem and a broad operating base where the action takes place – see Figure 1.8). The end result, while less rigid, is still essentially triangular.

Mintzberg's challenge to the 'classical' design view of strategy shows the influence of these two earlier projects. Mintzberg argued that the views of Ansoff and others were dependent on 'the fallacy of detachment', the belief that thinking and doing are separate. Managers were not rational, logical, directors – their courses were influenced by politics and historical or patterns of behaviour over time. Consequently, Mintzberg found that the interaction crucial to strategy does not happen between top executives and the environment – it occurs where employees at the operational base of the organization interact with one another and react to or anticipate customer needs and wants.

Over time, the mapping that goes on here may create patterns of behaviour that filter up the apex to be formalized in plans (or maps), but strategy did not come from the top. Mintzberg and other emergence theorists subsequently argued that ‘real strategy’ emerges ‘bottom-up’.

The debate between what became known as the ‘emergence’ school and the planning or ‘design’ school, began fairly inclusively (Mintzberg called for an opening up of the definition of strategy to include patterns, perspectives and ploys, *in addition* to planning and positioning). However, things became increasingly polarized in the first half of the 1990s. In so doing, they reflected one of the modernity’s key tenets: ‘objective representationalism’; the idea that the purpose of knowledge is to represent, without logical contradiction, the ‘ways things really are’ or the linear, functional causes of actions. Given this, finding opposing schools of thought is problematic for any field seeking to develop as a modern science. Hence, there appeared to be much at stake. Mintzberg’s views became more strident in a series of published debates with Ansoff, and he was backed up by new strategy gurus such as Gary Hamel, C.K. Prahalad and Ralph Stacey, who ‘uncompromisingly rejected conventional strategic management frameworks, with their trite future-mission statements and flimsy strategic plans’.

Ansoff, however, was clear that the evidence he was continuing to gather backed up the planning view of how strategy really develops, an assertion reaffirmed by heavyweights such as Michael Porter. Porter, whose models build upon microeconomic and design school premises (the arrangement of Porter’s value chain and the horizontal line of his five forces of industry – see Figure 1.9 – replicate the microeconomic input–process–output model that Ansoff ‘enriched’), and are still the most popular modern strategy grids, entered the fray in a *Harvard Business Review* article titled ‘What is Strategy?’ Here he argued that the ‘new dogma’, based on the mistaken belief that strategy happens ‘further down’ organizations, was leading to several problems and a subsequent lack of focus on ‘real strategy’. The best remedy, Porter said, was a ‘reconnection’ with the classical design view.

By the late 1990s the debate between the emergence and design camps was being described by eminent commentators as ‘tectonic’, indicating how seemingly fundamental it had become. However, tracing strategy back to its ancient fundamentals, as we did in the previous section, might have led to a different conclusion. In a world where strategy was about both design and emergence, about what we call strategy and tactics and operations, or where many competing schools of thought were normal, such a chilly polarization could not have set in.

However, the protagonists in the 1990s’ debate did not recognize the pre-modern perspective as a point of reference. Indeed, one of the reasons that Mintzberg’s ideas were ‘reactionary’, and consequently a mirror image of his top-down opponents, was that he identified Ansoff as where corporate strategy began and as what he was opposing. Mintzberg did mention the Ancient Greek origins of the concept in an earlier article, but disparaged them as a simpler version of the top-down planning approach. Stacey was similarly dismissive of strategy’s ancient military heritage, seeing it as a reason why we have a mistaken top-down view of strategy. The ancient world-view was misconstrued as a less refined and less educated version of our own.

What we want to put forward in *Images of Strategy* is another way of looking at strategic development – a way that circumvents the ‘tectonic debates’; a way that seeks to *acknowledge and combine*:

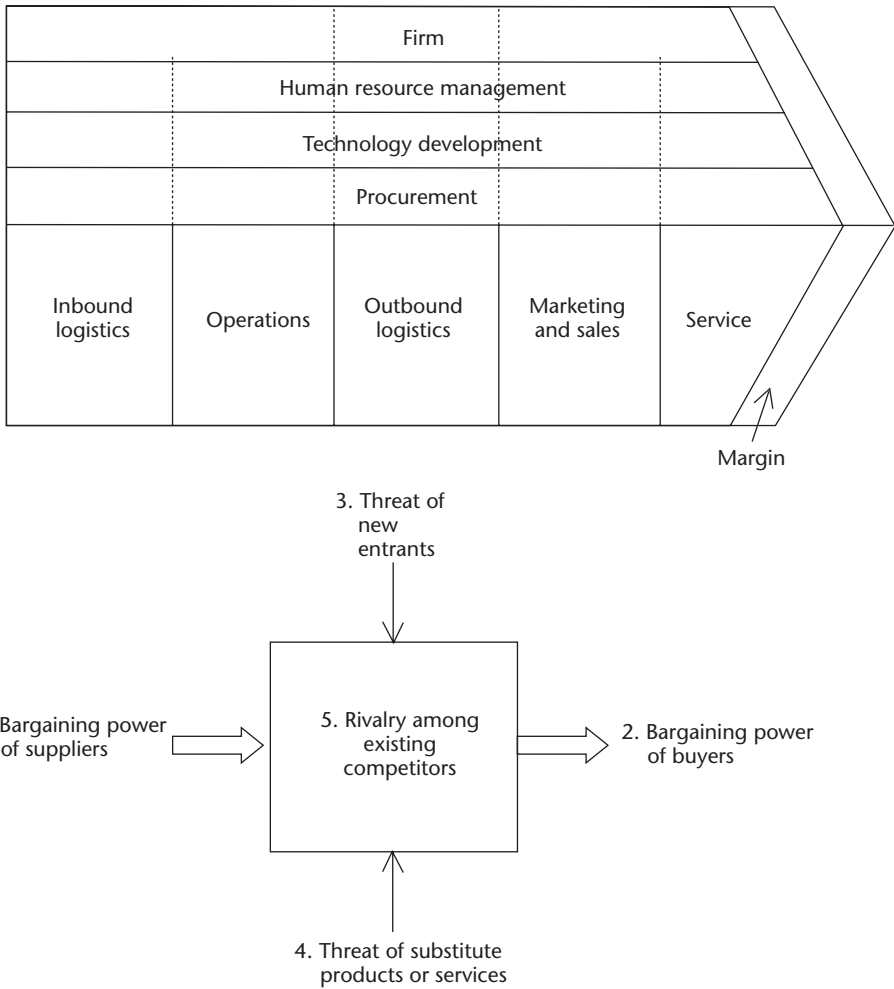


Figure 1.9 Porter's generic value chain and five forces of industry models

Source: Reprinted with the permission of Free Press, a division of Simon & Schuster Inc., from *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*, by Michael E. Porter (© 1985, 1998, Michael E. Porter); and *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*, by Michael E. Porter (© 1980, 1998, Free Press).

- (1) pre-modern notions such as the subjective web and the interaction between design and emergence (so as to incorporate the notions of emergent or unfolding process of *mapping* that are perhaps lost sight of by the design approach), and
- (2) many of the *maps* or images born of the over and above design approach to strategy (maps that aid individualized mapping, a factor that was lost sight of by many of the emergence theorists who sought to bring down the top-down view).

This is an approach to strategy based on oscillating between these two realms to create individualized 'montages' toward taking particular courses.

Postmodern Maps and Mapping: The Networked Montage

I am a great lover of these processes of division and generalization; they help me to speak and think.

Socrates, in Plato's Phaedrus (c.406 BC)

At the beginning of this new millennium we are beginning to see a further change in the way people conceive of strategy. And, once again, Mintzberg is at the forefront. Under his leadership, a forum discussed the state of strategy in 1996's *California Management Review*. Paying particular reference to the way that Honda Motorcycles' entry into the US had been seen by some to be the result of top-down design and by others as the emergence of patterns following chance events on the 'ground', they concluded that both images were right. In the light of this, Richard Pascale's final reflections argued that there is a useful and necessary tension between design and emergence and, subsequently, that most important strategic capability is 'agility', the ability to move from and to plans faster than one's competition – a conception uncannily like metos.

Moving further beyond the either/or debates, Mintzberg's 1998 *Strategy Safari* outlines many different strategy 'schools' and concludes that no one is better than the others. 'We are like blind men', says Mintzberg:

Each of us, in trying to cope with the mysteries of the beast, grabs hold of some part or the other [but all are looking at the same] elephant . . . To academics this represents confusion and disorder, whereas to others [like Mintzberg] it expresses a certain welcome eclecticism.

Mintzberg has also got beyond the image of organization as a triangle, claiming that the generic triangular hierarchy of boxes and lines that we call organization charts are now 'irrelevant'. 'Organigraphs' (subjective 'mind-maps' containing any number of different shapes that symbolize and 'convey meaning') are where it's at and managers must now 'create a customized picture of their company' (see Chapter 9, 'Strategy as Systems Thinking' for more on Mintzberg's 'organigraphs'). This new thinking is in keeping with an emerging discourse about organizations as networks and a moving away from the conception of value chains to relational value webs (a theme developed in more detail in Chapter 5, 'Strategy as Orchestrating Knowledge').

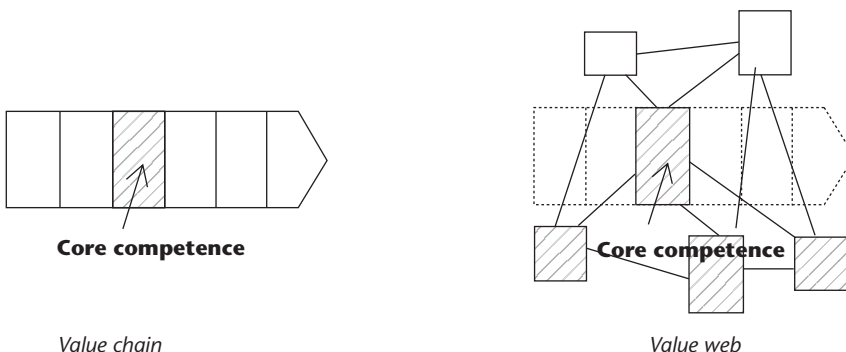


Figure 1.10 Value chain to value web

However, like much that is ‘new’ in management, these ideas lag a long way behind developments in social theory, philosophy and the arts from which we might learn much. By the 1970s, cultural commentators were already beginning to write of the exhaustion of the ‘modernist’ world-view and a re-appreciation of pre-modern subjectivity. Modernism’s reductionist approach to searching for the underlying functional laws of all things, combined with the relentless quest for ‘the new’, had led from non-representational impressionist art to cubism (the distillation of objects into their essential boxes and lines) to abstractionism, and on to the ‘white canvas’ as the encapsulation of all things – an encapsulation to which no individual could relate. In architecture it had led to the international style – the same building everywhere based on the universal maxims of essentialism, functionality and efficiency, no matter the local context; and in modern music, from atonality to noise to absolute silence.

Jean-François Lyotard expressed the attempt to get beyond the corner that a dogmatic modernism had painted itself into as ‘postmodernity’ in 1979. ‘The ground-zero of contemporary culture’, Lyotard claimed, ‘must be eclecticism.’ Five years before, Theodore Levitt was proclaiming that globalization, best practice and advances in communications technology were bringing us ever closer to homogenized universal products and services; Lyotard was arguing otherwise. The same information technology was actually leading, he claimed, to a greater global appreciation of local difference. This enabled individuals to move beyond the quest for keeping up with singular international styles and develop their own particular identities through the establishment of webs of relationships between different things. In postmodernity, Lyotard wrote: ‘One is free to listen to reggae, watch a Western, eat McDonald’s for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wear Paris perfume in Tokyo and retro clothes in Hong Kong.’

In keeping, people became increasingly incredulous toward ‘meta-narratives’: universal maxims or criteria over and above particular instances (e.g., science, communism, capitalism, global policies) that claimed to capture the essence of things through averages and general laws and tell individuals what norms they must follow. Postmodernity sees the re-appreciation or embracing of particular paths and many different views, and playful combinations of styles taken from different traditions and time zones according to individual or local preferences. Illustrative examples include:

- London’s Tate Bankside gallery – a power station rebuilt using leading edge modern technology in order to reinvigorate its distinctive 1930s’ facade.
- Cindy Sherman’s photography, showing how one person at once has a core and many contradictory aspects depending on the context.
- Design commentators reviewing chair design through the twentieth century and determining an iconic style for each decade, before reaching the 1990s and claiming that what matters now mixing and matching classical elements from other decades according to the vision of a particular designer.
- *Billboard* and other music magazines’ increasing struggle to classify new music into traditional categories such as ‘R&B’, ‘country’, ‘jazz’, ‘rock’, and ‘indie’.
- Customized trainers with individualized patterns scrawled over old generic canvases (see Plate 1.9).

While the ‘shapes’ of the modern industrial era were the triangle, the tree and the causal line of production, we appear now to be witnessing a return to the individualized nodal constellations of pre-modern times. At the time Lyotard was writing about the ‘postmodern condition’, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari were anticipating these



Plate 1.9 A postmodern form: 'Customized trainer (from Burro)'

Source: Photograph © Ian Nolan, first appeared in *Guardian Weekend*, 15 December 2001; reproduced by kind permission of Ian Nolan.

developments in their arguments against the 'trees, roots, and radicles' upon which modern 'arborescent culture' was based. While they did not seek to dismiss the standard 'trees that people had growing in their heads' for classifying things, they advocated more chaotic 'underground stems, aerial roots, adventitious growths and rhizomes' as alternative images. They subsequently favoured 'nomadology' as an approach to knowledge: individual wandering and eclectic combinations or networks of elements, rather than one common path toward greater objectivity. This alternative 'shape' is apparent in the cities in which many of us now live. According to geographer David Harvey, the postmodern city is:

A labyrinth, honeycombed with such diverse networks of social interaction oriented to such diverse goals that the encyclopaedia becomes a maniacal scrapbook filled with colourful entries which have no determining rational or economic scheme.

Hugh Pearman, cultural commentator with *The Sunday Times*, has recently related this postmodern turn to the changing shape of cars. The use of the same global-standard ergonomic principles, best practice benchmarking, and focus groups representative of a global society as the key 'yay' or 'nay-sayers' in prototype development, meant that most new cars came to look much the same. Rather than develop a model to which some were passionate about connecting, the aim for increasingly risk-averse manufacturers was for the greatest number of people to be unoffended by the look of the product. Consequently, Pearman claimed that 'Weird French cars ceased to be weird, Japanese cars stopped being ugly, the Americans toned down their once incredible styling in the name of international sales.'

However, this homogenization made it impossible to express an individual identity through a new car (vindicating famously anti-focus group inventors such as James Dyson, who likes to contrast the Hillman Avenger – focus-group approved; and the Mini – the vision of one designer). This, combined with the realization that margins

can only decrease if all companies are competing on the same dimensions, is now driving manufacturers to take new risks in order to create market niches.

Pearman claims that manufacturers now want their products 'to look distinctive and are discovering the joys of "localism" and pluralism'. Hence:

- Chrysler's PT Cruiser (a people-mover/1950s' hot-rod cross) is part of what it describes as its 'yestertech' range, combining retro-styling and modern technology. Only 41 per cent of the company's focus group members liked the PT and 26 per cent hated it – usually more than enough to kill off a prototype.
- BMW's reinvigoration of the very British Mini.
- Toyota's recent claim that 'Our global strategy used to center on "world cars", which we would modify slightly to accommodate demand in different markets. To-day our focus is shifting to models that we develop and manufacture for selected regional markets.'
- Rover's advertising uses images of non-politically correct pursuits such as hunting, nudism and boxing to convey the idea that not everyone will like the car but those that do will love it.

The change of emphasis caught some manufacturers on the hop. Citroën and Renault, once leaders in quirky styling, are now responding to consumers being unsure of their 'identity' and seeing its new cars as resembling last year's Fords. Meanwhile Jaguar, more concerned to project its past into the present, has kept loyal customers and is attracting new customers impressed by the doughty British character of their cars. (The most important test for Jaguar 'focus groups' is whether they recognize a prototype, without badging, as a Jaguar – if more than 90 per cent do not, then it does not go to production no matter how good a car it may be.)

Correspondingly, Doug Daft, the new CEO of the global icon Coca-Cola, describes the company's new vision as 'Think local, act local'. Levi, whose standard jeans have become global currency, now see 'mass-customization' (enabling individual customers to work with Levi's technicians to mix and match features into a combination that has a particular 'identity') as its most exciting new development. Instead of companies deciding to become more centralized or more decentralized, the talk is now of 'centralized-decentralization'. Paradoxical phrases such as 'glocalization' and 'lo-glo strategies' are bandied about. Pop-management books are entitled *Thriving on Chaos*, *The Age of Unreason* and *The Individualized Corporation*. And, in the year 2000, *The McKinsey Quarterly* concluded that while modelling performance on best-in-class competitors is an aspiration often offered by consultants and bought by companies as a badge of soundness, 'best practice does not equal best strategy'. Industries where best-practice copying has been widespread seem to witness declining average margins as competitors are forced to compete on price for customers who can no longer differentiate their products on any other grounds.

However, it would be foolish to suggest that 'Levittian' globalization is not happening at the same time. For example:

- VW's development of the 'new' Beetle has been enabled by a global chassis that is the same for a Seat or a Golf, and Ford's quirky Ka is just a Fiesta with curves.
- Jaguar can maintain its identity because of operating under the auspices of the giant Ford conglomerate.

- Local marketing strategies may differ, but a Coke is still a Coke.
- ‘Best practice’ benchmarking continues to play a role in cutting operational costs.

Postmodernism, therefore, should not be thought of as the death of the global or the modern and the imposition of a ‘new world order’, but as the paradoxical networking of global and local, general and individual modern and premodern, for specific purposes. Bernard Cova’s excellent *The Postmodern Explained to Managers* subsequently describes postmodernism as a series of paradoxes and a breaking down of either/or distinctions:

FRAGMENTATION *WITH* GLOBALIZATION,
 HETEROGENEITY *WITH* UNIFORMITY,
 PASSIVE CONSUMPTION *WITH* ACTIVE CUSTOMIZATION,
 INDIVIDUALISM *WITH* TRIBALISM,
 OLD *WITH* NEW.

So in this increasingly paradoxical and uncertain world what use are traditional images of strategy? Academics such as Stacey claim that this new world of complexity means that conventional strategy frameworks are ‘trite’ and ‘flimsy’ and that the image of strategy as rational planning is ‘redundant’. A recent paper by David Knights described Porter’s ‘generic strategy matrix’ (see Figure 1.11), a typical top-down positioning grid, as a classic example of the ‘myth of progress that underlies the demand for stable and positive management knowledge’.

		COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE	
		LOWER COST	DIFFERENTIATION
COMPETITIVE SCOPE	BROAD TARGET	<i>BROAD COST</i>	<i>DIFFERENTIATION</i>
	NARROW TARGET	<i>FOCUS COST</i>	<i>DIFFERENTIATION FOCUS</i>

Figure 1.11 Porter’s generic strategy matrix
 Source: Reprinted with the permission of Free Press, a division of Simon & Schuster Inc., from *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*, by Michael E. Porter (© 1980, 1998, Free Press).

Knights claims that despite the fact that Porter’s model is too simple to reflect the reality for managers, they continue to cling to it. Furthermore, says Knights, it detracts

from giving attention to ‘subjectivity’ by ‘disciplining modern management regimes into emulating it’. However, thinking of a postmodern map and how it is used might lead us to other conclusions. One such image is Harry Beck’s London Underground map (Plate 1.10). Here geographic representation is eschewed for one man’s diagram. It may not be rational in an objective representational sense, but it does not claim to be. Everybody knows that the distances between lines and stations are not ‘factual’. However, Beck’s map is memorable and open to nomadology, individual customization or montage. Indeed, as Beck said, the map ‘must be thought of as a living and changing thing, with schematic “manipulation” and spare part osteopathy going on all the time’. Subsequently, anyone who has lived in or visited London will find their own lives being understood, networked and communicated in relation to particular parts of it. It is not reality (see above it for that), but its symbols have become language and people interact with it to schematize their lives in ways that are useful to them in making decisions and taking particular courses.

Paradoxically, simple, open, non-representative images such as the tube map help us outline our individuality in these labyrinthine postmodern times. Borrowing from Plato’s premodern perspective, such ‘processes of division and generalization help us to speak and think’. Seeing images of strategy thus, rather than as objectively representations of how the world really is, we could argue that they can *be used in individualized ways to actually enhance subjective mapping*. Contrary to the views of Knights and Stacey described above, *Images of Strategy* suggests that a further postmodern paradox is that simple strategic images have never been more useful than they are in these increasingly complex times.

To illustrate, let us explore some ‘trite’ and ‘flimsy’ images of strategy in this postmodern manner. If the story of the Hungarian army unit (on p. 1) is the anecdote most remembered by our students of strategy, the model that managers we have taught remember most is likely this simple expression:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{cost} + \text{margin} &= \text{selling price (of a unit of product or service)} \\ \text{margin} \times \text{units} &= \text{profit} \end{aligned}$$

The beauty of these equations is that any strategy for any for-profit company can be analysed, and should be justifiable, in these terms. A viable strategy must, over time, enable profit to improve by way of:

- reducing costs and/or
- increasing selling price and/or
- increasing units sold.

If a strategy cannot be justified in these terms for the long term, it is hard to see why a for-profit company would take it. People like this expression because it is easy to remember, and it enables them to quickly assess proposals, ask difficult (but pertinent) questions, and make decisions.

Of course, the logic of these equations is very similar to that behind Michael Porter’s ‘generic strategy matrix’ (GSM pictured in Figure 1.11), which has, as its base, the idea that all companies must gain some ‘competitive advantage’ from either focusing on *reducing costs* or differentiating their offerings so as to command a higher *selling price*. Porter creates a two-by-two matrix out of this by crossing competitive advantage with ‘competitive scope’ (i.e., number of *units* sold, number of distribution channels used,

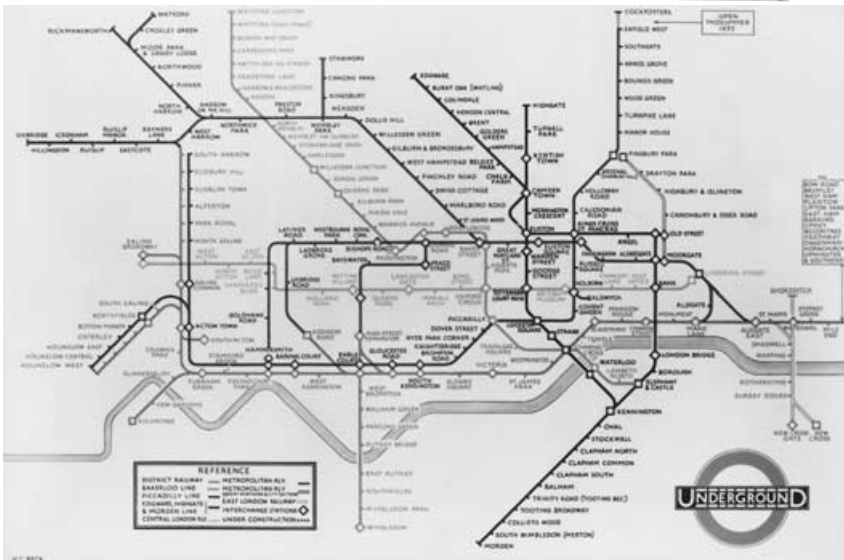
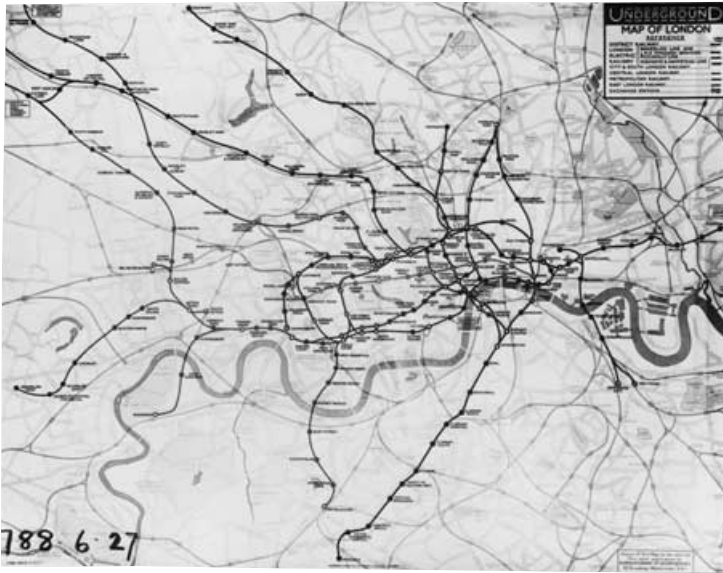


Plate 1.10 Harry Beck's 'postmodern' map (bottom) and the more geographically representative map that it replaced

Source: Top – Underground Map of London, c. 1927; bottom – Harry Beck's 1933 Underground Map of London. Both maps reproduced with the kind permission of the London Transport Museum.

etc.). Here the choice is *broad* or *narrow*. Thus a grid comprising four generic positions is developed. Porter condemns those ‘stuck in the middle’, those who have failed to choose between cost or differentiation, and broad or narrow, and subsequently cannot identify which of the four strategic positions is theirs.

We can demonstrate a model such as the GSM’s limitations and worth from an individualized postmodern perspective by revisiting our earlier car industry discussion. The car industry is now characterized by value-webs or relational connections created through alliances and mergers. Some of these webs appear to work better than others. One such concern is the Ford Group. After initially attempting to impose ‘The Ford Way’ upon Jaguar (according to Jaguar people at least), the Ford management has now taken a step back. It recognizes that it benefits from being associated with a Jaguar that maintains its own identity within the focused differentiation segment, and so leave it ‘to do its own thing’. Thus it does not undermine the distinctive *differentiated* Jaguar style, but seeks to network it into the core Ford identity wherever possible to help on *cost reduction*. This ‘soft-merger’ relationship is similar to that with Volvo (and Land Rover and Mazda). Ford seeks to increase its average selling prices through association with Volvo’s differentiated competitive advantage (safety technology), while using its operational expertise and global muscle to reduce Volvo costs. Thus one can better understand the Ford Group’s strategy by superimposing a particular pre-modern type web of relationships over Porter’s general modern grid (see Figure 1.12).

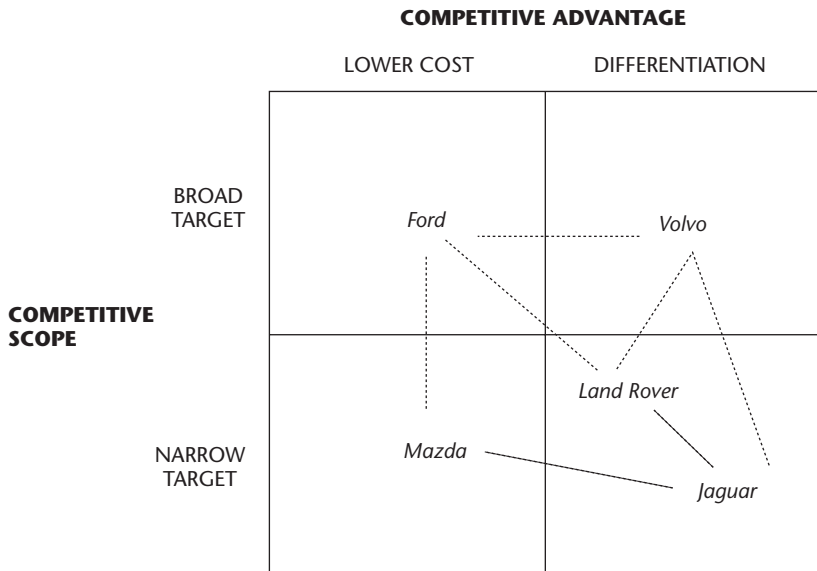


Figure 1.12 The modern GSM crossed with a premodern relationship web

Other companies and groups in the industry may also be quickly and simply mapped out and analysed in this manner:

- The VW group works well by networking particular identities in all four segments. However, draw them out and you will begin to recognize that a key challenge

for VW is not to let the sharing of costs across the group lead to all of its marques being perceived as too ‘samey’ with all gravitating to the middle. This would result in Seat cannibalizing VW sales and VW cannibalizing Audi sales and so on.

- BMW succeeded in positioning Rover to produce the 75, a car directly competing with its own marques in the broad-differentiated segment, and then did not know what to do with it.
- Citroën, whose sameness problems were cited earlier, is attempting to refocus on differentiating itself (in the end it cannot compete just on cost reduction) and Renault appointed Patrick le Quemert as their new head of design with a mandate to bring more ‘Frenchness’ to the brand.

Porter’s notion that companies must be clear in understanding their positioning or identity still rings true. However, the idea that one must choose to *either* reduce costs or focus on differentiation and not be ‘stuck in the middle’ may be a little outdated in these individualized and network-oriented times. (Indeed, Honda is a great example of a company profiting from being in the middle because it knows it is there for a good reason, which marks it out from its competitors.) Despite this, however, Porter’s images, with input or modification in terms of particular concerns, provide great grids upon which ideas can be divided, generalized, spoken and thought as a starting point for debate as to a company’s future direction.

Indeed, one of the main reasons that Porter’s images are so popular is that their simplicity enables people to interpret them in different ways, work their own thinking into them and express their ideas in ways to which people can quickly relate. Moreover, their simplicity and openness enable people to customize models by combining them into their own particular ‘hot-rods’. For example, we have seen managers create montages that help them understand particular situations by ‘bolting’ a PEST analysis onto the five forces to facilitate a fuller discussion on the factors influencing their industry (see Figure 1.13). (Indeed, one of the questions we often like to press MBAs with in order to get them thinking ‘outside the box’, is ‘why are there five forces of industry?’.)

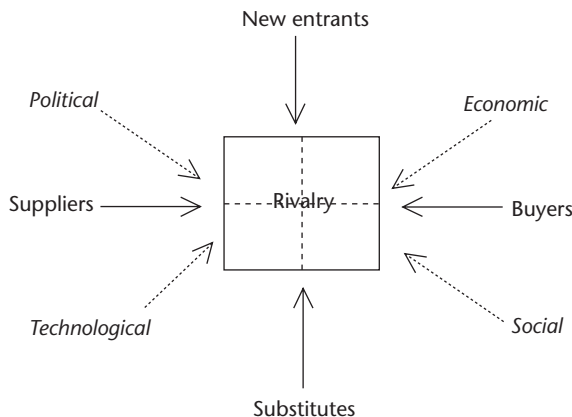


Figure 1.13 Porter’s five forces + PEST = nine forces of industry

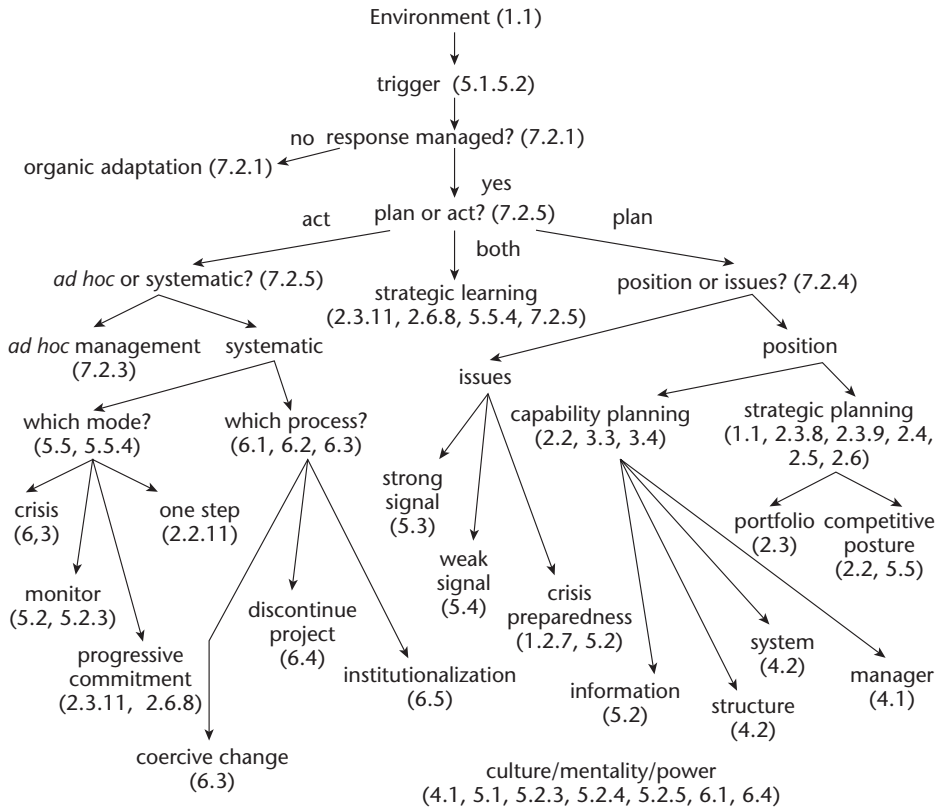


Figure 1.14 A more representative or all-encompassing strategy framework

Source: Figure entitled ‘Tree of Strategic Management’, from H.I. Ansoff, *Implanting Strategic Management* (1984) (© H.I. Ansoff); reproduced by permission of Pearson Education Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.

There are many more complex models than these now available that seek to represent strategy in more objectively representative ways that encapsulate ‘the global picture’ all at once (see Figure 1.14, for example). However, we have found that in a world where one meta-narrative’s ability to represent reality objectively is doubted, these are less effective than more basic forms, such as the GSM or $C + M = SP$, that allow interpretation, connection and ‘play’. The more complex, ‘technical’ or representative a model is, the more it alienates people, closes off debate, and prevents them incorporating their own ideas or networks of relationship. In fact we argue that while useful images must be regarded as having some ‘sympathy with’ or connection to the situation faced, their lack of accuracy actually inspires a greater compulsion to ‘take ownership’ of strategic situations by using these maps as a starting point and then doing one’s own mapping.

While academics such as Stacey may be right in saying that conventional strategy frameworks are ‘trite’ and ‘flimsy’ and that strategy is much more than this, the call to make such images ‘redundant’ may be a case of throwing out the baby with the bath water. While things *are* more complex than a two-by-two matrix, good strategies often

come from the interaction between local individuals and such images. As with the Hungarian army example or with the tube map, these images need not objectively represent the world all in one. Their divisions and generalizations animate and orient people, they provide a shared language, they act as sounding boards and points of convergence – even if people choose to disagree with them and debate why. So long as we recognize them as such there is no need for belittling – strategic thinking is the richer for them.

David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* begins with this quotation from Jonathan Raban's *Soft City*, a novel about a London life:

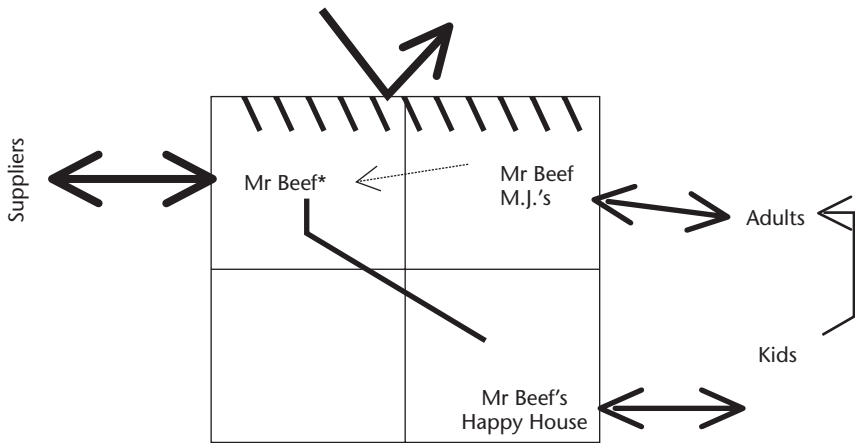
For better or for worse the city invites you to remake it, to consolidate it into a shape you can live in. Decide who you are, and the city will again assume a fixed form around you. Decide what it is, and your own identity will be revealed, like a map fixed by triangulation.

There could be no better expression of the worth of exploring many different strategic images in the postmodern manner described here, to see which may be particularly useful to connect with, which help you triangulate or begin mapping your own particular concerns. The onus is, first and foremost, on individuals to know themselves and their particular companies. Know this and you can resourcefully use many different frameworks to good purpose. Do that and you will develop a further understanding of your own and other companies and be able to use more frameworks to greater effect. And on it goes, with the strategic manager adding more images and becoming ever more insightful and resourceful. Case box 1.1 gives further food for thought in this regard.

Case Box 1.1 Porter's Power

Power, a pub/restaurant group, has grown fast through successful acquisitions. It now owns many big name brands, including 'Mr Beef', 'MJ's' and 'Pizza Court'. To aid the company's co-ordination as it grows, managers need to think through how these various identities relate to one another. The diagram and dialogue below came about as the result of encouraging a group of these managers to use Porter's frameworks to express their own ideas about where the company was going, with a particular emphasis on Mr Beef.

Manager 1: Basically, I saw Mr Beef as being a family pub/restaurant, but a bit better than the competition – differentiated. However, over time this has been kind of forgotten. It's been easier to focus on cost reduction and it's drifted back into the broad-cost segment. The interesting development is Happy House [Happy House is a children's restaurant/playground that had been established within a number of Mr Beef pubs]. These have proved really popular and are differentiated and focussed on kids, obviously. So, what do we do? Perhaps we need to revamp Mr Beef and move it into the differentiated end again?



Manager 2: 'Maybe, but there it's almost directly competing against MJ's.'

Manager 1: 'And surely Mr Beef is such a big chain now that we should be in the broad-cost segment? If you add in that part of Porter's five forces of industry that's where we can really exercise power over suppliers by using our size as a buying strength.'

Manager 2: 'But what about the disparity between Mr Beef and Happy House? If we continue with your bringing in the five forces and look at the other side of things, buyer power, we all know that for family pub/restaurants it's kids who often make the buying decision. We can't afford to damage that link by letting Happy House slide the way of Mr Beef.'

Manager 3: 'Sure, but if we realize the difference and the relationship between the two, then surely we can benefit at both ends of the value chain: a strong link into key suppliers and a key hook into a special type of buyers.'

Manager 4: 'Yeah, in a way, if we could do this, and get the best of both sides, then this could be a source of competitive advantage hard to replicate. It would create a real barrier to new entrants up at the top of the box there.'

1. *How did using basic strategy grids aid these managers? How might this conversation have gone differently without using the grids?*
2. *While the above discussion may not represent a pure application of the logic of Porter's models, how have these managers benefited by customizing these models?*

*Note: (The identities of this organization and its business units have been disguised). A version of this case first appeared in *Recreating Strategy* (Sage 2002) by S. Cummings.*

Images of Strategy – a User's Guide

Creativity comes from the co-agitation or shaking together of already existing but previously separate areas of knowledge, frames of perception or universes of discourse.

Arthur Koestler, The Act of Creation

Knowledge so conceived is not a series of self-consistent theories that converge towards an ideal view . . . It is rather an ever increasing ocean of mutually incompatible alternatives, each single theory,

each fairy-tale, each myth that is part of the collection forcing others into greater articulation and all of them contributing, via this process of competition, to the development of our consciousness.

Paul Feyerabend, Against Method

It might be thought that the approach advocated in *Images of Strategy* is similar to Mintzberg's earlier described *Strategy Safari*. However, it is different in key respects. Briefly exploring its similarities and differences, not only in contrast to *Strategy Safari* but also in contrast to other strategy texts, is a good place to begin this outline of how *Images of Strategy* can be used to best effect. And this exploration might best be guided by adapting our earlier developed (on p. 2) animation/orientation matrix (see Figure 1.15).

The first books written on strategic management in the 1950s and 1960s were written from a singularly *industrial economics* basis. While they provided a means of orienting organizations in terms of this logic, they were generally fairly dry and often failed to inspire or animate managers.

Animation	High	Guru books (e.g., Peters, Porter, Covey)	<i>Images of Strategy</i>
	Low	Industrial economics basis (e.g., Ansoff)	Textbooks, edited compendiums, <i>Strategy Safari</i> (e.g., Mintzberg)
		Singular	Multiple
		Orientation	

Figure 1.15 *Images of Strategy* related to other books

Writers such as Porter built on this thinking, taking strategy into the realm of pop-management *gurus* such as Tom Peters and Stephen Covey by weaving in practical examples and simple checklists and frameworks that were more easily related to and hence more animating. However, these guru books were also singular in their orientation; their logic was based on the view and subsequent images of the individual author. Moreover, these books increasingly became like a fast-food meal – initially tasty, easy to digest and causing a great deal of action in one's stomach, but lacking in lasting effect. While executives may have disembarked transatlantic flights excited by having just read such books, their generic and prescriptive nature often failed to provide the means by which managers could orient or understand or debate their particular company in relation to others or the environment.

The strategy *textbooks and edited compendiums* of strategic thinking, which have become increasingly prevalent in the past decade, moved beyond this tendency to have

to choose between either this guru recipe or another, by listing many strategic images by which managers could think their companies. However, their length and dry objective manner, their focus on facts and technical approaches rather than unfolding examples where best answers are by no means clear, and their general lack of a particular philosophy generally meant that the reader's initial animation often collapsed under the weight of all their means of orientation.

Perhaps the most advanced of the multiple means of orientation genre is Henry Mintzberg et al.'s *Strategy Safari*. This outlines the different extant strategy 'schools' and encourages managers to be eclectic. *Images of Strategy* shares this interest in eclecticism, but it also picks up on some of *Safari's* weaknesses. *Safari's* objective overview of existing schools by its singular authors is a useful survey, but we find that it often fails to animate managers. Too often it leaves them asking 'so what should I do now that I've read it?'. Like most safaris, one is guided around as an interested observer rather than an active participant and creator of one's own particular path.

Furthermore, in order to stimulate these particular paths, *Images* advocates a broader and more eclectic range of images of strategy than that contained in Mintzberg's more structured survey. *Safari* is constrained by its reporting on defined schools that have established themselves in the past 40 years and what Mintzberg describes as the strategy tree with its branches 'the basic [modern] disciplines – economics, sociology, anthropology, political science, biology'. *Images of Strategy*, by contrast, is not 'one elephant' looked in at from established perspectives, but personal images from the subjective perspectives of several enthusiasts who want you to take part in their ideas. *Images of Strategy* takes a subjective perspective, assuming strategy depends on who is doing the looking and how that looking is done. To borrow a quotation by William Blake from Duncan Angwin's chapter on 'Strategy as Exploration and Interconnection', 'The eye altering alters all'. Thus in the chapters to follow:

- Stephen Cummings investigates *ancient philosophy* as a means of developing images beyond those provided by conventional approaches to business *ethics* in 'Strategy as Ethos'.
- Karen Legge connects us to an understanding of how *human resource management* and the *linguistic* turns that surround it shape organizational development in 'Strategy as Organizing'.
- Robin Wensley draws on *physics, logic* and *game theory* and beyond to think of strategy as about people's predetermined assumptions in 'Strategy as Intention and Anticipation'.
- John McGee draws on the *economics* and *knowledge* literatures to challenge us to rethink the conventional shape of organizations and the traditional roles of managers in 'Strategy as Orchestrating Knowledge'.
- Bob Galliers and Sue Newell investigate the *human and technology interface* and its influence on strategy in 'Strategy as Data Plus Sense-Making'.
- Chris Bilton trawls his *theatrical* and arts experiences to help us think about how we might develop strategy more *creatively* in 'Strategy as Creativity'.
- Duncan Angwin takes from his background in *historical geography* and knowledge of *explorers* to develop interesting images for exploring aspects of mergers and acquisition in 'Strategy as Exploration and Interconnection'.

- John Brocklesby and Stephen Cummings visit *systems and cognitive biological theories* to see if they may contain images useful for aiding strategy in ‘Strategy as Systems Thinking’.
- Andrew Pettigrew reflects on the roles played by *history* and *politics* in shaping the *process* and *context* of strategy in ‘Strategy as Process, Power and Change’.
- Peter Doyle seeks to reconnect strategic thinking with the discipline of *marketing* through the image of *shareholder value* in ‘Strategy as Marketing’.
- Chris Smith utilizes his background in psychology to look at how strategy is often shaped by our love and need for tangible *financial* figures in ‘Strategy as Numbers’.
- And, David Wilson draws on his 25 years of research on the cusp of *organizational analysis* and strategy in ‘Strategy as Decision Making’.

Each chapter contains case boxes which provide examples and questions designed to test your knowledge and stimulate debate.

The final chapter draws the different chapters’ images together into an integrative framework for thinking through how you might use different images of strategy to orient and animate organizations. This chapter also presents an integrative case.

While the chapters listed above may seem disparate, as they have emerged from first draft to last, we, as editors, have been pleased to recognize the ‘base notes’ that underpin them. They appear to us as indicative of the particular ethos of Warwick Business School, to which each of the authors is, in some way, connected. These base notes include:

- A *breadth of influences*, which fits with a business school that draws on being part of a fully fledged university, rather than a stand-alone entity communicating only with business concerns.
- A *combination of some fairly ‘heavy’ theory with practical case examples*, reflecting the ground that we have traditionally sought to occupy by bringing together theory and practice.
- This ‘bringing together’ relates to our desire to *deconstruct conventional thinking*, but so as to enable *re-constructions that people can use*, not a scorched earth from which we walk away with shrugging shoulders.
- The importance placed throughout on *context and temporality* is reflective of how we have tended to draw on fields like anthropology, sociology and history as much as economics and finance when thinking about management and strategy.
- The recognition that any discussion of strategy requires *forethought with regard to the nature of organization* indicates how we have tended to operate on the boundary between what has conventionally been seen as strategic management and organization theory.
- And finally, *Images of Strategy* is characterized by the idea that the world of business is *too complex to allow us to prescribe easy, one-best way prescriptions*.

We hope that you find the images that are built out from these hubs challenging and engaging. However, we do not claim them to be the be all and end all of strategic thought. To think that would be to misunderstand the role of a good creative reader. In Karen Legge’s words ‘students must be producers of knowledge, not just

consumers'. We trust that readers will respond to the spirit in which this book is developed by offering up their own images to add to what we present here. We even offer a web site (www.blackwell.co.uk/resources/images) that invites contributions to what we hope is an organic and ongoing body of work.

Relatedly, it is useful to take a pre-modern attitude to the reading of this book. Plutarch, biographer of ancient strategists, contended that we should read the stories and ideas of such people as a means of stimulating our own unique style: 'A colour', he wrote:

is well suited to the eye if its bright and agreeable tones stimulate and refresh the vision, and in the same way we ought to apply our intellectual vision to those models which can inspire it to attain its own virtue. [Such a model is] no sooner seen than it rouses the spectator to action, and yet it does not form his character by mere imitation, but by promoting . . . a dominating purpose [to come from within].

We hope that the images we outline, processes of division and generalization that aid speaking and thinking about strategy, or maps that enable mapping, will stimulate and refresh your own strategic vision. However, none of these images will prescribe what you must do, each individual must bring his or her particular purpose and understanding into the mix in order to 'triangulate' or analyse his or her situations. Nigella Lawson provides a useful parallel in bemoaning the 'tyranny of the recipe' in her recently published *How to Eat*. Having several good recipes is a starting point, she explains, but a good chef must be more than this – he or she must have their 'own individual sense of what food is about'. Hence she encourages readers to develop and critique her recipes and think of her book as 'a conversation we might be having'.

Like the Ancient Greeks, and like Nigella, this book thinks of strategy as the *oscillation between* recipes, maps or images, and particular practical chaotic realities. We hope that after years of debating which image best represents the way strategy really is, we might now see the value in being Able to connect to many. One is more likely to reach a *particular destination* by using a Tube map *in combination* with a *London A-Z in combination* with a map drawn by a friend on the back of an envelope. These, *in combination* with other environmental signs picked up along the way, will provide a basis for constructive debate with those travelling with you and, subsequently, a platform for developing impetus. We think that the images of strategy presented here should be used in a similar vein. The measure of this book's success will be the extent to which the reader finds it increasing his or her resourcefulness in connecting them to an increasing number of ways to think about strategy that they can bring to bear in their own chaotic worlds: making them more multiple, more mobile or more polyvalent; making their strategic intelligence more wily and supple so as to help them to think (and un-think) in many directions before deciding the path on which it is best for them to set out. And if there is a picture that expresses this individual building of multidirectional connections then it is the microcosm shown in Plate 1.3.

Consequently, *Images of Strategy* needs not be read in a linear fashion from the first chapter to the last or from strategic to tactical to operational levels like a standard strategy text. Instead, wander over it. Read it as a nomad. Pick up bits that you think are interesting or that connect with your own experiences within organizations past and present, or bits that you think you might usefully apply to give you impetus

into the future. We believe that this is where creative problem solving comes from, from different traditions being connected together and, to use Arthur Koestler's phrase, 'shaking hands' in the light of particular purposes and circumstances (see Plate 1.11).

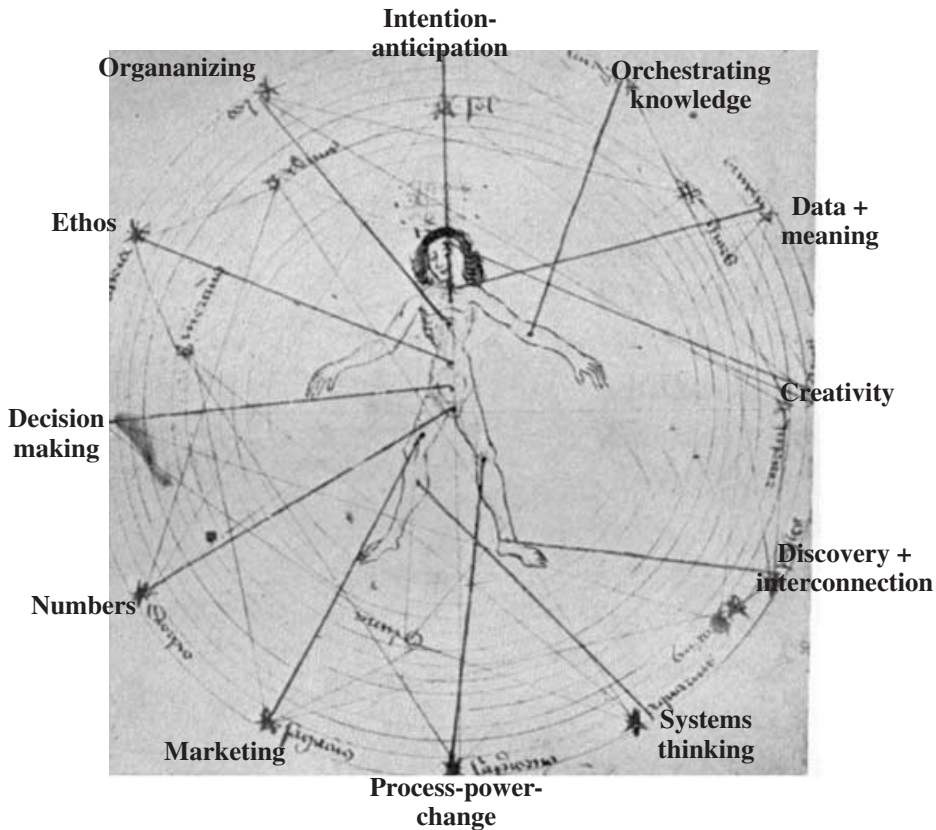


Plate 1.11 Individually connecting images of strategy

In any event, the complexity of a postmodern world, and the subsequent realization that organizations *must accentuate their differences* in order to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage, mean that 'intellectuals' cannot prescribe what individual managers must do. That is a matter for those who determine particular goals in specific contexts. A matter for you. In the words of postmodern philosopher Michel Foucault, 'The intellectual can no longer play the role of the advisor. The project, tactics, and goals to be adopted are a matter for those who do the fighting. [The best] the intellectual can do is provide instruments of analysis.'

Strategy for too long has been driven by academics and consultants looking from the 'outside-in' and offering generic best-practice prescriptions. It is time for the strategic identity of corporations to come from the 'inside-out'. We hope that the images that we have found useful over the years refresh your strategic vision toward mapping a course across your own uncharted territories.

Source Material and Recommended Further Reading

The Hungarian soldier's story at the head of this chapter is taken from a chapter by Karl Weick titled 'Substitutes for Strategy', in J. Teece (ed.), *The Competitive Challenge* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1987).

A good overview of the 'turf wars' between strategy's bottom-up emergence and top-down planning schools can be gained by reading the exchange between Henry Mintzberg and Igor Ansoff in *Strategic Management Journal* 11 (1990) and 12 (1991). An edited version is reproduced in B. De Wit and R. Meyer (eds), *Strategy: Process, Content, Context* (London: ITP, 1998). Mintzberg's *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning* (New York: Free Press, 1994), develops the 'anti-establishment' argument further. Ralph Stacey's *Dynamic Strategic Management for the 1990s* (London: Kogan Page, 1990) is perhaps even more vitriolic. Michael Porter's *Harvard Business Review* article 'What is Strategy?' (Nov.–Dec. 1996) shows the 'empire striking back'. The despairing editorial quotation on page 2 is from Milan Zeleny's 'The Fall of Strategic Planning', *Human Systems Management*, 16, 1997.

For more on how pre-modern ways of seeing and knowing are different from modern views see R.G. Collingwood's *The Idea of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960); M. Foucault's *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Science* (London: Tavistock, 1970); A. Gabbey's 'The Mechanical Philosophy and its Problems', in J.C. Pitt (ed.), *Change and Progress in Modern Science* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1985); and C. Taylor's 'Overcoming Epistemology', in K. Baynes et al. (eds), *After Philosophy: End or Transformation?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987). J. Seznec's *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953) reproduces several ancient microcosms. Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (various publishers) is a useful synopsis of the appreciation of Dionysian and Apollonian forces in the Ancient Greek world. For more on *metos*, see M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (Sussex: Harvester, 1978). D. Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) nicely describes the change of perspective from pre-modern to modern with particular reference to mapping.

E. Kearns's 'Change and Continuity in Religious Structures After Cleisthenes', in P.A. Cartledge and F.D. Harvey (eds), *Cruce* (London: Imprint, 1985) and S. Cummings and J. Brocklesby 'Toward *Demokratia*: Myth and the Management of Change in Ancient Athens', *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 10, 1997, provide background on Kleisthenes' reconfiguration of Athens. For a discussion of how this organizational structuring and pre-modern thinking influence the Greek's approach to strategy see S. Cummings, 'Pericles of Athens – Drawing from the Essence of Strategy', *Business Horizons*, Jan.–Feb. 1995.

Roy Strong's commentaries on Elizabethan portraiture, for example, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth the 1st* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987) provide a good starting point for an understanding of the geometry of the modern gaze. The cause of the 'mind-shift' is generally put down to advances in technology in most histories of science. However, A. Giddens' *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990) gives a good account of the importance of the rise of Europe's nation-states and organized capitalism and colonialism in shaping the modern representational objectivist way of seeing. S. Toulmin's *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (New York: Free Press, 1990) puts the case for the change toward privileging certain objective knowledge being related to a Europe fed up with religious and social divisiveness in the seventeenth century. R.S. Westfall's *The Construction of Modern Science* (New York: Wiley, 1971) and R. Dawkins' *The Blind Watchmaker* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991) provide good accounts of the development of the modern scientific method. *The Scientific Revolution in National Context*, edited by R. Porter and M. Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), builds upon these and describes the emergence of centralized knowledge

institutions. The best concise combined review of all of these aspects is S. Shapin's *The Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

To see how the shape and perspective of modern scientific reasoning and bureaucracy influence what are considered to be the origins of corporate strategy, read the introductions to A. Chandler's influential *Strategy and Structure* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1962) and *The Visible Hand* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977). Also, look at I. Ansoff's *Corporate Strategy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), and his introductory chapter of *Business Strategy*. 'Toward a Strategic Theory of the Firm' (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969). The Ford and Carnegie reports (F.C. Pierson, *The Education of American Businessmen*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959; R.A. Gordon and J. Howell, *Higher Education for Business*, New York: Columbia University Press) outline the shape of business schools. L.W. Porter and L.E. McKibbin's *Management Education and Development – Drift or Thrust in the 21st Century* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988) shows how the model laid down in 1959 has really only been tinkered with. K. Andrews' *Harvard Business Review* article 'Toward Professionalism in Business Management' (March–April 1969) comments on how Chandlerian bureaucracy and the organization of business schools inform one another.

The best comprehensive survey of postmodernism in all its forms is D. Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Important postmodern documents include J.-F. Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), G. Deleuze and F. Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (New York: Viking, 1977), and *Mille-Plateaux: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Athlone, 1988). Umberto Eco's *Reflections on 'The Name of the Rose'* (London: Minerva, 1994) is a readable series of insights into the exhaustion of modernism and the subsequent rise of the postmodern view using his famous novel as an exemplar. For something more focused upon the impact of postmodernism on management, B. Cova's 'The Postmodern Explained to Managers: Implications for Marketing', *Business Horizons* (Nov.–Dec. 1996) brings the issues down to earth in a simple but not simplistic manner.

The state of strategy is discussed by H. Mintzberg, R. Pascale, M. Goold and R. Rumelt in 'The "Honda Effect" Revisited', *California Management Review*, 38, 1996. Mintzberg's latest thinking can be found in *The Strategy Safari: A Guided Tour Through the Jungles of Strategic Management* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1998); and 'Organigraphs: Drawing How Companies Really Work', *Harvard Business Review*, Sept.–Oct. 1999. The pop-management books mentioned in this chapter are T. Peters' uneven *Thriving on Chaos* (London: Macmillan, 1988); C. Handy's interesting but fairly lightweight *The Age of Unreason* (London: Business Books, 1991); and C. Bartlett and S. Ghoshal's very good *The Individualized Corporation* (New York: HarperBusiness, 1997). On the breakdown of the either/or choice between centralization and decentralization see S. Cummings' 'Centralization and Decentralization: The Never-ending Story of Separation and Betrayal', *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 11, 1995. The revelation that 'Best practice does not equal best strategy' comes from an article of the same name by P. Nattermann, *McKinsey Quarterly*, 2, 2000, 20–5.

Michael Porter's 'generic strategy matrix' and 'five forces of industry' are built up in *Competitive Advantage* and *Competitive Strategy* (New York: Free Press, 1985 and 1980 respectively). For a briefer description of these and many other useful strategy frameworks like PEST, S. Harding and T. Long's *MBA Management Models* (London: Gower, 1998) is an excellent resource. David Knight's article critiquing Porter's models in particular and simple theories of management in general is 'Changing Spaces: The Disruptive Impact of a New Epistemological Location for the Study of Management', *Academy of Management Review*, 17, 1992.

Mr. Beck's Underground Map (K. Garland, London: Capital Transport Publishing, 1994) is a fascinating account of one man's vision and the uniquely memorable London Tube map. The novel *Soft City* by Jonathan Raban was published in 1974 (London: Collins).

Plutarch's ideas regarding the importance of being inspired by strategos models form the introduction to his 'Life of Pericles' (*The Rise and Fall of Athens*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960). Nigella Lawson's words come from *How to Eat: The Pleasures and Principles of Good Food* (London: Random House, 1999). Arthur Koestler's notion of creative decision making stemming from different traditions, 'shaking hands' to solve particular problems can be explored in greater detail in *The Act of Creation* (London: Hutchinson, 1964).