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Advance praise for *Strategy and Organization*

"In this refreshingly lucid book on *Strategy and Organization: Realizing Strategy Management* Professor Loizos Heracleous applies organizational theory to strategic management. In the process, he critically reviews conventional strategic thought and develops the many building blocks of an 'organizational action' view of strategic management, providing a valuable reference for students of both strategic management and organization theory. But his greatest contribution is the analytical synthesis of strategy and organization theory, which he accomplishes in a systematic and methodical yet easily accessible writing."

THEODORE PANAYOTOU Harvard University and Cyprus International Institute of Management

"At last! A clear, concise and convincing exposition that integrates strategy formation with organizational behavior and action. Drawing on recent developments and applications in social action theory, and his own extensive research, Professor Heracleous introduces an 'organization action' perspective for understanding the interdependencies among the social processes of organizations and strategy and change. This is a superb book for those interested in new and different ways of thinking about organization strategy, change and behavior. It would be an excellent addition to graduate courses in strategic management, organization theory and behavior, and organizational change."

ROBERT J. MARSHAK Distinguished Adjunct Professor, School of Public Affairs, American University

"Rarely has a book offered such an effective bridge between two distinct discourses as this one. Dr Heracleous opens the wide vista of strategic management to the large numbers of theorists of organization who view it as a foreign country, showing how current thinking on strategy grows organically out of insights on the nature of organizations, leadership, environment, politics and culture. A remarkably erudite book which is going to become a standard reference for many years to come."

YIANNIS GABRIEL Professor of Organizational Theory, Imperial College, London

"For a consultant and practitioner in strategy implementation and the management of organisation change, this book provides valuable challenges to some aspects of conventional thinking, and fascinating insights into the reality of strategic management. It provides a holistic and integrative route through the complexity and confusion of diverse academic thinking on the subject matter. The second and third sections, with their case studies and examination of highly topical issues, demonstrate the richness, excitement and problematic nature of working in this area. This book has motivated me to redouble my efforts to understand the what, why and how managers do what they do, and given me further clues about how they can increase their chances of strategic success."

BRIAN LANGHAM Hay Group

"It is rare to see a book on strategy that engages so well with the field of organization studies. All too often books on strategic management, especially those aimed at practitioners and students, treat strategy as a self-contained phenomenon that is primarily, if not purely, a managerial challenge. By integrating strategy with a wider understanding of the organizational literature, such as culture, leadership and organizational development, the book succeeds in providing a more substantive basis for strategy making, which enriches our understanding of the practicalities of strategic change, as well as linking strategy to some of the broader debates in organization studies. It should prove a rewarding read for researchers, students and practitioners alike."

CYNTHIA HARDY Professor, Department of Management, University of Melbourne
Director of the International Centre for Research in Organizational Discourse, Strategy and Change

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"This book is a timely and relevant look at the links between organizational behavior, corporate governance and business strategy, and offers material both for 'experts' and the generalist alike. The researcher or academician will find value in the comprehensive review and elucidation of the theoretical and practical implications of organizational theory in considering strategy, a new frontier of management. Heracleous then applies his theory to several areas of emerging business importance, including ICT and 'best practices' in corporate governance – and thereby reaches out to the generalist and business practitioner audience in a step that too few academicians take. As a scholar writing in Asia, his choice of 'applications' is timely indeed, as the region's companies search for the paths and structures that will provide business growth and sustainability for the coming years."

PAMELA C. M. MAR Associate Director – China, World Economic Forum

"Heracleous employs an accessible style in his book and brings a remarkable range of sources in social theory and organization studies to his argument for a new 'organization action' view of strategic management. Highly original and inspirational, this book will be of invaluable interest to researchers, postgraduate and advanced undergraduate students in the fields of strategy and management, organization theory, and organizational behaviour."

ANDREW CHAN Associate Professor, City University of Hong Kong

"Strategy is a serious business and this is one of those rare books that treats it in a fittingly serious way. Heracleous provides an authoritative overview of a lively and central discipline. His book will be valued by all serious students of strategy and by teachers and researchers wanting to understand where the discipline has come from and where it is going today."

RICHARD WHITTINGTON Professor of Strategic Management, Said Business School, University of Oxford

"The 'soft' aspects of strategy, that is primarily organizational culture and politics, have at long last found their ways into strategy textbooks and this is to be welcomed. In this fine textbook Loizos Heracleous goes further: by making agency and discourse the central organising principles of his argument he tackles strategy from a performative, as opposed to a representationalist, point of view. Strategy making is a creative activity par excellence, he argues, deeply entangled with language and discourse, and in this book he shows us how and why. His analysis is well embedded in the fine tradition of hermeneutical organization theory and, furthermore, Heracleous usefully extends his theoretical excursions in social theory, searching for better ways of making sense of strategy. This book has all the things I admire in good organizational scholarship: it is grounded in a process epistemology, it explicitly focuses on agency and praxis, and adopts a dynamic view of how organizations behave and strategies are made."

HARIDIMOS TSOUKAS The George D. Mavros Research Professor of Organization and Management, Athens Laboratory of Business Administration (ALBA), Greece
Professor of Organization Theory and Behaviour, University of Strathclyde
Editor-in-Chief of *Organization Studies*

"*Strategy and Organization* is a theoretically rigorous examination of current issues and debates in strategy. Dr Heracleous does an excellent job in combining organization theory with existing theories on strategy to develop a new perspective on strategy and produce a very readable and useful book."

CONSTANTINOS MARKIDES Robert P. Bauman Professor of Strategic Leadership, London Business School

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Strategy and Organization

Examining some of the new and emerging issues in strategic management, Loizos Heracleous offers a fresh approach to the established ideas of strategy. Beginning with the historical development of the strategy field, including the influence of industrial organization and the resource-based view, he develops a new perspective labeled an "organizational action" view of strategy. This approach is theoretically underlain by organization theory and takes seriously such issues as the role of agency, the need for a longitudinal focus on process, the complexities of strategy implementation, and organizational facets such as strategic choice, organizational culture, organizational discourses and learning. Combining theoretical subtlety with an applied orientation, Heracleous examines topical areas such as corporate governance, inter-organizational networks, and organizing for the future. With original research and extensive surveys of the strategy literature, combined with a strong practical orientation, this book is ideal for MBA students, strategy researchers, and the more thoughtful practitioner.

Dr. Heracleous is Associate Professor of Corporate Strategy at the School of Business, National University of Singapore.

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To my parents, whose unconditional and loving support made my work possible

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Preface

The first books on organization theory I read were Burrell and Morgan's (1979) *Sociological Paradigms* and *Organizational Analysis*, and Morgan's (1986) *Images of Organization*. These works explored the conceptual and methodological pluralism of the social sciences and in particular organization theory, and made clear that the dominant positivist mode of inquiry was just that: a mode of inquiry, that taken to extremes, could hinder the knowledge-generation process. Pettigrew's (1985) and Johnson's (1987) in-depth studies of the strategy process, in addition, shaped my early understanding of strategy. They emphasized that we cannot hope to understand sufficiently the complex processes related to strategic management unless we take a good look at the *internal functioning* of organizations. This entails getting one's hands dirty in the field, gathering nuanced data on actors' first-order perceptions through hermeneutically oriented methodologies.

These initial orientations enabled me to view strategy as inextricably linked to organization, and as such processual rather than static, messy and ambiguous rather than clear-cut, socio-political rather than simply "technological" or sanitized, and located within local conditioned rationalities rather than universal rationalities. I became convinced that carrying out my doctoral research on the topic of how organizational discourse and culture influence strategic change processes (Heracleous 1997) using ethnographic methodologies would be useful in terms of contribution to knowledge (even though it would also be pretty hard work).

My research work over the last few years has revolved around themes whose common thread was the attempt to understand what is actually going on in organizations, or how social theory can contribute to such understanding, rather than what classical theories tell us should go on. When asked to explain what my research is about, I say that at the most basic level I am interested in how people in organizations think, how they interpret things, and why they choose to act as

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they do. This is certainly a tall order, and perhaps unacceptably broad and subjectivist from the positivist's perspective. Yet, the alternative risks micro-defining issues out of relevance or substantive interest, and constructing "objective" surveys that could tell us a lot about correlations between variables yet precious little about whether these variables matter to, and are meaningful to, actors, whether they can actually describe what is going on, or how they were developed in the first place.

Conducting hermeneutically oriented research entails a mainly positive rather than normative orientation, even though these cannot be neatly separated, since useful organization change and development prescriptions should be based on a robust understanding of the organizational setting. In a similar vein, strategic management itself cannot be separated from organization change and development since the realization of strategic goals often involves the effective implementation of significant organizational change (Heracleous and Barrett 2001; Tan and Heracleous 2001).

In my research I have tried to understand issues such as the relationship between organizational culture and change (Heracleous and DeVoge 1998; Heracleous and Langham 1996); the complementarity between strategic management and organizational development (Heracleous 1998, 2000); the relevance of organizational discourse to the functioning of organizations (Heracleous 2002, 2003; Heracleous and Barrett 2001; Heracleous and Hendry 2000) and how applications of social theory can contribute to more nuanced understanding of issues such as processes of globalization (Barrett and Heracleous 1999) or organizational controls (Jacobs and Heracleous 2001).

In the context of my doctoral and subsequent research, the genesis of this book is rooted in my interest in how organization theory can engender a new paradigm in strategic management, that takes seriously such issues as the role of agency; how the world is meaningful to organizational actors; a longitudinal focus on process rather than on static cross-sectional analyses; and pays due attention to organizational facets such as strategic choices, culture, discourse, and learning. I have labeled this an "organizational action" view of strategic management, in order to highlight the relevance of such organizational issues, and perhaps to invoke Silverman's (1970) challenge to positivism in the form of his "action frame of reference." There are already several scholars contributing to this emerging paradigm, often labeled as

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"strategy as practice" (e.g. Hendry 2000; Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002; Whittington 2002).

Part I of the book, on "Bases of strategic management" outlines the literature in the field; develops the organizational action view; applies organizational learning theory to the concepts of strategic thinking and planning; and explores how leadership research can improve our understanding of boards of directors.

Chapter 1, entitled "The strategic management field," opens the scene by briefly addressing the historical origins of strategy, the writings of classic authors and the entry of consulting firms; it then considers the industrial organization model with a look at the work of Michael Porter, organizational economics and the resource-based view. The chapter ends by noting the disenchantment with the traditional planning paradigm, the fragmentation of the strategic management field, and the need for a new, more organizationally informed paradigm.

Chapter 2 locates the dominant strategic management approaches outlined in chapter 1 in the functionalist paradigm, notes their main critiques, and discusses the emergence of what may be labeled the "organizational action" view of strategic management in terms of applications of interpretive sociology and organization theory to strategy. It then discusses the conceptual building blocks of the organizational action view and their interrelationships, and concludes with some key theoretical features of this emerging view.

Chapter 3 aims to disentangle the relationship between the terms "strategic thinking" and "strategic planning" as found in the literature; to develop the analogy of strategic planning as single-loop learning and strategic thinking as double-loop learning; to propose a dialectical view of the relationship between strategic thinking and strategic planning; and to offer examples of strategic thinking and planning and the dialectical process involved. This discussion illustrates the general orientation of the organizational action view, the application of organization theory to strategic management issues, in this case using organizational learning concepts to clarify the nature and interrelationship between strategic thinking and strategic planning. It can also potentially contribute to a deeper understanding of strategic choice, a key facet of the organizational action view, by exploring the nature and complementarity of these two concepts.

Chapter 4 explores the relevance and applicability of leadership research in enhancing our understanding of boards of directors'

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functioning and effectiveness. Secondly, it discusses methodological issues with respect to board research and indicates potentially fruitful methodological approaches. Consistent with the organizational action view of strategic management, this chapter aims to gain a deeper understanding of the dominant coalition, and shares the methodological perspective of this view.

Part II of the book, on "Realizing strategy," is concerned in various facets of strategy implementation within an organizationally informed perspective. Chapter 5 sets the scene, by highlighting the turbulence of the competitive environment, which makes capabilities for strategic thinking and successful realization of strategy even more critical. It addresses the high costs of failed implementation efforts, as well as the reasons for which strategy implementation efforts can fail. Finally, it outlines various concepts and frameworks that can aid successful strategy implementation.

Chapter 6 goes in depth into one facet of the organizational action view, the organizational paradigm, which provides the context for strategic choices and actions. It employs a processual approach to examine the nature of organizational culture and its effects, focusing on the close interrelationship between culture and strategic change. The case discussion illustrates how a strategic re-direction involving market repositioning and substantial growth, can also entail significant cultural and organizational changes. The discussion suggests that rather than aiming for wholesale cultural change, an organization should recognize what aspects of the culture need to change and what aspects need to be nurtured. The cultural web is employed as a useful framework for understanding the cultural and organizational situation of the firm, and identifying relevant changes. A typified framework for strategic decision-making is also presented as a useful tool for managing the change process, and some important issues of change management arising at each stage are discussed.

Continuing chapter 6's focus on the ideational aspects of the organization and a change perspective, chapter 7 emphasizes that effective change management is not just about the "hard" structural aspects of organizations; it requires an in-depth appreciation of the cultural and human aspects of organizations, and taking actions based on this understanding. This chapter suggests that organizational discourse can provide access to this conceptual world of organizations and can also be used as an avenue for influencing it. Use of metaphor by change

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agents is discussed as a prime example of how discourse can help to achieve effective organizational change.

Chapter 8 describes an organization development (OD) approach to managing strategic change processes, based on an "integrated organizational model" developed for this purpose, and illustrates its use through an empirical example. The process of applying the model and learning from this and other OD interventions, indicates how closer integration between the fields of OD and strategic management can help to bridge the gap of relevance between academic and practitioner concerns. The findings also highlight useful lessons which merit careful consideration by top management teams when developing strategy, and planning and leading strategic change. In terms of the organizational action view, this chapter exemplifies a processual approach to strategic choice and implementation that takes into account key organizational factors in planning for and implementing change. In addition, it presents an organization development-oriented decision process that can support strategic choices by the dominant coalition; in doing so, it emphasizes the value of integrating organizational development with strategic management, in terms of enhanced practitioner relevance and more effective strategy implementation.

Part III of the book, entitled "Current themes and applications," discusses selected topical issues in strategic management. Chapter 9 outlines global privatization trends and the impact of privatization programs. Using a variant of the organizational action view as a theoretical framework, Singapore Telecom is analyzed as a case where state ownership combined with several contextual and firm-related factors, especially firm strategy, has led to sustained world-class performance relative to its peers. This analysis challenges the widely held position that public ownership is associated with inferior performance and points to the importance of strategy as a key factor in aiding superior performance even under public ownership. Some theoretical and practical implications of the analysis are then outlined.

Research on the importance of generally accepted "best practices" in corporate governance has generally failed to find convincing connections between these practices and organizational performance. Chapter 10 discusses research outcomes on the relationship between two such "best practices" (CEO/Chair duality and insider/outsider composition) and organizational performance, that find this relationship to be insignificant. Four possibilities are proposed for this tenuous

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relationship, that are not mutually exclusive. The methodological and substantive implications of each of these possibilities are then addressed. This chapter suggests that in order to gain an understanding of the strategic role and impact of boards, studies of structural board factors are insufficient; we must rather use in-depth qualitative methodologies to explore actual board functioning, and track the board's role in specific strategic decisions and actions. This shares the methodological perspective of the organizational action view, its focus on strategic choices by the dominant coalition, and the importance of following through the decisions' impact on realized strategy and performance.

Chapter 11 develops a typology of inter-organizational networks based on the key dimensions of organizational interdependence and network durability. This helps to place the network literature in context by suggesting that network features and processes vary in different types of networks, and have different implications for performance. This chapter includes an extended discussion of "embedded" networks found in East Asia. A "micro-typology" of such embedded networks is developed, based on the dimensions of formalization of ties and networking scope. Thirdly, taking a strategic perspective on the role of the board of directors, it is suggested that in the context of achieving more effective governance, (interlocking) directors' roles should differ based on the type of network in which they are engaged. This chapter represents an attempt to operationalize a key conclusion of chapter 10, on the need to better understand directors' strategic roles, rather than the mostly fruitless attempt so far of attempting to relate structural board features to organizational performance.

Chapter 12 begins by addressing the characteristics of the shifting competitive landscape, significantly influenced by the forces of globalization and information and communication technologies. It expands on the crucial role of leadership for guiding organizations towards competitive success, especially the ability to effectively balance strategic and organizational tensions and paradoxes. The implications of the new competitive environment for organizational design are then addressed, especially how firms can develop strategic flexibility. Intensified competitive churning leads to higher levels of uncertainty and risk. The chapter suggests that even though structured tools exist to help managers deal with such risk, the most effective defense at a strategic level is building sound strategic thinking and implementation capabilities. The chapter ends by suggesting that notwithstanding the hype

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and popular assertions that the old rules of strategy are not applicable any more, the opposite is true. Strategic clarity based on established principles is now more crucial than ever.

Without Fiona's unceasing encouragement this book might not be a reality. I would also like to thank Chris Harrison and his colleagues at Cambridge University Press for their professional and outstanding work on all aspects of publishing this book.

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