Edited by James R Meindl,
Charles Stubbart, and Joseph F
Porac, Thousand Oaks,
California, Sage Publications,
1996, pp 528, Price: $69.95
(Cloth), $32.95 (Paper).

Cognition Within and Between Organizations forms part of the series that Sage is bringing out in collaboration with *Organization Science* and the Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences (INFORMS). This series reprints special issues of *Organization Science* on various themes, with new chapters that did not appear in the special issue, and reprints of related articles that appeared in other issues of the journal. In a well written introduction to this book, the editors state that the primary theme addressed in it is, "how organizational members conceptualize and make sense of their organizational worlds" (p ix). Recognising a surge of interest in managerial and organisational cognition (MOC) in the past 20 years, they infer that it is in tune with the trend in social sciences in general during the same period where research has focused on understanding the construction and representation of reality. Questioning "a strictly realist view of the world in which the environment imposes itself on passive perceivers", the editors note that, "scholars now recognize that people actively construct their environments by combining existing knowledge structure with external information through acts of interpretation" (p x). Following this, the various chapters focus on "meaning, representation and sensemaking rather than on calculation and choice, on the social context of thought rather than on individual mental processes" (p xiii).

There are 15 chapters in this book, organised in four parts, along an increasing unit of analysis—from individual cognition within the organisation to cognition between organisations. Part I consists of four chapters under the theme. 'Individual Cognition Within Organizations'.

Do managers begin to think more and more alike as they continue in the same industry? If so, can we find 'industry-typical' shared thinking? The opening chapter on 'Comparative Cause Mapping' by Mauri Laukkanen attempts to answer such questions based on a field study of real life managerial thinking by comparing the cognitive structures or mental maps of managers in two inter-related industries. This chapter stands out not only for its conceptual rigour but for its methodological dexterity as well. The second chapter by Melone on 'Reasoning in the Executive Suite' explores if the reasoning processes followed by top executives while making decisions is influenced by their expertise or experience —professional and role/functional. In the third chapter, Nutt identifies four different ways in which managers structure the initial or formulation phase of decision making along with the respective tactics they use to carry them out. In the last chapter of Part I, Priem tests if assumptions of contingency theory on the "strategy-structure-environment-firm performance" congruence, match with the judgements of chief executives as to which of the configurations is actually "good" or effective.

Part II consists of four chapters on 'Cognition of Groups in Organizations'. Corner, Kinicki and Keats consider it problematic that the existing theories of strategic decision making in organisations based on the information processing perspective have either the individual or the organisation as their focus, and proceed to propose a parallel process model to integrate the two. Marlene Fiol in Chapter 6 presents an interesting perspective on achieving unity in diversity, on how managers can foster learning in their organisations by building consensus among members with different and conflicting views. In Chapter 7, Gioia, Thomas, Clark and Chittipeddi employ an

ethnographic interpretive approach to understand how symbols, metaphors and other influencing processes were used effectively to launch a strategic change effort in a university—for initiating change, overcoming resistance and accomplishing the desired action. In the last chapter of this part, Boland Jr, Tenkasi and Te'veni observe that the design of IT systems that support cognition in organisations is either individual or group focused and argue that such systems are ineffective to support 'distributed cognition' and facilitate learning. They propose a set of design principles for developing IT systems that facilitate both individual interpretation and group dialogue in organisations.

'Cognition and Organizing' is the theme of Part III. Stanley Harris in Chapter 9 focuses on the influence of organisational culture on the structure and processes of sensemaking of the individual member, that is, on how the individual "experiences cultural sharing, subcultural boundaries, and psychological attachment". In the next chapter, Dougherty addresses the differences in the interpretations which groups of individuals come up with, in relation to product innovation. She makes a strong case for organisations interested in successful product innovations to take explicit care to remove barriers within them — both interpretive and routine based — that impede learning and innovation. Chapter 11 by Cohen and Bacdayan deals with the topic of organisational routines, made highly popular by the

works of James March and colleagues, but in a very unique manner. Drawing from recent psychology literature and using a laboratory experimental task with playing cards, they explain how organisational routines arise, stabilise and change.

The 'drama' narrated in Chapter 12 by Edwin Hutchins stands out both for its story line, and for the unique context where it unfolded. Based on his first hand observation of how a navigation team in a ship dealt with the sudden failure of both the propulsion and navigational instrument systems, Hutchins neatly demonstrates how the solution to the crisis evolved with each action (both successful and failing), by different members of the group. While the solution to the crisis defied any prior designs mastered by the navigators, and while no one single member of the team had the whole solution in mind, together, collectively, they arrived at a successful solution. In the last chapter of this section, Burgelman, based on a study of Intel Corporation, addresses the strategy formulation processes in organisations. Following the evolutionary mode, he demonstrates that successful organisational change and survival result from the combined effects of pursuing strategic initiatives that are within the current strategy framework of the organisation, as well as following new initiatives that fall outside of it. Importantly, he points to the internal experimentation and selection processes of strategic initiatives by successful organisations, before they ac-

tually embark on them.

Finally, the two chapters in the last section of the book deal with 'Cognition Between Organizations'. Raghu Garud and Michael A Rappa in Chapter 14 examine the evolving social and cognitive processes in technology development. Based on a longitudinal case study of cochlear implants (electronic biomedical devices that provide a sense of sound to the acutely deaf), they demonstrate the cyclical interdependence between the beliefs that researchers hold about what is technically feasible and what is not, the subsequent products and services they create, and the procedures they develop/use to evaluate how well their creations match prior expectations. In the concluding chapter of the book, Philips explores industry cultures, a theme not so frequently dealt with by organisational researchers as the theme of organisational culture. Using ethnographic methodology involving interviews and thematic content analysis with informants in carefully identified work roles in the fine arts museum and California wine industries, she demonstrates the existence of industry cultures.

This is a remarkable book. First, while each chapter in the book makes a distinctive contribution to knowledge, there are some chapters that are unique in their contribution, such as the one on the problem solving behaviour of the navigation team of a ship in crisis by Hutchins (Ch 12), and the one on comparative cause mapping by Laukkanen (Ch 1). Second, though many of

its chapters address topics that are familiar to researchers and managers, such as strategy formulation, product innovation, and technology development, they are done in unique ways. This uniqueness comes both from the research orientation (mental map or schema) as well as the methodologies followed by the authors. Third, the academic quality of this book is beyond any question, as the original source of all its chapters is the *Organization Science* journal. Further, Meindl, Stubbart and Porac, who are themselves reputed scholars in the field, have done a very careful job of editing it and writing a fitting introduction.

For a researcher, teacher, student or any other person interested in managerial and organisational cognition, this book presents a single window interface with the articles that appeared in *Organization Science* between 1991 and '94. In particular, the researcher will be thrilled to encounter a rich variety of research methodologies in the book. Teachers of advanced courses on MOC could use this book as one of the anchors in their courses. Hence, it is a must for libraries in all management schools, and universities with departments of psychology, social psychology and cognitive psychology and perhaps sociology, especially the ones with explicit research agendas (even if unrelated to organisational cognition).

The book should also be of interest to the managerial audience. In particular, strategic planners, trainers, and technol-

ogy/product development groups at the corporate levels of all progressive minded organisations would find different sets of chapters in the book useful. Consultants who work on strategy formulation, organisation development and change management, organisational learning, and technology/product development, may also find some of the chapters in this book extremely insightful, innovative and useful for their work.

— K Unnikrishnan Nair

K Unnikrishnan Nair is Assistant Professor, Behavioural Sciences Group, at the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta.

e-Profit—High Payoff Strategies for Capturing the E-Commerce Edge

In a business environment charged with daily sensational stories about E-commerce, this book by Peter S Cohan goes back to the basics. It cuts through the hype of the cutting edge companies selling millions of dollars on the Internet, and focuses on the basic management principles that should guide companies through this revolution sweeping our world. Put very simply, this book tells practicing managers how to integrate the 'E' part into their existing businesses for maximum results and with minimum pain. It is not a book for technical people, or for

academics and students. It provides little by way of any outstanding theoretical research or breakthrough concepts. It is rather like a roadmap for managers grappling with the Internet revolution. Based on age-old management principles, it takes you through every intersection on the road to using the Internet for profits by clearly outlining the principles, methodologies and pitfalls and by illumining the way through numerous case studies.

Peter S Cohan is president of a management consultancy firm and has earlier written a book called *Net-Profit: How to Invest and Compete in the Real World of Internet Business.*

At the very beginning, he identifies the three types of companies:

■ the internet-only, E-commerce 'pure play' company

■ the land-based company that is willing to evolve itself in the internet age, called Self-Reinventors

■ the land-based company that is hoping that E-commerce will somehow go away, called the Change-Avoiders.

This book is specifically useful for the last two categories mentioned. Cohan has based this book on interviews conducted with managers from many organisations, big and small, as well as numerous articles from magazines such as *Information Week, Internet Week* and *PC Week.*

Cohan presents the economic case for E-commerce when he deals with the difficulties in us-