



Call for Papers: Special issue on

## “Organization Design of Resilience in the face of Unanticipated Global Crises”

Guest Editors: Arie Y. Lewin, *Duke University, USA* and Liisa Välikangas, *Technical University of Denmark and Hanken School of Economics, Finland*

**Deadline for submissions: 17 April 2021**

The *Journal of Organization Design* welcomes submissions to a Special Issue on “Organization Design of Resilience in the face of Unanticipated Global Crises”

### Background

How to design for resilience, and how do organizations manifest resilience in organizational designs during global crises? The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed resilience as a neglected organizational capability despite decades of research in different but related disciplinary fields ranging from psychology to ecology, from safety engineering to organization studies and management.

What is resilience? Holling (1996) drew a distinction between resilience that is about the functional efficiency of a system or an organization (called engineering resilience) and resilience that is about its survival (called ecological resilience). He further noted that resilience is found only in dynamic responses to extraordinary challenges, not in the everyday adaptation of organizations (March, 1981), which may mask latent or potential resilience or lack thereof (Fenema & Romme, 2020, Linnenluecke and Griffith, 2010). How is resilience manifest? Some authors focus on a bounce back to event-preceding conditions as a sign of operational resilience (Wildawski, 1988). Others emphasize the improvisation of timely strategic responses amidst external chaos

(Lengnick-Hall et al. 2011) and without undergoing trauma (Hamel & Välikangas, 2003). Resilience is then observable in the capacity of an organization to transform itself to remain competitive or legitimate in the abruptly changing external environment. Such resilience may be enabled by fungible slack resources or flexible cognitive routines to fashion solutions out of collective, transactive memory. It may derive from particular qualities in organizational relationships, or it may be a matter of serendipity and luck – making it to the right place the right time. Resilience may also have an internal quality, such as mindfulness (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2001) which may mean preventing disruptions including accidents. The dynamic nature of resilience is evidenced in the organization transforming itself or it may be – in Karl Weick’s words – a dynamic non-event: the status quo prevails.

A number of case studies (e.g. Perrow, 2011, Vaughn, 1986, Majchrzak et al, 2007, Stevenson, 2014) have discussed adaptation to potentially catastrophic external disruptions. What is the record of organizations and their designs in a global pandemic beyond the luck of benefitting from a business that is in particular demand, or being able to ramp up to the needs of the suddenly skyrocketing market? Where do we find resilience in the current landscape of organizations and why (Van der Vegt et al 2015)? What organizational designs show resilience under crisis (for an integrative view, see Williams et al, 2007)? An interesting example of studying resilience of complex organizations from different theoretical perspectives is the debate between Charles Perrow and Nancy Leveson who scrutinized each other’s work from a sociological and engineering perspective, respectively relating to the nature and designs of resilience and safety (see for example Marais et al, 2004, Leveson et al, 2009, Leveson, 2011, Perrow, 1981).

It is not clear whether resilience pinpoints to a single or multiple phenomena. What is potentially adding to the confusion are terms that are sometimes used interchangeably, such as agility, robustness, or anti-fragility. What unites the resilience scholars and practitioners is the focus on the challenge of responding to unpredictable Black Swan type events that can precipitously obsolete existing competitive strategy or organizational functionality and distort the organization’s capacity to recognize that returning to old normal is not an option (Grandori, 2020; Välikangas & Lewin, 2020).

## Special Issue aims and scope

The intent of this Special Issue is not to limit resilience to any singular format or framework or to seek an ultimate or unassailable dominant design definition. We acknowledge that resilience can stem from many wellsprings and it may be manifest in multiple ways. This should not be surprising, given the scientific roots of the term being located in a multitude of disciplines, with cross-overs and interpretations. We thus call for papers that consider and accept equifinality of capabilities underlying resilience anchored in various theoretical lenses in the context of studying organizations. For example, we welcome multi-method studies on the expressions of organizational resilience in collective learning, organizational ambidexterity, open innovation, garbage can processes and outcomes, capabilities for recognizing emergence, leadership, or deploying and repurposing advanced technologies. How do particular theoretical perspectives enable or negate organizational resilience and how is such theorization empirically manifest? We invite diverse submissions that take specific or a fusion of theoretical perspectives and consider how the particular perspective(s) might anchor resilience, coupled with an empirical qualitative or quantitative study. Where is resilience manifest in organizations and their designs and to what performative effect? How do organizations learn from failing to be resilient?

The Special Issue is proposed as a forum for exploring resilience from multitude of theoretical perspectives under extraordinary circumstances such as the current global pandemic. We encourage exchange across theoretical, or even disciplinary boundaries in the best tradition of resilience studies, as long as the discussion is related to organizations and their designs for resilience. To aid such exchanges, we will assemble reviewers from multiple disciplinary backgrounds to provide commentaries on the published articles.

## About the Guest Editors



Arie Y. Lewin (Coordinating Guest Editor) is Professor Emeritus of Strategy and International Business at Duke University, Fuqua School of Business. He is elected Fellow of the Academy of International Business and The Organization Management and Theory division of the Academy of Management, which awarded Professor Lewin the first Joanne Martin Trailblazer Award at the 2008 Annual Meeting. He is the Editor-In-Chief of *Management and Organization Review (MOR)*. He was Editor-in-Chief (2002- 2007) of *Journal of International Business Studies (JIBS)*; founding Editor-in-Chief of *Organization Science* (1989-1998) and the convener of the acclaimed Organization Science

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## Instructions

The deadline for submissions is 17 April, 2021.

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The *Journal of Organization Design* publishes various article types, including research papers, research primers, translationals, commentaries, and "point of view" papers, all of which can be submitted to this Special Issue. Refer to the journal's online submission guidelines for details pertaining to each article type, as well as examples of published work.

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