Empirical Research on Organizational Resilience: How far have we come?

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Julia Hillmann
(Supervisor: Edeltraud Guenther)
Faculty of Business and Economics,
Chair of Environmental Management and Accounting
Technische Universität Dresden
**Agenda**

(1) Sustainability and Resilience: two concepts that match?

(2) Resilience and Organizational Resilience – same, but different?

(3) Systematic literature review

(4) General findings about literature

(5) Towards a research agenda

- Definition of organizational resilience
- Factors of organizational resilience
- Context in which organizational resilience is studied
- Relationships to other concepts
“Among a growing number of scientists [...] a new dialogue is emerging around a new idea, resilience: how to help vulnerable people, organizations and systems persist, perhaps even thrive, amid unforeseeable disruptions. Where sustainability aims to put the world back into balance, resilience looks for ways to manage in an imbalanced world.”

(Andrew Zolli)
Resilience and Organizational Resilience – same, but different

Resilience in the context of organizations – What is the difference?

Other research disciplines

- Resilience of what?
- Resilience to what?
- Resilience for what?

Management research

- Resilience of organizations (for-profit)
- The notion of uncertainty, complexity, and turbulence is added (e.g., McCann and Selsky, 2012; Välikangas and Romme, 2012; Reinmoeller and van Baardwijk, 2005)
- Supporting companies to create capabilities that help them to survive and thrive in changing environments
Methodology

• Systematic literature review (Fink, 2010)
• Search strings:
  „corporate resilience“
  „business resilience“
  „organisational resilience“
  „management resilience“
  „industry resilience“
  resilience OR data OR empirical OR finding*
  OR test OR statistical OR evidence OR result*
  (Davis and Han, 2004)
  + measur*

• Source:
  (2) Database: Business Source Complete (EBSCO), Emerald, Web of Science
• Search results: 1042 articles
• Excluded: book reviews, resilience as personality trait, resilience at community level, resilience of built environment

→ Overall: 69 references analysed
General findings in the literature

Literature on organizational resilience is highly diverse
Many practitioner articles were found (19)

- Roughly half of the studies were empirical studies (31)
- Few quantitative studies (11)
- Majority were case studies (26) → Empirical literature still remains on a conceptual and exploratory level

- No common agreement on how to measure organizational resilience → a clear and valid construct is missing
- Link to organization theory not strong enough

13 articles found in top journals → not yet a topic of high quality journals?

Need for more empirical evidence on larger samples
Need for a clear and valid constructs and distinction to existing concepts in management
Need for more rigor of resilience within management research
Towards a research agenda

Looking at the following 4 aspects:

- Definition of organizational resilience
- Factors of organizational resilience
- Context in which organizational resilience is studied
- Relationships to other concepts
A definition of organizational resilience

- Only definitions included where authors (n = 29) gave their own definition of ‘organizational resilience’
- Searched for ‘abstract’ categories that describe components of definitions (similarities among definitions):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When is resilience shown?</th>
<th>Resilience to what?</th>
<th>Which kind of capability or capacity is mentioned?</th>
<th>Which corporate level is addressed: strategic or operational level?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Before the event</td>
<td>After the event</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>During the event</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Organizational resilience is**

„an ability to anticipate risks and future trends (prepare / before)

to understand the situation, to resist, and act thoughtful (response / during)
to recover fast, to adapt, and to renew or reinvent (recover / after)

while effectively aligning operational with corporate strategies to be able to survive in turbulent and complex environments.”
### Factors of organizational resilience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components of OR</th>
<th>Capabilities (Science)</th>
<th>Managementsystem (Practice)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before the event</td>
<td>ability to anticipate</td>
<td>Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the event</td>
<td>ability to resist</td>
<td>Crisis</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ability to respond</td>
<td>ERM</td>
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<td></td>
<td>quickly</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>ability to act</td>
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<td></td>
<td>thoughtful</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>After the event</td>
<td>ability to recover</td>
<td>BCM</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(fast)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ability to adapt</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ability of renewal</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>/ reinventing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ability to learn</td>
<td>SCM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### strategic or operational level?
- **Strategic level**
- **Operational level**

- measured it as multi-dimensional construct BUT in different ways
Context in which resilience is studied

The context aspect is twofold:

(1) Distinction between discontinuous and continuous change:
   • different capabilities needed
   • BUT: researchers combine those types of change (in definition) but then focus on a certain shock or disruption in their analysis
   → could be clearer and more systematic
   → Role of continuous change needs more research
      → continuous change → small-scale events → not easily perceived by companies but accumulate over time and may result in an even bigger crisis (Rudolph and Repenning, 2002)

(2) Remember: different notion to resilience: complexity & uncertainty (turbulence)
   • organizational resilience and the type of environment (McCann & Selsky, 2012, Smart & Vertinsky, 1984)
Relationship to other concepts

Antecedents / Enablers

- Routines (Lengnick-Hall & Beck, 2005)
- Slack (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2007)
- Learning (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2007, Burnard & Bhamra, 2011)
- Networks (McCann & Selsky, 2012, Stephenson, 2010)

Organizational resilience vs. existing concepts

- organizational change capacity (Judge & Douglas, 2009)
- organizational buffering (Lynn, 2005)
- organizational flexibility (Hatum & Pettigrew, 2004)

Consequences

- organizational performance (Stephenson, 2010, McCann et al, 2009)
Thank you for your attention!

Do you have any questions or comments?
References


