

Call for Papers

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Organizational Agility – Adaptive strategies, inspiring leaders & flexible structures

During the last decades it has become widely accepted in management science that organizations continuously adapt to dynamic environments. Dynamic capability theory, for example, emphasizes that organizations should be constantly changing in dynamic environments (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Wilden, Devinney, & Dowling, 2016). Similarly, process organization studies have proposed that organizing is inherently instable and adaptive, making change the rule rather than the exception (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Recently, these dynamics become visible in empirical phenomena such as digitalization, Industry 4.0, the sharing-economy, sustainability, or e-mobility. The central question remains how organizing can account for the flexibility required to strive and survive in these dynamic environments.

Organizational agility is a concept that is increasingly gaining popularity (Goldman, Nagel, & Preiss, 1995; Sambamurthy, Bharadwaj, & Grover, 2003; Tallon & Pinsonneault, 2011). We define organizational agility as the process of how organizations sense their environment and (re)act accordingly in order to survive in dynamics environments. Even though the agility concept is relevant, a comprehensive understanding of what underpins organizational agility is still missing. This special issue seeks to fill this gap. In order to attain this goal it strives to unravel the underlying micro-aspects and processes that support or inhibit organizational agility (Salvato & Rerup, 2011).

The special issue particularly encourages contributions that unpack three specific dimensions that underlie organizational agility: adaptive strategies, inspiring leaders and flexible structures. However, it is not limited to these dimensions.

1) Adaptive strategies and organizational agility

Strategy plays a major role in facilitating or preventing organizational agility. Research on dynamic capabilities, ambidexterity, and innovation networks, for instance, has emphasized the relevance of strategies in facilitating adaptation processes (Teece, Peteraf, & Leih, 2016; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Other strategy scholars have looked at how specific characteristics of strategies make them more or less adaptive. For instance, open strategy strives for increased transparency and inclusion to open up the strategy process, involving both the internal and the external stakeholders, and providing more strategic information, for the benefit of both business and society at large (Whittington, 2019).

While strategies are important in understanding organizational agility, the making of strategies is also an important aspect. Scholars have emphasized the role of managerial skills and cognition in this regard (Helfat & Martin, 2015; Tripsas & Gavetti, 2000), and the notion of managerial heuristics and simple rules has gained attention (Sull & Eisenhardt, 2015). Other scholars have emphasized that it might be relevant to look at how managers strategize (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007) and how actors all across the organization contribute to strategy making (Hautz, Seidl, & Whittington, 2017), also providing an interesting perspective on how adaptive strategies come into being.

2) Inspiring leaders and organizational agility

While strategies are important, they need to be diffused into the organization in order to have practical impact and hereby support organizational agility. Leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing the operative impact of strategy. The central question here is how leadership can make a difference and support organizational agility. We encourage contributions that tackle the role of leadership in supporting organizational agility (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). This could be done by looking at different leadership styles, such as servant leadership (Van Dierendonck, 2011), transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006), dyadic leadership (Dansereau, 1995), or ambidextrous leadership (Mueller, Renzl, & Will, 2018).

Alternatively, such contribution could be achieved by looking at leadership as a process of interaction between leaders and subordinates, disentangling the role of narratives, discourses, and social construction (Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien, 2012). While leadership is oftentimes considered a role of managers, it might also be relevant to disentangle how other actors can take action to influence their organization, such as the notion of corporate entrepreneurship (Kuratko, Ireland, Covin, & Hornsby, 2005; Mahringer & Renzl, 2018), autonomous strategic behaviour (Burgelman, 1983a, 1983b) or issue selling (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, & Lawrence, 2001).

3) Flexible structures and organizational agility

A third component that influences the agility of an organization is structure. Contributions in this regard could look at coordination mechanisms (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009) such as routines (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Parmigiani & Howard-Grenville, 2011), practices (Mahringer, Rost, & Renzl, 2019), projects (Sydow & Braun, 2018) networks (Rogan & Mors, 2014; Rost, Sonnenmoser, & Renzl, 2019), knowledge (Cegarra-Navarro, Soto-Acosta, & Wensley, 2016) or roles (Bechky, 2006). For instance, it might be worthwhile to unravel how these coordination mechanisms facilitate learning (Edmondson, Bohmer, & Pisano, 2001) or dealing with ambiguity (Konlechner & Ambrosini, 2019) and novelty (Sonenshein, 2016). In this vein, contributions could also look at specific types of organizations. These types include, but are not limited to temporary organizations (Sydow & Braun, 2018), replicators and accelerators (Schmidt, Braun, & Sydow, 2019), ecosystems and hubs (Spigel, 2017) or network organizations (Miles & Snow, 1992).

Important notes

- While we embrace a variety of theoretical perspectives, we urge contributors to clearly state how their manuscript helps to better understand organizational agility, defined as the process of how organizations sense their environment and (re)act accordingly in order to survive in dynamics environments.
- Note that organizational agility is not similar to agile methods. Even though it might be possible to link either aspects (or use agile methods as an empirical context) manuscripts should make a primary contribution to better understand organizational agility.
- Even though we embrace different methods and theoretical approaches, manuscripts should build on a consistent theoretical and methodological basis. We are open to all kinds of methodological approaches, such as quantitative, qualitative and mixed method studies. Conceptual papers are also considered.
- All manuscripts have to be formatted according to the author guidelines. These guidelines can be found on the journal website.

Submission

The deadline for submission is the **30th of April 2020**, 23:59 UTC+1. Manuscripts have to be submitted via the submission system at the journal webpage (www.jcsm-journal.de). The special issue is scheduled for end of 2020. If you need assistance please contact martin.rost@bwi.uni-stuttgart.de.

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