



Are we ready to manage the unexpected?

Exploring antifragility, resilience and wellbeing in organizations

PRESENTATION

The SARS-COV2 pandemic has changed individual's perception of reality in a dramatic way. People, cities, economies and countries have experienced the shock of health crisis, lockdown and the fear of unknowing. Everything has changed and we probably still do not understand the real magnitude of this change. We question ourselves about our future and the next generations' one.

Everywhere the consciousness of the fragility has dramatically increased and we have to look for new ways to cope with it. In other words, we have to learn and increase our set of possible actions toward and reactions to "nonobvious breakdowns" (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015).

WOA 2021 opened up this line of research by focusing on "new meanings and purposes in human action" and Professor Chia's keynote speech was illuminating under this perspective. In his work, Professor Chia highlights how nowadays, "the organization is inextricably immersed and intertwined with its environment, and both are perpetually shifting and changing" (Chia, 2017, p. 108) and proposes to the academic community to focus on a form of learning based on practice and on sensing that allows for constant searching, adjustments, reconfiguration of responses to emergent issues. He calls this learning "wayfinding" by meaning the refining of empirical sensitivity to cope effectively with uncertainty, and to respond to external solicitations to meet the organizations changing needs.

The wayfinding approach is thus strongly related to organizational resilience, defined as "the maintenance of positive adjustment under challenging conditions such that the organization emerges from those conditions strengthened and more resourceful" (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007, 3418). Being resilient means having latent resources and the ability to combine them differently in order to cope with challenging and changing conditions.

The pandemic crisis acted as a Black Swan (a random event with three properties: large impact, incomputable probabilities, and surprise effect), notwithstanding several voices claim that it should not, and generated a chaotic situation all over the world. Due to the complexity and the interrelatedness of the social and economic systems, sub-systems reacted with different levels of effectiveness by influencing each other to some extent. It is time to look for the antecedents of fragility and understand how we, as a scientific community, could contribute to build antifragile organizations characterized by the ability to gain more benefits from chaos than harm (Taleb, 2012).

The psycho-sociological approaches (e.g. De Carlo, 2003) point out the mechanisms through which chaos and uncertainty generates stress on individuals and groups, and a huge body of literature (e.g. Daniels & Guppy, 1994; Sonnentag & Frese, 2013) demonstrates that caring about individual and organizational well-being (Avallone & Paplomatas, 2005) is an effective manner to prevent stress in both private and working life. Moreover, the pandemic period calls for an extension of the concept of stress and for overcoming the classical identification of occupational stressors at the workplace. It is necessary to embrace a more comprehensive approach, which should include workers physical and mental conditions, by cross-fertilising scientific domains such as management, psychology and sociology. From a people management point of view, competence and leadership models, sustainable and wellbeing oriented practices (Salas-Vallina *et al.*, 2020), welfare policies, and new dimension of the work-life balance issue should be investigated and contextualized in the so-called “next normal” paradigm.

As far as processes and structures are concerned, we have to deal with new learning strategies, the management of distant workforce, the revision of HR tools and policies and with a different approach to job design (and the birth of new jobs) in order to account for the increase of remote working that differently shapes roles, tasks and collaborative attitudes.

Several companies had to adapt their business models to the emerging contextual situation and new sources of competitive advantage arose together with deep process reengineering, also thanks to the increasing diffusion of digital technologies.

However, the boost in digitization due to the pandemic crisis was randomly applied in several organizations, namely SMEs and public ones. The lack of planning ability clearly emerged. Schools and universities faced several challenges in implementing the distant learning processes and a profound digital divide arose. Generally speaking, the Public Administration – already involved in a slow and laborious process of digital transition – had to put in place huge organizational efforts to guarantee to citizens essential services in this turbulent times. Some authors claim for the need of a more “robust” governance and leadership in the PA (Ansell *et al.*, 2020) based on agility and flexibility, and we should question ourselves about the evolution of managerial processes and practices in the public sector after the pandemic shock.

The pandemic also increased citizens’, customers’ and employees’ awareness about an economic sustainable development, not only in terms of eco-friendly behaviours but also in terms of labour market inequalities (e.g. social costs for the national Health Systems) and individuals’ mental and physical health.

The previous issues drive us to meditate on organizational performance indicators as companies are becoming more and more “social actors” and have to go beyond the classical concepts of performance. It is straightforward that the complexity of these challenges would benefit from multiple perspectives approaches. The WOA 2022 thus invites participants to reflect on these and other related questions by embracing, as much as possible, different points of view and theoretical approaches by also involving and inviting colleagues from other disciplines, such as work psychology, sociology and labour law.

AIM, TRACKS AND TOPICS

We encourage organizational scholars participating to the 2022 WOA in Brescia to contribute with new empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives on all the themes presented above that may lead us to ask some of the following questions, provided as examples:

How could we capitalize the experience of the last two years in the organizational setting?

How are organizational structures and managerial processes changing under the pressure of the need for managing new organizational boundaries?

Are “traditional” HRM theories and practices able to deal with workers’ psychological stress, new job designs, ever-changing leadership paradigms, a brand-new meaning of the work-family balance and new labour market forms and inequalities?

How should we redefine organizational performance measures by including, for instance, organizational resilience and sustainability?

To guide researchers in framing their potential contributions, in the following table we present some preliminary ideas concerning topics and tracks for the WOA conference. It should be noted that the following represents just some examples, but do not exclude contributions on other topics in the spirit of this conference. Thus, the research community is strongly encouraged, but not limited to making contributions that relate to the following topics:

ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS	Post-pandemic business models evolution Organizational boundaries management Emerging issues in job design From remote working to smart working
PEOPLE	Managing a distant workforce The emergence of new leadership paradigms Expanded concept of wellbeing Emerging Work-Life balance issues
PROCESSES	Wayfinding learning HR and sustainability Reactive and proactive resilience Integrated performance indicators
METHODOLOGY	Sources, processes and tools for organizational research Textual analysis and theory development Survey research Ethnography Statistical modelling Cross-cultural and comparative methods Experimental research design

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS

SESSIONS

In order to account for the shorter lasting time of this call for paper, with respect to previous years, the Workshop Program will mix up past and recent approaches. We are keeping the distinction between papers and work-in-progress contributions, but the final upload of the full paper (for the paper session)

is not mandatory (even if it is strongly encouraged in order to have the possibility to present and discuss completed research). Thus, we kindly invite scholars to submit to:

1. PAPER SESSIONS (SHORT PAPER → FULL PAPER on a voluntary base): Short papers presenting completed research - including theoretical, methodological, findings, and discussion and contributions sections – may be submitted in such a session. Authors of short papers accepted to present in a paper session, are invited – but not obliged to- upload a full version of the paper, possibly addressing reviewers indications, so that the track chairs can circulate them among the authors presenting in the same session.

2. WORK IN PROGRESS SESSIONS (ABSTRACT → POSTER): Abstracts about work in progress, research ideas or early-stage works eliciting feedback, must be addressed in this session. Indeed, this session is suitable for idea exchange and open discussion of research projects and ideas in an early phase of development. Authors of abstracts, accepted to be presented in a *work in progress* session, are invited to produce a printed copy of a poster that presents the research in progress.. Posters will be on display during the whole conference and there will be dedicated sessions to present and discuss.

SUBMISSION

Short papers (Paper session) and abstracts (Work in progress session) must be submitted electronically via EasyChair by the deadline January 31st, 2022. Contributions will be double-blind reviewed.

Short papers should comprise 3000 words including graphs, figures, tables, and references. The submission must include a Title page and a Main document, to be uploaded as separated files. Documents should be uploaded in a pdf format.

Structured-abstracts should comprise 300 words and should include:

- Purpose
- Design/Methodology /Approach/Intervention
- Results
- Limitations
- Research/Practical Implications
- Originality/Value

Notification of acceptance will be communicated by March 20th, 2022.

Guidelines and criteria for posters

Work in progress session: Posters are short printed presentations displayed on large boards (100 h x 70 l centimetres; portrait format). Individual posters will be clustered in thematic work in progress sessions lasting 45-60 minutes each. Since the aim of this session is to generate a dynamic discussion among presenters and the audience, at the beginning a facilitator will lead an introductory round in which each

presenter introduces her/his poster with a brief statement about objectives and (expected) results (approx. 3 minutes each). It follows a brief informal discussion (questions, comments, etc.) and then the audience members will have the possibility to go through posters and interact with presenters. Presenters of the posters are kindly asked to bring handouts of their poster to the session for interested visitors.