RICHIESTA PER L'ATTRIBUZIONE DI UN ASSEGNO DI RICERCA POST-DOC
Dipartimento di Scienze Aziendali – Università di Bologna

Title: When Struggles Develop Strengths: Transforming Learning in Innovation.

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Settore scientifico disciplinare: SECS-P/10

Lenght: 12 mesi

Location of the Resarch: DiSA - Università di Bologna

Fundings: Progetto PRIN 2022

Possible collaborations: Prof.ssa Rita Bissola (Università Cattolica di Milano) – Prof.ssa Alessandra Tognazzo (Università di Padova)

Main project: Progetto PRIN 2022 | When Struggles Develop Strengths: Transforming Learning in Innovation. An Analysis of Individuals, Teams, and Organizations | Finanziato con Fondi PRIN 2022 – Principal Investigator: Marcello Russo

1. Description of the research

We live in turbulent times: organizations increasingly find themselves responding to major shocks. Disruptive events (pandemics, climate change, wars, etc.) interact with individuals, teams, routines, and practices in the organizational environment in a manner that is often rapid, unpredictable, and on an unprecedented scale and that requires a process of adaptation to reduce harmful effects. Scholars agree that adversities in organizations can be a catalyst for learning and innovation (Nava, 2022): when facing a systemic shock, organizations can be capable of huge efforts that allow them to develop new organizational capabilities and routines (Salvato et al., 2020).

"Learning from disasters" (Nava, 2022: 5) illustrates the mechanisms which support organizational learning and preparedness to cope with similar threats in the future (Pearson & Clair, 1998). What is less clear in the literature is how organizations "learn through disasters" (Nava, 2022: 5) beyond the face of similar threats. This process involves a deep-learning and an organizational transformative dynamic that expands the domain of organizational capabilities and gives a new sense to the organization (Weick, 1998). The shock becomes an opportunity not simply to "bounce back" but to build a better organization. Experiencing a shock is not *per se* a condition that enables learning and innovation in organizations: many organizations fail to institutionalize and leverage on the new knowledge experimented. They often forget the good practices and routines introduced in the most difficult moments (e.g., morning team brainstorming).

2. Goal of the Research

When experiencing a systemic shock, it is very likely that organizational actors closely cooperate to restructure and reorganize internal resources and processes to maintain their functioning during the adversity (Williams & Shepherd, 2016). The result of this huge collective effort, which goes beyond

leveraging the capacity of being more prepared to cope with future shocks, is the development of newer organizational routines, greater diffused resilience, new knowledge, processes, meanings and strategies that renew and transform organizations, by fostering organizational learning and allowing to benefit from experimented innovations (Nava, 2022).

The overall objective of this research is to improve current understanding of how innovative routines, practices, and behaviours introduced by organizations while coping with systemic shocks can be maintained and capitalized in the post-shock period. Due to the conscious and unconscious need of forgetting the shock experienced (de Holan & Phillips, 2004) as well as to the simultaneous occurrence of macro and micro stressors (i.e., hassles, which may have an extended effect in time), organizations, teams and individuals often fail to benefit from a transformative learning process after a crisis as the following quote taken from a preliminary study we conducted with the largest public hospital in Emilia-Romagna demonstrates: "We [doctors] have been talking 100 times per day during the most intense moments of the pandemic [March-May 2020] and now [December 2021] we have returned to our traditional organizational silos…[…] it is a real pity! We have lost that 'momentum' and missed the opportunity to develop new organizational practices that could foster greater collaboration among all of us".

Forgetting may lead to organizational amnesia (Othman & Hashim, 2004): the failure to utilize learning that has taken place to make a necessary adaptation, reflects the failure to benefit from the learning that has taken place in organizations. Metaphorically, organizations have multiple brains located in different parts of the organization: this makes spatial distance across and between organizational levels a hindrance in developing organizational learning.

Moreover, recent reviews on organizational resilience (Baumeister & Alghamdi, 2015; Robertson e al., 2015) suggest that contextual conditions over the long-term impact on stress and well-being.
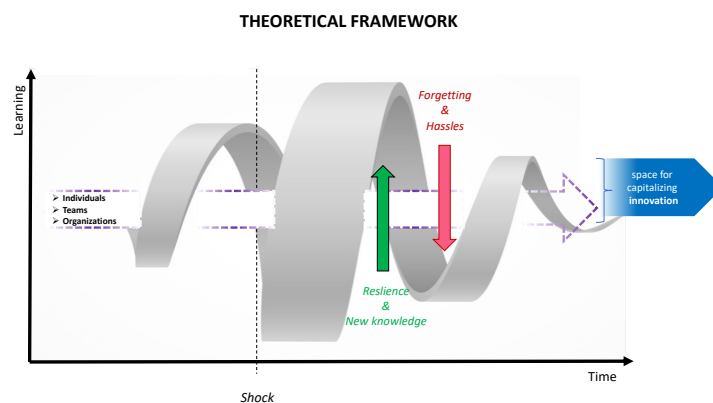
As the figure above shows, the goal is to conduct a multi-level research examining how individuals and teams in organizations can react to macro shocks and micro-stressors, by enhancing their personal and collective resilience, and ultimately by retaining (or forgetting) learning practices that sustain and capitalize innovation when a shock is over.

3. Expected results

The research can have significant scientific, but also societal impact by enabling the design of evidence-based recommendations, interventions, and diagnosis instruments that will enable organizations to assess and consolidate their innovation capabilities after a shock has occurred. More specifically, the findings of our research will enable us to refine and develop managerial

practices that could make all parties involved to be more capable of leveraging on the learning associated with a shock. We now outline the scientific impact, social and economic benefits, and potential applications for the individuals, teams, and organizations.

As for the impacts at scientific level, the contribution of the project is threefold.
First, in terms of advancement of the **scientific knowledge,** it permits to deepen under which organizational, team and individual-level conditions learning from and through external shocks, under relevant level of stress and hassles, will unfold. The previous literature has mainly focused on the individual and cognitive level suggesting that negative emotions hamper learning (Wortha et al., 2019). Conversely, stressors have a differentiated impact on learning and cognition, namely individuals can experience a higher level of learning in proximity of an acute stress, but when stressors are temporally separated from the learning, long-term memory will be impaired (Cadle & Zoladz, 2015). However, scant research attention has been devoted to the analysis of acute stressors generated by external shocks and its interplay with minor stress-related hassles. Moreover, scant research has systematized and modeled the effects of team and organizational level variables over the relationships between stress/negative emotions (caused by external shocks and minor hassles) and individual-, team-and organizational-level learning.

In terms of impacts at social and economic level, the contribution of the project to **social well-being and cultural development** is twofold. First, in terms of social well-being, we expect that organizations capable of learning and coping with stressors caused by external shocks might be more likely to survive and grow, especially in the actual turbulent times. As a consequence, those organization can enhance workers personal growth enhancing their and ability to learn from adversities and their well-being by helping them cope with stress and negative emotions generated by facing continuous external shocks.

Exploring the determinants of learning under external shocks and hassles and the role of resilience in supporting it, the project will provide organizational members relevant knowledge to cope with major and minor adversities they can face.

4. Plan of research (12 months)

Phase 1 (lenght: 3 months)
Output expected in this stage are:
- Literature review of the main factors that could facilitate or obstacle learning after a crisis or a systemic shock has occurred;
- Analysis of preliminary findings based on qualitative interviews;
- Building of the survey that will be implemented on Qualtrics to collect data about factors and dynamics that obstacle learning during crises.

Phase 2 (lenght: 4 months)
Output expected in this stage are:
- Data collection;
- Data analysis and interpretation of preliminary results
- Coding of the qualitative data.

Phase 3 (lenght: 5 months)
Output expected in this stage are:
- Paper writing;
- Submission of a first preliminary manuscript to a national conference.
- Preparation of a first submission draft.

5. Profilo del ricercatore post-doc e output scientifici richiesti

Requirements:

Below is the (preferential) characterization of the post-doc researcher profile:
- Have a master degree in Business Management or different area with subjects related to the business management;
- defended, or are about to defend, the doctoral thesis in the management disciplines;
- having conducted research activities in the field of organizational behavior;
- have developed skills in designing and implementing questionnaires for primary data collection;
- have an in-depth knowledge of multivariate statistics and analysis of qualitative data;
- having already activated international contacts, following periods of training and/or work at academic structures of international prestige;
- have been involved in national or European research projects.

Expected outcome at the end of the research grant.

At the end of the 12 months of the project, the post-doc researcher will be asked:
- 1 article based on the data collected within the project, co-authored with the tutor and the other members of the research unit of the PRIN project, submitted and presented at the main national and international conferences (i.e., AOM, Euram, EGOS, WOA)
- 1 Technical report for the dissemination of the project results.

6. Six best pubblications of the tutor in the last five years (2023 – 2017)

1. Beham, B., Ollier-Malaterre, A., Allen, T.A., Baierl, A., Alexandrova, M., Beauregard, A.B., Carvalho, V.S., Chambel, M.J., Cho, E., Coden de Silva, B., Dawkins, S., Escribano, P., Gudeta, K.H., Huang, T., Jaga, A., Kost, D., Kurowska, A., Leon, E., Lewis, E., Lu, C., Martin, A., Morandin, G., Noboa,F., Offer, S., Ohu, E., Peters, P., Rajadhyaksha, E., Russo, M., Sohn, Y.S., Straub, C., Tammelin, M., Triki, L., Van Engen, M., & Waismel-Manor, R. (2023). Humane Orientation, Work-family Conflict, and Positive Spillover across Cultures. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0001093

2. Russo, M. & Morandin, G. (2023). A network approach to work-family conflict. *Human Resource Management Review*, 33(2), 100943.

3. Kossek, E.E., Perrigino, M., Russo, M., & Morandin, G. (2023). Missed Connection between the leadership and work-life fields: Work-life supportive leadership as the key to the dual agenda. *Academy of Management Annals*, Vol. 17, Issue 1, 181-217.

4. Yu, A., Pichler, S., Russo M., Hammer, L. (2022). Family-Supportive Supervisor Behaviors and Work-Family Conflict: The Role of Stereotype Content, Supervisor Gender, and Gender Role Beliefs. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 95(2), 275–304.

5. Morandin, G., Russo, M., & Bergami, M. (2021). Imagining the Newcomer-Supervisor Relationship: Future Relational Self in the Workplace. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 31(4), 1010–1024.

6. Russo, M., Ollier-Malaterre, A., & Morandin, G. (2019). Breaking out from Constant Connectivity: Agentic Regulation of Smartphone Use. *Computers in Human Behaviors*, 98, 11–19.

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Myers, C. G. (2021). Antecedents and performance benefits of reciprocal vicarious learning in teams. *Academy of Management Journal*, 64, 926-947.

Nava, L. (2022). Rise from ashes: A dynamic framework of organizational learning and resilience in disaster response. *Business and Society Review*, *November 2020*, 1–20.

Othman, R., & Hashim, N. A. (2004). Typologizing organizational amnesia. *The learning organization*, 11, 273-284.

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Salvato, C., Sargiacomo, M., Amore, M. D., & Minichilli, A. (2020). Natural disasters as a source of entrepreneurial opportunity: Family business resilience after an earthquake. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 14(4), 594–615.

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