

JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES

Call for Papers

ORGANIZING AND STRATEGIZING IN AND FOR EXTREME CONTEXTS: TEMPORALITY, EMBODIMENT, MATERIALITY

Submission Deadline: 1 September 2022

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CALL FOR PAPERS

In the present situation, with the aftermath of a global pandemic, extreme weather events, geopolitical tensions, terrorism, religious extremism, wars, cyber espionage, street violence, interferences in democratic elections, and declining trust in democratic systems we may be in what some commentators call an age of ‘normalized unprecedentedness’ (Atwater, 2021). Although we may wish that research on extreme contexts should be of little importance, these

patterns point to the opposite. Research in this domain is indeed important and critical for increasing society's ability to cope with the present and future situation at hand.

Extreme contexts is defined as settings “where one or more extreme events are occurring or are likely to occur that may exceed the organization's capacity to prevent and result in an extensive and intolerable magnitude of physical, psychological, or material consequences to - or in close physical or psychosocial proximity to - organization members” (Hannah et al., 2009: 898). Because of their revealing nature, extreme contexts have made, and continues to make, important contributions to broader domains of management scholarship (Bamberger and Pratt, 2010; Bartunek et al., 2006; Hällgren et al., 2018) In particular, much understanding of organizing and strategizing within ordinary organizations is owed to research on sensemaking that originated in settings such as wildland fires (Weick, 1993), processes of normalization to space shuttle explosions (Vaughan, 1990), system couplings to nuclear meltdown (Perrow, 1984), and high reliability organizing in high-hazard contexts like aircraft carriers (Weick and Roberts, 1993), and healthcare (Sutcliffe et al., 2004).

Recent studies on processes of organizing and strategizing point to the importance of *temporality* (Hernes et al., 2021; Sirén et al., 2020), *embodiment* (Clarke et al., 2019; Meziani and Cabantous, 2020; and *materiality* (Glaser, 2017; Yamauchi and Hiramoto, 2020) to advance management scholarship. Similar patterns are repeated in the extreme context literature (Bechky and Okhuysen, 2011; Bloomfield and Verdubakis, 2015; Cornelissen et al., 2014; De Rond et al., 2019; Geiger et al., 2020; Hawkins, 2015; Maynard et al., 2018; Wright et al., 2020). Beyond the recognition of a need for in-depth studies, extreme contexts are particularly suited to advance knowledge on these themes as they are characterized by high time pressure, physical presence of heterogeneous actors and unexpected material and

environmental conditions. The three themes represent the difference to life and death when expeditious and skillful bodily accomplishment, sensations and the material surroundings dictates who lives and who dies. The aim of this special issue is, therefore, to use the strengths of extreme contexts to prepare society for a possible "new normal", and advance management scholarship on organizing and strategizing in general by focusing on temporality, embodiment and materiality in extreme contexts, in particular.

In this special issue, we welcome a variety of theoretical and empirical papers, involving themes and topics related to extreme contexts. However, as examples, we see special value in research advancing temporality, embodiment and materiality in this context.

Temporality is critical to most extreme contexts as they are characterized by high time pressures. Indeed, time is a core organizing principle to ensure safety, resilience, and rapid decision making (Faraj and Xiao, 2006; Klein, 1999; Williams et al., 2017). Studies of disasters and crisis management have also shown that in response to disaster temporary organizations form and are formed to mitigate immediate crisis (Danner-Schröder and Müller-Seitz, 2020; Majchrzak et al., 2007). Finally, temporality is not only expressed in practices and in new temporary organizations, but also in communication, narrative, and discourse that shape and coordinate practices and temporary organizations, and influence their success (e.g., Shipp and Jansen, 2011; Vaara et al., 2016). Whilst these studies of temporal organizations in disaster response have explored important antecedents for successful coordination, the role of time in temporal coordination has largely been treated as an independent variable and has not been the topic of explicit attention and theorizing. Research on time and temporality has convincingly argued that time is not an objective dimension, but instead through their everyday actions actors produce and reproduce temporal structures which in turn shape the

temporal rhythms of their practices (Orlikowski and Yates, 2002). Hence, potential themes could be, but are not limited to:

- The sense of urgency and fast response created and the fast strategies for coping with emergencies
- The impact of time pressure on strategizing and the formulation of strategies in extreme contexts?
- The enactment of past, present, and future in formulating crisis response strategies
- Emergence of temporal organizations and temporal autonomy in extreme contexts
- The role of time in the narrative construction of the organizational reality in extreme contexts

Embodiment is, by definition, salient to extreme contexts as their management requires the physical presence where the events happened. Extreme contexts are typically characterized by strong and intense physicality and negative emotions (e.g. fear, sadness, anxiety, panic, desperation) which affect how individuals, leaders and teams react and make sense of the events (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). But extreme contexts might also be a source of more positive emotions such as hope, relief and even joy. Such emotions increase resilience, organizational compassion (Shepherd and Williams, 2014) and are anchored in moral values (Wright et al., 2020). Emotions are felt and expressed through the active engagement of our body via the five senses (touch, hearing, smell, sight, taste). Sensorial knowledge informs medical staff, firefighters, police officers, action sport enthusiasts and so on about what is going on outside and gives cues for organizing and strategizing skillfully. The physical body and its cues are also important for being able to do one's job in an extreme context. For example, police officers may struggle to keep their level of fitness required for

street work, as desk work is seemingly prioritized by those setting the policies (e.g. Courpasson and Monties, 2017). Embodiment also matters for better understanding how collective mind, mindfulness and improvisation are relationally enacted and performed (Bechky and Okhuysen, 2011). Research about the role of embodiment in extreme contexts can be generative for advancing the literature on, for example, sensemaking, organizational routines, communication, coordination and leadership in extreme contexts. Potential themes could be but are not limited to:

- The regulation of emotions in self and others when organizing and strategizing in risky situations
- Boredom or prolonged periods of stress and tensions in extreme contexts
- Sensory knowledge in managing and coordinating emergency work (hospitals, firefighters, police, and so on)
- The role of the body in performing extreme work
- The role of moral emotions in building new capacities after (ecological) disasters

Materiality is the third and final theme of the special issue. In extreme contexts, technical systems, procedures, tools and artefacts play a crucial role as Weick (1996) demonstrated 25 years ago with the famous “drop your tools” allegory (see also Guthey et al., 2014; Hyde, 2015). Tuana (2008) and Whiteman and Cooper (2011) invited extreme context researchers to incorporate both the physical and natural environment, composed of rocks, ice, animals, trees, vegetation, etc. Clegg, et al., (2013) examined how mundane objects intervene as a genocidal process unfolds in a death camp (e.g. chains, iron beds, needles, books). Cornelissen, et al., (2014) explore the “mediating” role of materiality in escalating commitment around a false interpretation of what is happening during a police operation.

These authors suggest that embodiment and materiality go hand in hand. Musca et al. (2018) emphasize the material dimension in frame-shifting and propose the notion of material chronotope for explaining how central objects (boat and bags) are structuring the collective sensemaking process during a risky mountaineering expedition. While extreme contexts are about fringe events and context, the everyday aspect is still present and influential on tasks performed (De Rond, 2017). The everyday interaction with material conditions in extreme contexts is however often overlooked (Hällgren et al., 2018). The lack of research has created a need for extreme contexts research to consider both the materiality of the empirical context to, for example highlight the ethical agency of robotic warfare (Bloomfield and Vurdubakis, 2015) and leadership affordances of military constructions (Hawkins, 2015). Potential themes could be but are not limited to:

- The role of ecological conditions for organizing and strategizing in extreme contexts
- The impact of consistent physical threat on teams and organizations
- The impact of safety devices and their use to reduce risk
- The role of everyday objects in extreme contexts

Importantly, by focusing on temporality, embodiment and materiality, we do argue for some consolidation of cutting-edge research in extreme contexts. This special issue calls for contextualization, robust theorizing, and methodological innovation. Each of these elements have a significant role in the themes outlined above, which we hope to advance.

Other information

Potential authors may benefit from attending the virtual seminar series organized by www.organizingextremecontexts.org, or the EGOS Standing Working Group sub-themes on

extreme contexts. We also plan to host a workshop for potential authors of the special issue. Please note that participation in the workshop does not guarantee acceptance of the paper in the Special Issue, likewise, attendance is also not a prerequisite for paper acceptance.

Submission Process and Deadlines

- Submissions should be prepared using the JMS Manuscript Preparation Guidelines (<http://www.socadms.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/JMS-ManuscriptPreparation-Guidelines.pdf>)
- Manuscripts should be submitted using the JMS ScholarOne system (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jmstudies>)
- Papers will be reviewed according to the JMS double-blind review process.
- We welcome informal enquiries relating to the Special Issue, proposed topics and potential fit with the Special Issue objectives. Enquiries should be directed to: Markus Hällgren, Umeå University, markus.hallgren@umu.se
- Submission deadline: **1 September 2022**
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