Call for Papers for a Special Issue – *Academy of Management Perspectives* (AMP)

OPENNESS IN THE CONTEXT OF CRISES: A NEW PARADIGM FOR MORE SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT?

Submission deadline: February 15, 2024

BACKGROUND

Organizations and societies alike are confronted with new external challenges – and even shocks – unlike those they have encountered in the past. The COVID-19 pandemic, complex geopolitical events, and the pervasiveness of digitalization with accelerated information (and misinformation) flows have the potential to result in sudden, unexpected and massive disruptions with sometimes devastating impact (Brammer et al., 2020; Seidl & Whittington, 2021). This requires management to reconsider their strategic responses, risk management, and community engagement. While traditionally these strategies have been primarily controlled by top management, there is an enhanced awareness that increasing the involvement of various stakeholders is needed (Priem et al., 2022).

In this special issue call for *The Academy of Management Perspectives*, we seek to examine "openness" as an alternative organizational response in the face of such crises. "Openness" has become an organizational leitmotif of our time echoing contemporary trends in many societal domains such as open source software, open science, open innovation, open data, open government and most recently open strategy (Splitter et al, 2023; Hautz et al., 2017; Whittington 2019). It responds to widespread tendencies including shifts in societal values towards democratization, liberalization, and accountability, the rise of social software that facilitates self-organizing, community development and collaborative contributions, and the growth of "wicked problems" – complex and indeterminate challenges requiring input from diverse viewpoints and collaboration among various partners (Splitter et al, 2023). One broad definition of openness emphasises "widening *inclusion* and increasing *transparency*" with respect to the numbers and variety of both internal and external actors (Whittington et al., 2011: 535).

"Openness," however, may take many forms, and can be considered from a range of theoretical perspectives, for example procedural justice theory (Kim & Mauborgne, 1998), middle management involvement (Wooldridge et al., 2008), stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) and deliberate governance (Scherer & Voegtlin, 2020). Openness overlaps with these concepts and goes beyond as contemporary practices, mainly based on digital technologies, radically increase the likely extent of inclusivity and transparency (Hautz et al, 2019); e.g. internal and inter-organizational workshops (Mack & Szulanski, 2017; Seidl & Werle, 2018), blogs (Gegenhuber & Dobusch, 2017), wikis, jams (Stadler et al., 2021), crowdsourcing contests and communities (Aten & Thomas, 2016; Malhotra et al., 2017).

With this special issue we ask prospective contributors to engage with the questions *if and how openness as recent societal paradigm can critically help and support organizations to move beyond established dogmas and to respond to and manage severe crises more successfully*.

More than ever organizations – for-profit, public, non-profit and non-governmental – are in need of guidance on how to respond to, manage, and survive such crises which are defined as "*shocks that are perceived by organizational members as sudden, unexpected and massively disruptive*" (Wenzel et al., 2021: V8) and bring ambiguity, a potential threat to organizational survival, time pressure to respond, and dilemmas in judgement (Pearson & Clair, 1998). Organizational responses to crisis are studied from various perspectives including *strategy, innovation management* and *organization studies* on changing organizational processes, business models, governance, and associated structures; *supply chain management* dealing with interruptions; *international business*, studying cross-border threats and consequences; *human resources* exploring the need to re-structure and re-align workforces; *micro-, behavioral* and *psychological perspectives,* on individual-level responses of actors; *finance and accounting,* on ensuring liquidity and modifying financial structures; and *ethics*, with regard to reputation, regulation and social responsibility for instance. This research often assumes increased closure in the face of crises. Due to complexity, high-impact to viability, the need for fast decision-making, and protection from anxious stakeholders, crises management and responses have been assumed to be developed and controlled within small management teams in processes treated with secrecy. Thereby they neglect important internal and external stakeholders (employees, customers, suppliers, banks, investors, creditors, communities etc.) and tend to be cognitively biased, neglecting diverse inputs (Heyden et al., 2017; Phan, 2021).

Openness in a crisis context has the potential to be relevant in multiple ways. Through actively involving internal and external stakeholders, organizations can rely on their diverse social and relational capital but also on their heterogeneous, marginal perspectives (Stieger et al. 2012) which can be leveraged to better address the complexity and ambiguity of crises situations (Comfort et al., 2020; Burke et al., 2022). Increasing transparency and inclusion might reduce uncertainty and increase stakeholders' understanding, approval, and commitment to accept and to act on changes (Stadler et al, 2021, Korsgaard et al., 1995) with significant impact on outcomes and chances of success of crises responses. But implications are far from being clear. Openness brings challenges, such as undermining control and authority compromising the flexibility and speed of the processes. The disclosure of sensitive, competitive, and confidential information can be risky in a crises situation (Hautz et al, 2021).

With this SI we aim to link the disparate literatures currently grounded in multiple separate disciplines. We encourage contributions that integrate research on openness with literature on different types of organizational responses to crises, and grounded in different fields to challenge established assumptions. We particularly encourage research that focuses on potential tensions or paradoxes (Lewis, 2000) that may arise between openness and closure in crises management from different perspectives. We also aim at generating specific policy implications related to the interaction of openness and crisis management. Political responses to crises and support programs, governmental aid packages, relief resources and incentives, are typically accompanied by strictly regulated processes that especially firms under financial distress have to comply to and follow.

But open practices rely upon the availability of knowledge outside of formal contracts which are influenced by policies e.g. towards IP rights, transparency, competition, employee engagement, and insolvency; some of which may support openness, while others may impede the adoption of open practices in the context of crises.

KEY TOPICS

We call for papers that deal with the various aspects of openness in the face of crisis. We are interested in conceptual studies and contributions drawing on empirical evidence from a broad variety of fields and building on different theoretical perspectives, such as e.g., strategy-as-practice, institutional theory, network theory, resource-based theory, stakeholder theory, resource-dependency theory, behavioral theory, micro-political approaches, and theories of social practice. Possible research questions for contributions include, but are not limited to:

- What **potential tensions and paradoxes between openness and closure** become relevant in the context of crisis management and how can those tensions be appropriately balanced? What mechanisms have organizations used to balance the tensions between openness and protecting the firm's boundaries?
- What can we learn from integrating **empirical evidence** on the broad and diverse range of benefits of openness with scholarly debates in different fields on managing crises brought by sudden shocks?
- How do **temporal dynamics** impact the effectiveness of openness at different stages of crisis management? Do pre-existing channels of communication and feedback inoculate firms from severe negative impacts? How can organizations best implement open strategies as a crisis unfolds?
- What are regulatory and governmental roles in encouraging and institutionalizing openness? How can **policy frameworks** support the adoption and effectiveness of openness to respond to unexpected and disruptive shocks to enhance economic resilience? What policy implications may be in support of openness, and which policies and legal structures may impede the adoption of open practices in the context of crises?
- When the crisis necessitates a **legal restructuring of the business**, what degree of openness is beneficial? Since restructuring may involve strategic as well as financing solutions, which stakeholders are key players in an open restructuring process and how will they be engaged? How will the interest of internal and external constituents best be considered?

PAPER STYLE
1. Scholars are reminded that *AMP* seeks papers that advance theory and contribute to policy (broadly defined).
2. We welcome conceptual and qualitative (e.g., narratives, multiple cases, experiments) papers, but note that *AMP* is neither a theory-tested nor a mathematical modeling journal.

SUBMISSION PROCESS
- **Pre-submission:** The guest editors plan a Paper Development Workshop (PDW) on the SI Topic at the Academy of Management Annual Meeting, August 4-8, 2023 in Boston (USA). Participation in this workshop is neither a guarantee nor a prerequisite for publication.

- **Submission deadline (full paper)**: **15 February 2024**. The **ScholarOne** submission portal will be open from February 1 to 15, 2024 (https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/amp)
- **Authors should follow the AMP Manuscript Preparation Guidelines** (https://aom.org/research/publishing-with-aom/author-resources/submitting-to-perspectives) **Articles will be reviewed according to the AMP double-blind review process.**

Informal enquiries relating to the Special Issues, proposed topics, and potential fit with the Special Issue objectives can be directed to the guest editors:

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