5th KCO SYMPOSIUM

KEDGE BUSINESS SCHOOL TOULON

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BETA Université de Strasbourg 61, avenue de la Forêt Noire 67085 STRASBOURG Cedex

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Spontaneous Emergence of Communities in Times of Crisis:

Internal and External communities

The symposium will be punctuated by:
- An inaugural Workshop where we will be honoured with the presence of **Etienne WENGER-TRAYNER** who will bring his theoretical and practical lighting on communities in time of crisis.
- Research workshops
- Roundtables discussions composed of practitioners

The current Covid19 pandemic is a health, economic and social crisis that is devastating populations and disrupting our society, economy and organisations. In the face of this disruptive event, society has developed resilience mechanisms to sustain itself. Resilience is the capacity of individuals, societies and companies to survive and adapt despite the shocks they may experience. This notion of resilience can be approached from different angles: from psychology to ecology to computer science, from the ability of individuals to build themselves up in spite of traumatic circumstances, or the ability of an ecosystem or group of people to recover from an external disruption, to the ability of a system to continue to function even in the event of a

breakdown. In all cases, resilience requires innovation, change and adaptation within organisations. In the context of this crisis, the resilience of companies has been particularly dependent on their ability to mobilise and harness the 'human intelligence' available within organisations.

We have seen unprecedented collaborative impulses and community gatherings that have developed in all areas: help for careers, support for families, consortia of companies to manage and safeguard our health commons…

This management of the commons brings us back to the work on the governance of the commons by Elinor Ostrom. She has worked on a theory of collective action whereby members of a community can spontaneously and voluntarily organise themselves to appropriate the value of their own efforts. In particular, she analyses self-organised common pool resources within long-functioning resource and institutional systems. Ostrom seeks to identify success factors for self-organisation. She presents three principles enabling communities to preserve their common resources and be sustainable:

- Clear definition of the purpose of the community and its members
- Recognition of self-organisation principles by government authorities
- Participation of users in the modification of operational rules concerning the common resource.

The role of government in legitimising and supporting community dynamics is noted in these principles. In the case of the Covid-crisis, several governments have fostered autonomy and supported cooperation. For instance, regarding the management of our health as a common resource, the French government requested a grouping of four French industrialists: "the sacred union of Air Liquide-Schneider Electric-Valeo-PSA" to manufacture 10,000 artificial respirators to meet the needs of local hospitals. Air Liquide Medical Systems, a dedicated and unique contact for many hospitals, led the project which brought together hundreds of companies in a very short time. Schneider Electric provided operators and equipments ; Valeo managed supplies and PSA assembled the parts for the main block of respirators. In parallel to the actions of French government, a community momentum emerged spontaneously to research, qualify and design engineering and manufacturing solutions during the pandemic.

Communities are large sets of informal creative networks that repeatedly interact and exchange knowledge to support dynamic processes of creation and innovation. These informal groups are formed by individuals willing to produce and share knowledge by connecting people from different entities. Their characteristics underlined their social dimension: the voluntary commitment to build, exchange and share a repertoire of common cognitive resources; a common identity built on their practice and repeated exchanges; the respect of specific social norms. It has been shown that communities have a leverage effect on value creation and performance within companies and foster innovation. Their role has become essential in the context of the Covid 19 crisis, to provide quick answers to complex issues and to foster collective resilience.

Rethinking social processes in time of crisis

Research must equip organizations with frameworks for rethinking social processes in times of crisis to overlap boundaries relations between individuals and organizations. For instance, one such framework could be based on the theory of learning-by-doing which sheds particular light on the role played by actors in crossing frontiers of knowledge (Wenger, 1998, Wenger 2015) to facilitate interactions between individuals belonging to geographically dispersed communities. Wenger (2015, 2020) highlights the key role played by boundary actors. As they simultaneously participate to several communities, they provide them a legitimacy (expertise) and enable to transfer knowledge more easily from one community to another.

In the same vein, the literature on open innovation attributes a role of brokering and external stimulation (West & Bogers, 2014) to intermediaries whose objective is "to enable other organizations to innovate" (Winch & Courtney, 2007: 751) and to develop access or trust between two parties (Marsden, 1982). There are different typologies to qualify their role: knowledge brokers (Hargadon, 2002, Wenger, 2015, 2020), qualification brokers (Goglio-Primard & Crespin-Mazet, 2015), innovation brokers or intermediaries (Howells, 2006; Winch & Courtney, 2007), or technology scouts (Monteiro & Birkinshaw, 2014). These intermediaries can intervene in any aspect of innovation. They may be specialized service companies with strong knowledge in a field such as KIBS (Knowledge Intensive Business Services) that innovate on behalf of their client through cooperative and trusting relationships (Koch & Strotmann, 2008). But these intermediaries can also be individuals (Obstfeld, 2005) with motivation and orientation (tertius iungens) to play this coordinating role. Howells (2006) synthesizes the different roles of intermediaries on a continuum, ranging from providing knowledge and qualifying partners to a more proactive role of animation and co-creation generating a dynamic in an innovation system.

These intermediaries, individuals or organizations, involved in supporting innovation communities appeared essential in the context of the Covid-19 crisis to provide rapid responses and foster collective resilience. Engineers belonging to geographically dispersed communities submitted ideas to virtual hackathons. For instance, they organized the two-week Hack-a-Vent Innovation Challenge supported by the US defense department in mid-March. Its goal was to develop a low-cost, locally manufactured fan using widely available resources. The Code Life Ventilator Challenge was also sponsored by the Montreal General Hospital Foundation and the Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre. It was a 2-week sprint to identify the best ideas in the world and design emergency ventilators. Dassault Systems also launched the Open Covid-19 community. The community is an online workspace where engineers, designers and manufacturers from all around the world can work together on innovative solutions. Collectives of Makers ("Makers for Life) and French Fablabs brought together public and private organizations (universities, hospitals, start-ups, Companies…) for developing masks, gels and respirators.

This call for paper focuses on the role played by all these intermediaries, individuals or organizations in crossing knowledge boundaries between communities to foster innovation and resilience.

Research Topics

Potential research questions for the theorical and empirical papers submitted to this special issue may include, but are not limited to:

Communities to foster innovation and resilience in times of crisis

- How to develop communities to foster collective resilience within organizations?
- In times of crisis, what are the organizational levers that support the development of communities?
- How to create and animate a community with experts, customers, and users, to develop innovation, agility and resilience in times of crisis?
- How to mix new organizational forms (i.e. various forms of communities and collectives) to innovate and respond to a crisis?
- How can communities promote a common societal cause outside the organization and obtain the adhesion and legitimacy of a great number of the population?
- How can the spontaneous responses of communities support innovation and resilience in formal hierarchical structures?

Boundaries relations between communities for innovation and resilience

- What is the role of brokering (innovation intermediaries, knowledge brokers) in the development of successful communities?
- How to distinguish the role of internal and external actors within interacting communities?
- What role do boundary actors play to transfer knowledge more easily from one community to another?
- What role do peripheral participants play to instigate change and stimulate innovation and resilience?
- What is the role of KIBS (Knowledge Intensive Business Services) to consolidate cooperative and trusting relations between communities in time of crisis?

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Selection Process of papers and dates:

KCO Symposium :

All Authors should submit their full papers in english for consideration to Karine.goglio@kedgebs.com **for Mai 2nd 2022.** Full length research papers (including tables, figures, references and appendices) should be up to 10,000 words.

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