

ORGANIZING EXTREME CONTEXTS

APRIL 2025 NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the April 2025 Edition of the 'Organizing Extreme Contexts' Newsletter!

The newsletter is packed with the following exciting insights:

- *Virtual Seminar Series – Next date is set!*
- *Extreme Context R&R Club – Review and next date!*
- *EGOS 2025 – Program*
- *EGOS 2026 – Information on the subtheme*
- *Special Issue on Organizing and Strategizing In and For Extreme Contexts: The Interview Series*
- *Recent publications*
- *Recent Calls for Papers*



If you have content or feedback for future editions, please let us know!

info@organizingextremecontexts.org

*If you want to subscribe for the newsletter,
here is the possibility:*

<http://eepurl.com/gIT4mb>



VIRTUAL SEMINAR SERIES

THE NEXT DATE IS SET!

The next **Organizing in Extreme Contexts seminar** is scheduled **over Zoom** on **April 28th (3:30pm-5:00pm GMT)**! We'll have **Lucy Easthope** (University of Bath and author of *When the Dust Settles*) and **Graham Dwyer** (Trinity College Dublin) presenting on the theme of perspectives on disaster, followed by discussion.



Registration is free and available at the following link:

https://lnkd.in/eEE_M9_M (please confirm, if attending, by Tuesday April 22nd).

The purpose of the series is to bring together the community of extreme context researchers on a recurrent basis throughout the year and outside of the typical conference format. Extreme context research has been an international and interdisciplinary effort among scholars interested in organizing in contexts that have potential to cause severe physical, psychological, or material harm to participants or those in close psychosocial proximity to them (Hällgren, Rouleau, & de Rond, 2018). The ongoing series will allow those of us interested in ECR to connect with each other, to stay up-to-date with the latest research through presentations and discussion, and to get ideas and feedback for empirical or theoretical studies.

We hope to see you there!

Derin & Markus



EXTREME CONTEXT R&R CLUB

REVIEW OF THE LAST MEETING!

The 28th of February saw our first "Extreme Contexts RnR Club" led by Robin Burrow and Sophie Jane over zoom. We discussed two papers (shared ahead of time) by Extreme Contexts Community members over the two hours, focusing on the author's questions for the group and the feedback from the reviewers they have received so far. It was a really fun, energizing session, and so lovely to see how enthusiastic everyone was about pitching in and sharing their thoughts! Interested in getting involved? Feel free to connect with Robin or Sophie and they will add you to the mailing list for the next time.



Hope to see you next time!

Robin & Sophie



NEXT MEETING!

The **next meeting of the Extreme Context R&R club** will take place **Friday 30th May 1300-1500 [UK Time]**.

If you would like to be part of ECR&R, please contact Robin Burrow on LinkedIn or by email (Robin.Burrow@york.ac.uk) to be added to the mailing list!

EGOS 2025 & 2026

2025: THE PROGRAM IS ONLINE!

Sub-theme 14: The Normalization of Extreme Contexts: Creatively Co-existing with Crisis

We're excited to share that we have a fantastic program lined up! With inspiring presentations and plenty of opportunities for exchange, we're already looking forward to the conversations, ideas, and connections that await.

We can't wait to see you all in Athens! Anja, Daniel, Sophie



Session 1: Time, Absurdity, and Existential Meaning in Crisis

- Soniya Rijal, Nader Naderpajouh and Markus Hällgren: Back to the future: How communities organize social, ecological, and technical systems in the face of poly-crises
- Nil Gulari and Anna Dziuba: Layered temporality of sensemaking in the extreme context of war through existentialist philosophy of absurd

Session 2: Leading Through Crisis – Sensemaking, Adaptation, and Resilience

- Charlotte Förster, Nina Füreder, Attila Hertelendy and Cheryl Mitchell: What if? The role of leaders' sensemaking in navigating potential organizational disruptions
 - Amna Chaudhry and Jane Bjørn Vedel: Building resilience in the wake of goal complexity: A case of organizational survival and persistence
 - Cécile Godé, Bruno Perrier and Madelien Perrier: Leadership practice in isolated, confined, and extreme (ICE) contexts: The year of a leader in the French Southern and Antarctic Lands
 - Lucas Dufour, Meena Andiappan and Emilie Bourlier Bargues: The evolution and adaptation of organizational socialization tactics in an extreme context: A 40-year perspective of the French Army
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Session 3: The Normalization of Extreme Work – Identities, Professions, and Expectations

- Kijan Vakilzadeh, Peter Eberl, Charles (Richard) V. O'Quinn and Sebastian Raetze: "We're supposed to be surrounded by enemies, we are paratroopers": Normalizing the profession as a resilient response to extreme adversity
 - Maren Vakilzadeh and Kijan Vakilzadeh: The absence of "extreme" in extreme occupation: The violation of stakeholders' expectations through distorted representations of occupational reality
 - Alexei Koveshnikov, Mark v d Giessen and Sofia Villo: Reconstructing a positive self from the "wrong side" of conflict: Identity work among Russian high-skilled migrants in Finland
 - Charles (Richard) V. O'Quinn: Traumaflagging as normalizing the extreme: Veteran disclosure of health conditions in workplaces
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Session 4: Roundtables

Roundtable 1: Navigating Crisis and Resilience in Extreme Contexts

- Nawras Ateeq and Isabel Neuberger: Emotions and maintenance of crises: How social entrepreneurs experience and navigate an extreme context
- Tapiwa Seremani: "Awful places": Re-humanizing and re-politicizing "extreme contexts" in organizational scholarship
- Marco Tulio Zanini and Carmen Migueles: The impact of normalization on organizational resilience: Insights from Rio's special operations forces

Roundtable 2: Boundaries, Governance, and Crisis Management

- Rachel Estey, Kristina Potocnik and Lila Skountridaki: Exploring the role of boundaries in crisis management: A case study of flooding during summer camp
- Stella B. Kyohairwe and Gerald Karyeija: From crisis management governance to integration: The case of urban refugees in Uganda
- Sofiane Baba, Hanaa Sfeir and Shoeb Mohammad: Extreme for Whom? "In God We Trust!"

Roundtable 3: Organizational Responses to Creeping and Sudden Crises

- Chiara Corvino, Franca Olivetti Manoukian, Barbara Di Tommaso and Benedetta Colaiacovo: Tackling Organizational Creeping Crisis: Mission Impossible? Insights from a Juvenile Prison Case Study
- Vanessa Mansour and Eric Pezet: Restoration of organizational routines in extreme contexts: Healthcare organization facing the COVID-19 pandemic and an industrial disaster
- Tom Zugasti and Myriam Merad: Are disasters not predictable? Discussing the organization of early warning around the 2021 major disaster in Germany

Roundtable 4: Crisis, Repair, and the Normalization of Risk

- Olivier Chanton: Retrofitting the nuclear infrastructure in the wake of climate change: Repair as maintenance?
 - Anne Vestergaard and Chin Ruamps: Humanitarian partnerships and the risky business of normalizing crisis
 - Monika Maślikowska and Jan Schmutz: Collaboration in the extreme: Teamwork for social impact in global crises
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Session 5: Navigating Ethical Dilemmas in Crisis – Moral Injury and Outrage

- Madeleine Rauch: “What are we even doing here?” Nurses' experience of moral injury during the pandemic
 - Karan Sonpar, Mukta Kulkarni, Federica Pazzaglia and Arshia Bathla: Professionals' experiences and response to moral outrage in times of crisis
 - Nicolas Zickler and Virginie Fernandez: Normalizing or anomalizing? That's the resilient team question
 - Gloria Kutscher and Derin Kent: Rethinking handovers in extreme contexts: Experiences from an emergency rest center
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Session 6: Polycrisis and the Challenge of Competence in Uncertain Times

- Torik Holmes and Mike Hodson: Bringing organizational capacity into question and conversation with polycrisis: A critical research agenda
 - Joakim Netz, Anna Rylander Eklund and Maria Elmquist: Understanding competence in polycrisis – The case of climate-security nexus in the food sector
 - Diane Owin: Perception of urgency: How overlapping crises amplify or downplay urgency
 - Tove Frykmer, Sara Bondesson, Henrik Hassel and Alexander Cedergren: "What is best for Sweden Inc.?" On how crisis management organisations adapt to the temporality of crises
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Session 7: Crisis as an Opportunity – Creativity, Entrepreneurship, and Social Systems

- Ishan Jalan, Jamie A. Hahn and Steven Brown: Creatively capitalising from crises: Perspectives and illustrations from the paramedic profession
 - Kemal Haşim and Birthe Soppe: Enhancing place legitimacy: How local entrepreneurs use normalization strategies to enhance place legitimacy in stigmatized contexts
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More information about the format will be shared soon via email with all participants.

Stay tuned!

We're pleased to share that the extreme contexts community will continue to have a home sub-theme at EGOS 2026, after the SWG concludes this year. Our sub-theme on "Reframing the Extreme: Moving from Context to Theory" has been accepted. The short summary is below, with the full call for submissions to follow later this year:

Reframing the Extreme: Moving from Context to Theory

Research under the label of extreme contexts has seen a vast proliferation of studies. Yet, whilst much effort has been put into defining context, the notion of "extreme" has still not been subject to in-depth reflection. It is often used as a catchword to qualify diverse phenomena other than the context in which an extreme event has occurred. Hence, we believe it is time to take stock and start moving beyond our shared interest in the phenomenon of the extreme towards a shared theoretical interest of understanding how the extreme comes into being. First, we can move towards a broader perspective on what extremeness consists of, away from understanding the extreme as a context or a short-lived event only. Second, we can move towards a deeper investigation of the nature of the extreme and its tendency to bring out opposites, like vulnerability and resilience.

We're looking forward to continuing our discussions, and to seeing many of you also in the coming year.

Gloria Kutscher, University of Southampton

Derin Kent, Warwick Business School

Daniel Geiger, University of Hamburg



SPECIAL ISSUE ON ORGANIZING AND STRATEGIZING IN AND FOR EXTREME CONTEXTS

PUBLISHED IN THE MAY EDITION

Now that the Special Issue has finally been published in the May edition, we've decided to bring together the full interview series related to the articles.

Journal of Management Studies

Volume 62, Issue 3

Special Issue: Organizing and Strategizing In and For Extreme Contexts: Temporality, Embodiment, Materiality

Enjoy diving into both the articles and the accompanying interviews!

AUTHORS



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

Markus Hällgren, Umeå University; Daniel Geiger, University of Hamburg; Linda Rouleau, HEC Montreal; Kathleen M. Sutcliffe, Johns Hopkins University; Eero Vaara, University of Oxford

1. What inspired you to curate a special issue on "Extreme Contexts," and why do you think this topic is particularly relevant today?

The inspiration for curating this special issue emerged from the growing community of extreme contexts researchers, the increasing recognition of extreme contexts in management and organization studies, and the need to sustain the momentum of discussions initiated in recent years. Bringing together scholars in this space allows for a more cohesive yet inclusive understanding of extreme contexts, fostering further theoretical and empirical advancements.

The relevance of this topic today is undeniable. A quick glance at any source of news reveals pressing societal challenges that exemplify extreme contexts. However, not all extreme contexts receive media attention, despite their critical importance. Many unfold in less visible but highly consequential domains, which some contributions to the special issue also show. By advancing research on extreme contexts, we can contribute to a deeper understanding of how individuals and organizations navigate uncertainty, risk, and high-stakes decision-making—an increasingly vital area of inquiry in today's world.

2. Were there any surprising findings or methodological approaches that stood out to you during the editorial process?

While every contribution and method brought valuable insights, we noted the remarkable surge in interest in extreme contexts research. In just a few years, the field has expanded at an unprecedented rate, reflecting its growing relevance in management and organization studies. This rapid increase underscores the importance of continued scholarly engagement with extreme contexts, both in terms of theoretical development and methodological innovation.



3. Now that the issue has been published, what open questions remain, and where do you see the most exciting opportunities for future research on extreme contexts?

Beyond the future research directions outlined in our introduction and the contributions within the issue, many open questions remain. Our broader hope is that this special issue serves as a catalyst for new ideas, inspiring scholars to push the boundaries of extreme contexts research in novel and unexpected ways. We look forward to seeing how future studies build on and extend these discussions.

4. What surprised you the most about the editorial process—either in terms of submissions, reviewer feedback, or the evolution of the final issue?

One of the most pleasant surprises during the editorial process was the sheer diversity of contributions—from across the world, drawing on a wide range of theories, methods, and empirical settings to explore extreme contexts. Perhaps the most unexpected development was the thematic shift we observed. While we initially anticipated more contributions focused on materiality, emotions emerged as a dominant theme instead. This shift highlights the evolving nature of extreme contexts research and opens up intriguing avenues for further exploration.

5. Looking back, what were the biggest challenges in curating this special issue, and what lessons did you take away from the process?

Curating this special issue was both a privilege and a challenge—balancing a wealth of high-quality research while shaping a compelling, relevant, and forward-looking collection. While not a lesson in the strictest sense, one key insight we gained from organizing this special issue is the sheer number of people interested in extreme contexts and the wealth of great work being done in the field. If anything can be framed as a lesson, it is a return to the old saying: it takes a village...



AUTHORS



THE TEMPORALITY OF CRISIS AND THE CRISIS OF TEMPORALITY: ON THE CONSTRUCTION AND MODULATION OF URGENCY DURING PROLONGED CRISES

Lorenzo Skade, European University Viadrina; Elisa Lehrer, European University Viadrina; Yanis Hamdali, European University Viadrina; Jochen Koch, European University Viadrina

What did you study? What sparked your interest?

The study explored how organizations construct and modulate urgency during prolonged crises, using the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) during the COVID-19 pandemic as a case study. We aimed to understand how prolonged crises differ from short-lived ones in terms of urgency and temporal dynamics. The growing frequency of prolonged crises, such as climate change and pandemics, sparked our interest in understanding how organizations maintain temporal urgency to act over extended periods, even when the crisis unfolds in waves with unknown intensity rather than a singular, disruptive event.

How did you get access?

Access to the RKI's responses during the pandemic came primarily from publicly available resources, such as video recordings of press briefings and reports released by the Institute. We focused on publicly available daily situation reports, other official documents, and press events, as the pandemic's circumstances made direct access to organizational actors challenging. This approach allowed us to gather qualitative data on how RKI communicated urgency to the public during various phases of the unfolding creeping crisis.



What kind of methodological challenges did you face? What have you learned for future research?

One significant methodological challenge was capturing the dynamic and evolving temporal nature of the crisis and how the urgency to act changed over time. Given the fast-paced and unpredictable nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, keeping track of the evolving temporal cues and corresponding organizational actions required a more complex qualitative approach. We learned the importance of effectively mapping these events on a timeline to analyze temporal patterns. Future research would benefit from innovative research methods when studying real-time crisis responses, as traditional approaches may not capture the complexity of the temporality of such crises.

What's the main finding of your study? Anything that surprised you?

The main finding is that organizations like the RKI must construct and modulate urgency throughout prolonged crises by speeding up or slowing down activities. Contrary to common assumptions that urgency only needs to be increased, the study revealed that organizations must also decrease urgency at times to prevent burnout and maintain long-term crisis response capabilities. A surprising discovery was the temporal complexity of urgency itself, with forms like “expired urgency” (regarding actions that should have been taken earlier), “inceptive urgency” (actions that must begin now), and “windows of opportunity” (regarding actions that need to be taken during a specific time period) emerging during the crisis.



Can you tell us a little ‘Behind the Scenes’ story?

A key ‘behind the scenes’ aspect of this research was how we navigated the sheer volume of data produced by the RKI during the pandemic. Sorting through daily situation reports and frequent press conferences required rigorous organization and collaboration among us. The process of aligning data with the evolving stages of the pandemic brought an extra layer of complexity to the analysis, especially in identifying how and when urgency was being modulated. We enjoyed the work on this project a lot. However, the paper looks much more straightforward and neater than the actual work with the complex process data.

Another challenge was that the pandemic was ultimately a very intense time for all of us, both personally and professionally. In the beginning, it was certainly a very good opportunity to also work intensively on this topic in research, but at a certain point, it was sometimes also overwhelming.

What are future research opportunities?

Future research could investigate how other organizations construct urgency during prolonged crises, especially in different cultural or governmental contexts. Studying non-health-related prolonged crises, such as financial or environmental disasters, could further illuminate how urgency is shaped in diverse situations. We assume that there's also a potential to explore how different forms of communication (social media, government briefings) influence public perception of crises, a project we are currently working on.

AUTHORS



CONSTRUCTING A WORLD FOR COMPASSION: HOW TEMPORAL WORK CAN PRESERVE COMPASSION IN EXTREME CONTEXTS

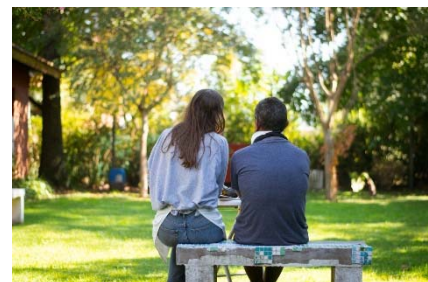
M. Dolores del Rio, University of Victoria, Universidad Austral; Pablo D. Fernández, IAE Business School; Ignasi Marti, ESADE Business School; Alberto Willi, IAE Business School

What did you study? What sparked your interest?

In our research, we focused on preserving compassion in challenging situations. We specifically looked into the organizational practices that support compassion over time. Our motivation came from the high occurrence of compassion fatigue and burnout in emotionally demanding workplaces like healthcare, where these issues are often considered unavoidable consequences and costs of organized compassion.

How did you get access?

We were granted permission to conduct a two-year ethnographic study by arranging for one of the authors to become a volunteer. Before joining the hospice, we obtained approval from the hospice's medical director and founder and from the board after a comprehensive interview. We tried to find common topics and interests to secure access. We assured the founder that we would accurately represent the "essence of the hospice." During the interview, we focused on understanding the motivations and emotional experiences of the hospice workers and volunteers, which sparked the founder's interest.



What's the main finding of your study? Anything that surprised you?

The key finding is that creating a "world" for end-of-life care within the hospice helps to maintain compassion by intentionally integrating temporal work into daily routines. This ultimately sustains compassion even in emotionally challenging situations. What was unexpected is how this affects the experience of time in practices, allowing for two distinct temporal experiences, or ways of being in that world, that we named being-with related to a kairotical, other-focused experience of time, and being-by turning into a chronological, task-oriented and linear time. These different ways of experiencing time enable caregivers to shift between deeply connecting with patients and recovering from emotional stress.

What kind of methodological challenges did you face? What have you learned for future research?

One of the most challenging aspects of our research was figuring out how to incorporate the researcher's personal experiences while maintaining rigorous analysis. We came to the conclusion that acknowledging the researcher's bodily experiences can provide valuable insights, especially in environments where emotions and physical presence play a crucial role. So, we learned to recognize and incorporate the body as a source of knowledge, prioritizing embodied reflection throughout the research process.



Can you tell us a little 'Behind the Scenes' story?

We started analyzing the data using the traditional Gioia model, coding and categorizing data into first and second-order themes. However, as we progressed, the reviewers emphasized that the deeply embodied and emotional nature of the data required a more phenomenological analysis. So, we shifted our focus to the lived experiences of the participants. This change improved our findings and led us to approach the data in a more interpretive and reflexive manner, adding new dimensions to our understanding of temporal work and how it impacted the experience of time and space.

What are future research opportunities?

Our study suggests new areas for future research. One possibility is to investigate how temporal work can be used in other challenging situations, like disaster recovery or refugee care, where compassion fatigue is also a major issue. Furthermore, additional studies could explore the impact of temporal work on finding a balance between compassion and efficiency in more bureaucratic or professional healthcare settings, where the focus on productivity often outweighs humanistic values.



AUTHORS



DESPERATE JOURNEYS TO EUROPE: SENSEBREAKING IN EXTREME CONTEXTS

Amna Chaudhry, Copenhagen Business School; John Amis, University of Edinburgh

What did you study? What sparked your interest?

As this study is part of a bigger project on irregular migrant workers, we discovered very early on in the data collection process, that journeys played a pivotal role in determining the trajectory, choices and perspectives of migrants as they navigated life in host countries. This inspired us to examine the ways in which irregular migrants from Pakistan navigate multiple adversities as they embark on perilous journeys to Europe. We found that in this extreme context it is very difficult for individuals to “make sense of” the extremities encountered. Thus, our case study helped us explore the ways in which sensebreaking – that is the breakdowns in one’s sense of reality and self - can become protracted over time, and subsequently, forestall and possibly delay the opportunity to overcome extreme contexts.

How did you get access?

Individuals who undertake these irregular migration pathways into Europe represent a hidden, vulnerable and hard-to-reach population, making access extremely challenging. Our approach was multi-tiered. The first author knew an irregular migrant and approached him for help. He introduced us to three other irregular migrants who served as “gatekeepers” and connected us with other irregular migrants who were willing to participate in the study.

What kind of methodological challenges did you face? What have you learned for future research?

Considering the sensitive nature of our study and the precarious legal status of the undocumented migrants who participated in the study, we had to deal with several logistical and ethical challenges. A key challenge for the first author personally was listening and closely examining the experiences of trauma, torture and different forms of abuse. Collecting narratives of irregular migration experiences and especially, details of the clandestine journeys across the Mediterranean Sea, has been an emotionally draining but humbling experience for us. In that sense, a major takeaway from this study is that as researchers we also need to prepare ourselves mentally and emotionally before delving into extreme context sites.

What's the main finding of your study? Anything that surprised you?

For us the main puzzle – which is also the underlying motivation for our research purpose – is how individuals can endure such dire circumstances over protracted periods of time. As we have attempted to show, the most jarring and outstanding feature of our study is the way in which these individuals had to contend with a myriad of hardships, the aftershocks of which had to be endured even after reaching the host country or the apparent termination of the extreme situation. In that sense, we believe we extend the notion of sensebreaking – that is, the collapse in one's sense of reality and self – and assert that it is not sufficient to black-box sensebreaking as a precursor to sensegiving and sensemaking. Instead, the process of sensebreaking has the potential to have a much more profound impact on individuals and the ways in which we conceptualize extreme contexts than previously considered.



Can you tell us a little 'Behind the Scenes' story?

The overall process of gaining familiarity to this context was extremely challenging. In some cases, it was both heartening but at the same time crushing to hear participants wanting to share details of their ordeals which they wanted to get off their chest. One person, after describing a particularly harrowing story of personal loss, explained that he wanted at least one other person to know what had happened to him and did not want the memory of the incident dying with him.

What are future research opportunities?

We believe this is an extremely understudied and important context that merits further investigation. Thousands of irregular migrants are losing their lives every year enroute to different destinations across the world, and yet often do not elicit mainstream media or even scholarly attention. In many cases, this lack of spotlight can be attributed to the negative status ascribed to economic migrants. The ascription of illegality to irregular migrants in particular is an undertheorized and extremely problematic phenomenon as also highlighted in this paper. The alleged "ill-intent" associated with this maligned group of migrants does not qualify as a cogent reason to subject them to the atrocities and institutionalized violence that they have to endure on and within Europe's borders.

AUTHORS



REFRAMING SILENCE AS PURPOSEFUL: EMOTIONS IN EXTREME CONTEXTS

Madeleine Rauch, University of Cambridge; Shahzad Ansari, University of Cambridge

What did you study? What sparked your interest?

We studied the experiences of medical professionals working with Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) in extreme contexts, such as warzones and disaster-stricken areas. What captivated us was the stoic silence these professionals maintained, despite the emotional toll of witnessing unspeakable tragedies. Traditionally, the medical and military fields emphasize emotional control, but this silence does not signal the absence of emotional distress. Instead, it serves as a strategic, emotional defense. We were drawn to understand how these individuals coped with this muted distress, particularly how they managed to maintain professional composure in environments of extreme human suffering.

How did you get access?

Our study is part of a multi-year multi-project research program on organizing in extreme contexts. Very early on, we discovered the important role that personal, unsolicited diaries played in their emotional coping. We are particularly grateful for the first 30 medical professionals who entrusted us with their diaries—their intimate, unscripted records of their lived experiences, which served as an important foundation of this research program that now encompasses more than 500 diaries across different settings. Without the initial 30 brave medical professionals, and their trust in us, this research program would have never seen the light of day. It became more to us than simply a single paper for the purpose of publishing. Instead, it became a deep connection with the human side of professionals working to alleviate the suffering of civilians and people in distress, while often portrayed as unbreakable in the face of chaos.



What kind of methodological challenges did you face? What have you learned for future research?

Studying emotions and silence in such extreme environments is fraught with challenges. Medical professionals are conditioned to suppress their feelings, making it difficult to capture the full spectrum of their emotions (e.g., in interviews, surveys, or observations). Drawing on unsolicited personal diaries opened a window into their private struggles. This experience taught us the profound importance of unconventional data sources, such as unsolicited diaries, which bypass formalized emotional narratives and reveal their unscripted experiences.

Can you tell us a little ‘Behind the Scenes’ story?

This was the very first paper we started collaborating on many years ago. It started as a passion project, born from curiosity about how medical professionals cope with unspoken emotions in extreme situations. However, like many papers, it took time and persistence (including a late stage rejection) to bring this research to life and navigate the peer review process.

What’s the main finding of your study? Anything that surprised you?

Our main finding challenges the typical assumption that silence in extreme contexts is purely a reflection of emotional suppression or external control. Instead, we uncovered that this silence is often a purposeful choice, a strategic mechanism that allows professionals to maintain focus and prevent emotional breakdowns. What surprised us most was how these individuals used silence not only as a tool for survival but also as a way to create private emotional sanctuaries through journaling. These diaries became an outlet, allowing them to express their emotional turmoil away from the scrutiny of others, providing a refuge amidst chaos.



What are future research opportunities?

Silence, we believe, is an under-explored phenomenon across many organizational contexts, and its purposeful use demands more attention. Future research could examine how silence interacts with other emotional dynamics, particularly during the mundanity and boredom in high-intensity work, like waiting for patients. Another intriguing avenue would be studying how individuals cope with emotional distress after returning home from such extreme contexts. How do they reintegrate into everyday life, and what psychological challenges emerge after leaving the frontlines? Moreover, exploring how different types of emotions are regulated over time, beyond those considered 'difficult,' could lead to new insights on emotional resilience and management.

MULTIMODAL COLLECTIVE SENSEMAKING IN EXTREME CONTEXTS: EVIDENCE FROM MARITIME SEARCH AND RESCUE

Lübcke, Thomas, German Maritime Search and Rescue Service – DGzRS; Steigenberger, Norbert, Umeå University; Wilhelm, Hendrik, Witten/Herdecke University; Maurer, Indre, University of Göttingen

AUTHORS



What did you study? What sparked your interest?

Actors in extreme contexts often need to collaborate in order to survive (or just to get the job done), and some of these collaborators may be less knowledgeable and/or more affected by emotions such as tension or fear. How does collaboration work in these situations? In our study, we explore this question from a sensemaking perspective. Specifically, we studied a situation in which actors must collectively make sense of the situation they find themselves in and the actions that need to be taken. We studied such collective sensemaking situations during a maritime search and rescue mission in the Mediterranean, where rescuers were tasked with evacuating refugees from unseaworthy rubber boats. Our video data quickly revealed the challenges: the refugees showed that they were experiencing distracting emotions, such as fear or tension, and that - as our data show - they were less knowledgeable about what actions were required of each person at each point in time (or what actions were potentially life-threatening and should be avoided). By analyzing the video data with micro-ethnographic methods, we were able to analyze how the rescue team met this challenge, which is the main contribution of our paper.

How did you get access?

On the very day that the board of the nonprofit organization (NPO) decided to take an active part in the international support and training mission in the Aegean, there was a conversation with the author, who later took part, and the managing director. It was immediately agreed that there was an extremely large learning potential for the organizations involved in the upcoming rescue missions. As much in this field has so far been based on anecdotal evidence, it was a joint effort to learn as much as possible from the rescue missions and to share this knowledge with the international search and rescue (SAR) community. However, the requirement for participating observation was that the researcher had previously successfully completed the personnel selection process specially designed for this mission, similar to a demanding Sea Survival training course, and successfully participated in the additional training – such as the resuscitation of babies and infants. At the same time, we applied for research funding in the national safety research program, which we were thankfully awarded very quickly due to the exceptional situation and the short lead time.

What's the main finding of your study? Anything that surprised you?

Our main findings, which culminate in a process model, solve the main puzzle that motivated our research. This model outlines how actors overcome the sensemaking challenges common in extreme contexts, i.e., distracting emotions and disparate cognitions about the situation. We find that the core sensemaking process uncovered by previous research is embedded in an auxiliary process in which the more experienced actors first focus on neutralizing potentially distracting emotions in order to then engage in task framing. We also outline the different multimodal communication patterns, with emotional framing relying heavily on nonverbal communication, while task framing (like the core sensemaking process) is mostly verbal.

What kind of methodological challenges did you face? What have you learned for future research?

In this study, we faced two major challenges related to our data and methodology. First, like most research in extreme contexts, we collected data in an environment where people were suffering. Accordingly, we always prioritized the rescue mission over data collection, a priority that affected our videotaping, data preparation, analysis, and presentation of findings. Second, we worked primarily with video data in this study. While the video data proved to be an excellent fit for answering our research question, the coding effort we faced was massive. For our paper, coding the data took two authors and a research assistant about a year of work. Nevertheless, we believe that the theoretical insights that can be gained from this video data are worth the effort, and we certainly advocate the use of more video data in research on extreme contexts.



Can you tell us a little 'Behind the Scenes' story?

While we relatively quickly had a clear understanding that the empirical phenomenon of interest was how experienced actors worked successfully with non-experienced actors in challenging situations, the paper underwent several rewrites in terms of the theoretical lens through which we would understand this phenomenon. In line with our "job description" from the NPO, we set out to study the decision making of the rescue team. To do so, we collected video material that might be useful in developing their tactics and processes. As we began to code the video data, we realized that we could not understand the situations without focusing on the interactions between the rescue crew and the refugees. Building on the notion that we were observing "repetitive, recognizable patterns of interdependent actions, carried out by multiple actors" (Feldman & Pentland 2003: 95), we shifted to an organizational-routine framing. We analyzed the rescue process as a routine and framed the paper as the integration of outsiders into organizational routines. This version was the runner-up for the Best International Paper Award in the Organization and Management Theory division at the 2019 Academy of Management Annual Meeting. So we thought we were on the right track! In subsequent iterations, and based on our own reflections and very constructive and friendly feedback by colleagues, the paper became a coordination paper. But even this setup had some issues, so during the review process in JMS, with the help of our excellent review team, we arrived at the collective sensemaking framing that we now believe provides the deepest insight into our data.

What are future research opportunities?

Most previous research on collective sensemaking in extreme contexts seems to focus on experienced, professional actors, such as police officers, firefighters, or health care workers, who coordinate with other professionals. The intersection between professionals and non-professionals, with whom many of these professions interact on a daily basis, seems to be less well understood. Our study has taken first steps in this direction, but more work is clearly needed. Our paper also outlines the importance of nonverbal communication. For us, this was a serendipitous finding, as we were not originally looking for specific communication modalities. Future research may extend our work in this regard.

AUTHORS



FINDING YOUR SEA LEGS: EXPLORING NEWCOMER EMBODIED LEARNING IN AN EXTREME CONTEXT

Ila Bharatan, University of Warwick; Eivor Oborn, University of Warwick; Jacky Swan, University of Warwick

How did you get access?

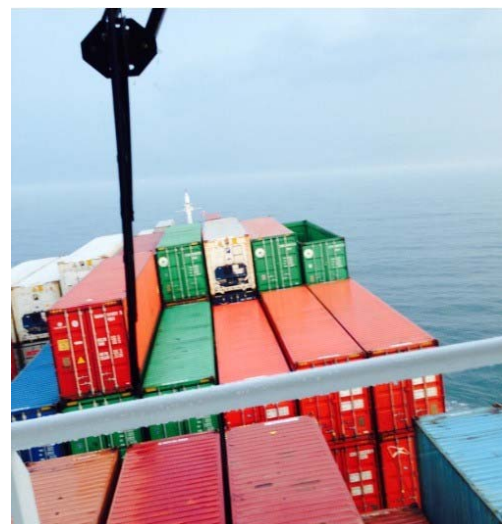
The first author, Ila, had personal networks in the shipping industry and we got access to training centres in the UK and the Philippines. The company referred to as Crewco in the study also facilitated access to a containership where Ila spent a month seeing the deck cadets working at sea in-situ.

What did you study? What sparked your interest?

We studied the seafaring practices of deck cadets working on container ships, focusing on the work they engaged in to prepare their bodies to deal with the threats they faced at sea. In an earlier piece of work, we had found cadets mentioning going “blank” or experiencing “hair raising” during their initial encounters with tasks or just when looking at a ship for the first time, this sparked our interest in looking at how newcomers overcome such issues, especially in extreme context settings.

What kind of methodological challenges did you face? What have you learned for future research?

Given the safety issues of being an untrained observer on the ship, sometimes access was restricted to some areas, and this meant that it was tricky at times to get the type of up-close observations needed to develop a more fleshed-out account of bodily practices. For the future, taking this aspect into account in designing the data collection and perhaps engaging in the types of safety training required to get up close to sites of action in extreme context work would be helpful.





*What's the main finding of your study?
Anything that surprised you?*

The key finding of our study was that newcomers encountered different threat experiences in performing their work, and these threat experiences became the triggers for bodywork to enable the newcomers to develop the capacity to act in situations of threat.

The interesting finding for us was that, counter-intuitively, boredom was treated as a threat in our research context.

Can you tell us a little 'Behind the Scenes' story?

Collecting data on a ship brought with it a number of challenges for Ila, but one of the interview transcripts carries a recording of her being very excited about spotting dolphins in the middle of an interview.

What are future research opportunities?

One interesting avenue for research would be to look into body memory or past experiences of embodied learning, which may not always be appropriate to a new work context (for example, war veterans in civilian police forces), quite how experienced practitioners engage in embodied re-learning may be an interesting avenue for future research.

AUTHORS



EMBODIED CONNECTION WORK: THE ROLE OF THE LIVED BODY IN ROUTINE RECREATION IN EXTREME CONTEXTS

Kathrin Sele, Aalto University School of Business; Anja Danner-Schröder, RPTU Kaiserslautern; Christian Mahringer, University of Stuttgart

What did you study? What sparked your interest?

We studied how Nolla, a zero-waste fine-dining restaurant in Helsinki, recreated their organizational routines as they worked through the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Given our interest in routines, the possibility to follow an organization's response to such an unexpected event in real time seemed like a unique opportunity. In fact, our study started when Kathrin received a call informing her that the restaurant had to cancel all reservations and "that they would figure something out."



How did you get access?

When Kathrin passed by the restaurant a few days into the closure to pick up some take-out food, she spoke to the owners and was welcomed into the premises. What started out as a short ethnographic study turned into a longitudinal adventure during which we explored how Nolla adapted and reinvented itself to remain a restaurant despite the complete halt of its routines. Quickly, Kathrin became part of the "Nolla family" and lived through the many ups and downs with the entire team.

What kind of methodological challenges did you face? What have you learned for future research?

One of the greatest methodological challenges was conducting ethnographic fieldwork during a pandemic when health concerns and maintaining physical distance were paramount. A second challenge, characteristic of most extreme contexts, was that our informants were deeply affected by the lockdown. This made data collection sensitive and emotionally charged. For example, the owners of Nolla felt very responsible for the well-being of their employees. However, the context forced them to furlough everyone to ensure the restaurant's survival. Studying Nolla showed us the importance of care and the joy in our practices, but also how any craft is a collective endeavor. We take this learning with us as we engage with new informants and the contexts we study.



What's the main finding of your study? Anything that surprised you?

Our main finding is that the ability to recreate organizational routines relies on what we call embodied connection work, which happens through two interlinked practices: embodied imagining and embodied protecting. These practices were crucial in establishing new connections and developing workable routines. What surprised us was how central the concept of the “lived body” became as we engaged with our data. At the same time, the concept was always present in our field notes, not in such abstract terms, but through the metaphor of dancing that we used to describe flow and the frequent lack of it.

Can you tell us a little ‘Behind the Scenes’ story?

Every day at 3 p.m., Nolla employees enjoy their team lunch. One team member cooks and everyone takes a moment to relax before the hectic evening service starts. Three months into the study, Kathrin offered to make lunch. While she was busy cooking (with some expert help...), she wanted to throw away a small piece of aluminum that was on the cheese she had brought along. As one of the chefs took it from her and walked all the way to the courtyard to throw it out, she realized that there was no trash can in the kitchen. This rather late but important experience made us realize how zero-waste was not a concept but an embodied practice.



What are future research opportunities?

Future research could explore how different types of organizations recreate their routines in response to such extreme disruptions. Comparing sectors that are more accustomed to crises with those unprepared, like fine-dining restaurants, could reveal deeper insights into routine adaptability. Further, fine-dining restaurants are known for their physically and mentally demanding work. This raises the question of whether and how the lived body plays a similarly important role in other settings.

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