



University of Antwerp
| Chair of Crisis Governance

From theory to practice: the implementation of resilience in a Dutch Safety

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Definition

“Organizational resilience is the ability of organizations to anticipate, avoid, and adjust to shocks in their environment.”
(Ortiz-de-Mandojan & Bansal, 2016: 1615)

“... and ultimately engage in transformative activities to capitalize on disruptive surprises that potentially threaten organization survival.”
(Lengnick-Hall, Beck & Lengnick-Hall, 2011: 244)

The number of scientific publications with **‘organizational resilience’** in their titles within **management and organizational sciences** has **quadrupled** over the past five years. In the **public management** field, there has even been a **fivefold increase** in such publications since 2020 (Mhlanga & Dzingirai, 2024).

Despite a growing interest, the practical application of resilience remains underdeveloped. **Little is known about how to operationalize organizational resilience**, let alone how to turn scientific knowledge into concrete recommendations, guidelines, or strategies that help organizations implement resilience (Hermelin et al., 2020; WEF, 2025).

Due to varying conceptualizations and methodologies, there is a **lack of consensus** among scholars on how to **effectively measure organizational resilience** (Linnenluecke, 2017; Hillmann, 2020).

Some challenges:

- 1. How to prepare your organization to be resilient?**
- 2. What is organizational resilience? How does it look?**
- 3. How to measure organizational resilience?**
- 4. What if emergency services are not resilient enough?**



- **25 Safety Regions in The Netherlands**
- **Government agencies composed of regional fire departments, municipal medical services, and regional medical emergency services**
- **Main tasks include organizing and managing crisis response and creating an overview of all relevant risks and hazards in its area.**
- **The Safety Regions Act (2010) states that the safety regions' response must be of adequate quality and suitable for the incident or emergency, before, after, and during an event.**





- **Safety Region Central & West Brabant**
- **Located in the southern part of the Netherlands and borders Belgium.**
- **It covers about 1,600 km², including 26 municipalities,**
- **1,800 people staff the organization, comprising 300 admin staff, 200 professional firefighters, and 1,300 volunteers, spread over 70 fire stations.**
- **The annual operating budget is 102.4 million euros.**

Organizational resilience: a capability-based conceptualization

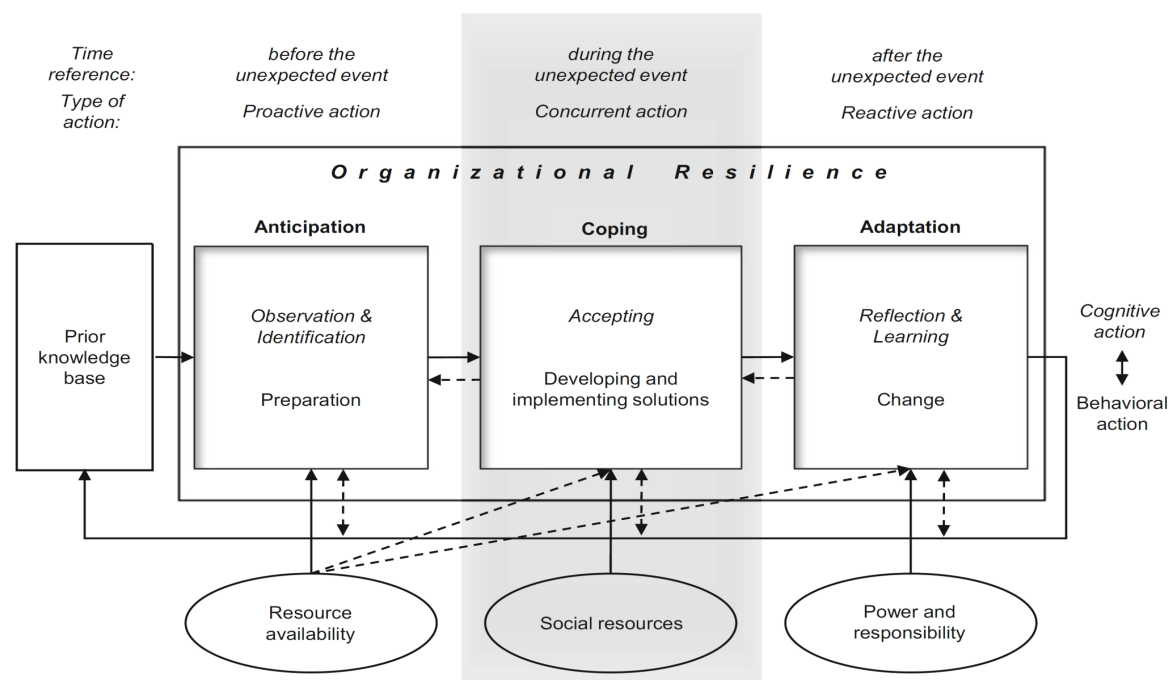
Stephanie Duchek¹ 

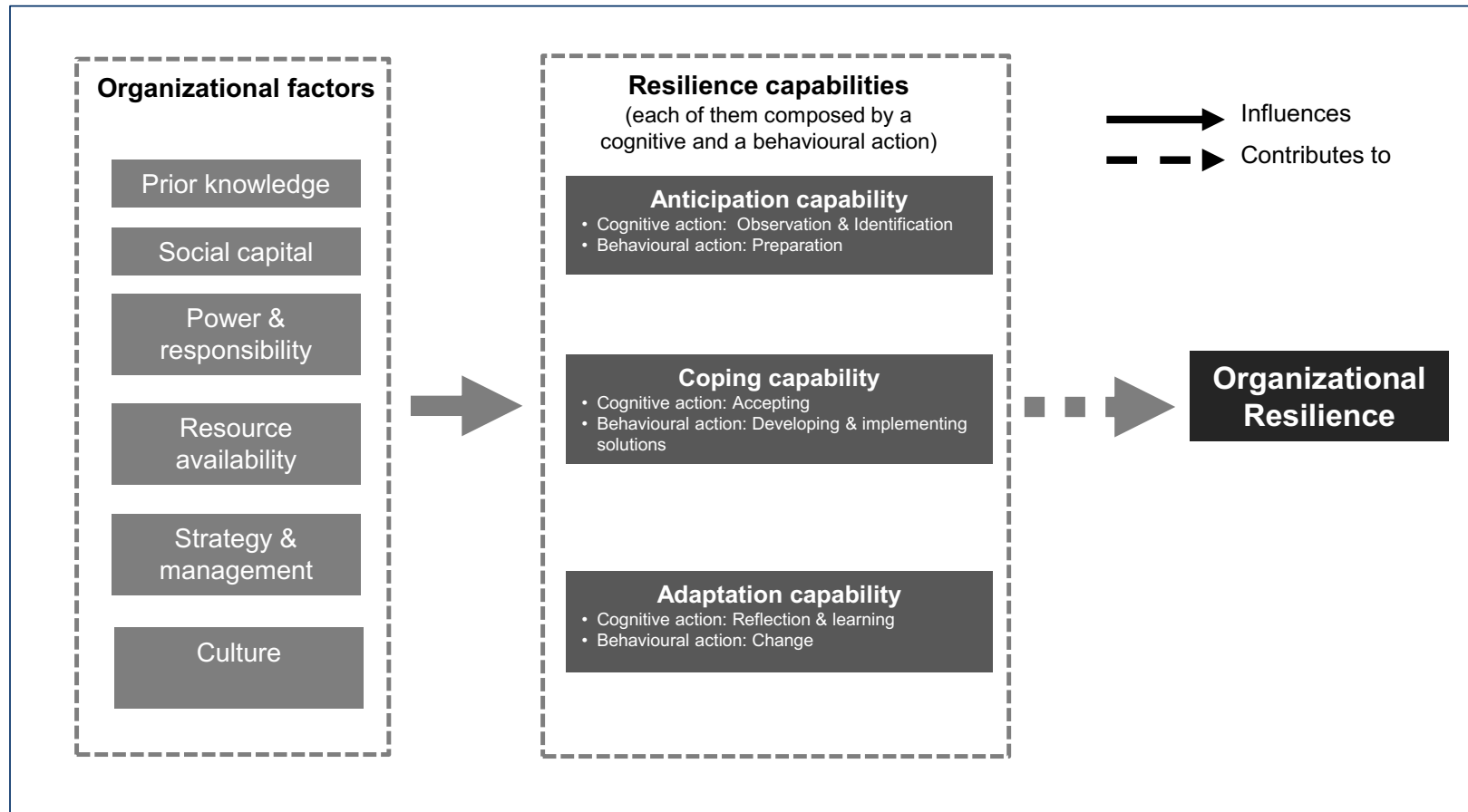
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Abstract In highly volatile and uncertain times, organizations need to develop a resilience capacity which enables them to cope effectively with unexpected events, bounce back from crises, and even foster future success. Although academic interest in organizational resilience has steadily grown in recent years, there is little consensus about what resilience actually means and how it is composed. More knowledge is particularly needed about organizational capabilities that constitute resilience, as well as conditions for their development. This paper aims to make a contribution to this heterogeneous research field by deepening the understanding of the complex and embedded construct of organizational resilience. We conceptualize resilience as a meta-capability and decompose the construct into its individual parts. Inspired by process-based studies, we suggest three successive resilience stages (anticipation, coping, and adaptation) and give an overview of underlying capabilities that together form organizational resilience. Based on this outline, we discuss relationships and interactions of the different resilience stages as well as main antecedents and drivers. We formulate propositions that can act as a foundation for future empirical work.

Keywords Organizational resilience · Resilience capacity · Resilience process · Resilience capabilities

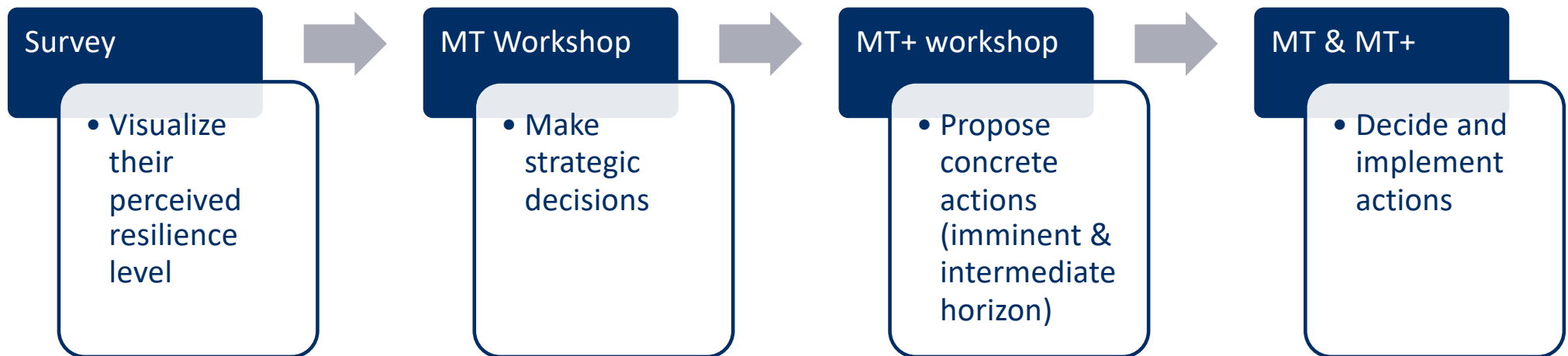
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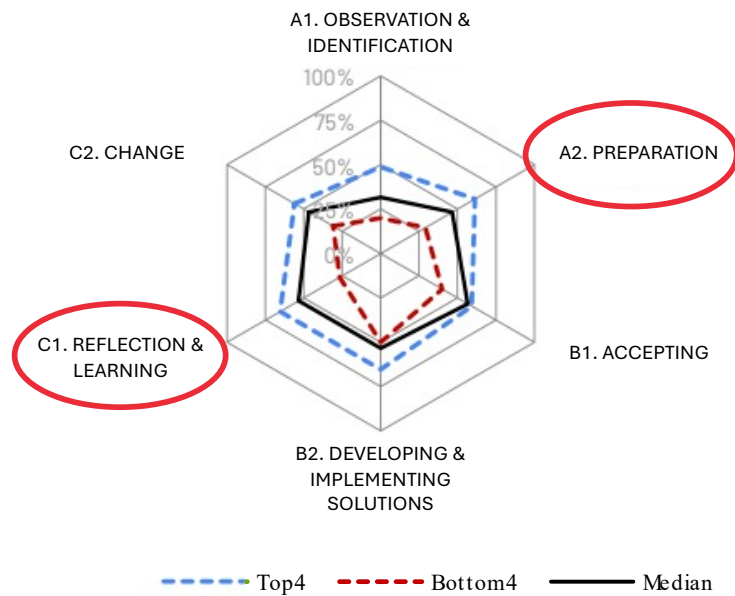


Domínguez et al., based on Duchek (2020)

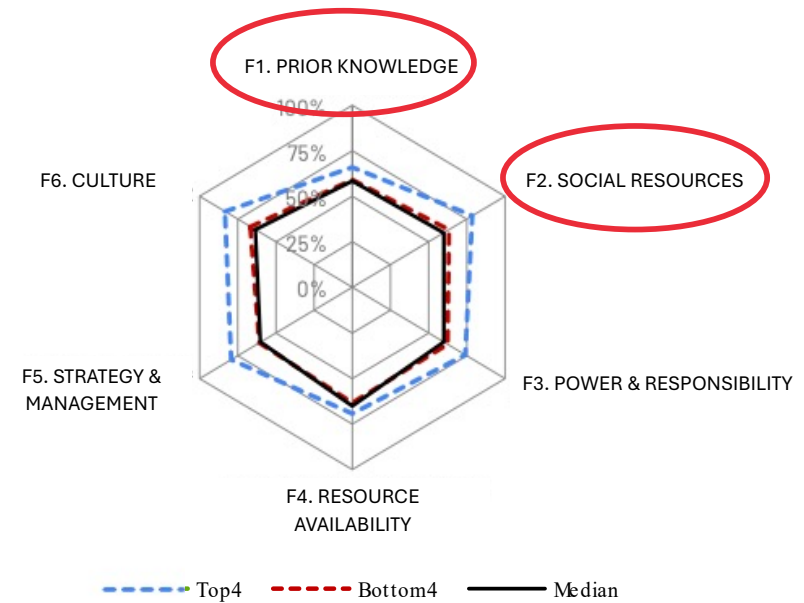
The process



Survey results



Capabilities



Factors

The organization's objective

- **Based on 2 scenarios: 72hours power outage & cyber hack**
- **Explore:**
 - What is covered?
 - Where do we excel?
 - What needs to be strengthened?
 - Competent incompetent?
- **Imminent & intermediate horizon**
- **Practical roadmap for implementing solutions based on agreed strategy**

So what?

Practice:

- The process helped the MT & MT+ to make 'resilience' more tangible.
- It spurred a constructive discussion about what organizational aspects need to be more resilient, and what not.
- It helped to make strategic decisions and reflect on practical solutions.

Theory:

- The sequential model of Ducheck does not reflect the complexity or the reality of a crisis.
- Adapted view on resilience management; it's all about 'coping'
 - 'Anticipation' & 'Adaptation' strengthen the ability to cope with the crisis