

Abstract for review

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Dynamic capabilities & changing face of NPOs' challenges

Insights from a survey in refugee aid

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Abstract:

Particularly, in times of crisis and political upheavals nonprofit-organizations (NPOs) take center stage in the public discourse (Simsa & Zimmer, 2014; Meyer et al., 2010). In the 'refugee crisis' of 2016, their significance as central civil society actor became especially evident.

Coping with waves of refugees was very challenging for NPOs because (environmental) conditions were ambiguous, multidimensional, and dynamically changing and their 'common' organizational capabilities (e.g. change management) were only partially successful in this respect (Eisenhardt et al., 2010).

NPOs had to think of new forms of organizing respectively managing. In this respect, dynamic capabilities (DCs) represent a promising approach. Their 'distinctive value' emanates from their nature as meta-capability as they "govern other organizational activities [...]. They enable the firm to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external resources to maintain leadership in continually shifting environments" (Teece, 2014, 335). I.a. ambidexterity or absorptive capacity represent DCs.

There is some research providing evidence for the positive impact of DCs on NPO performance (Piening, 2013). However, it remains largely unclear which intra-organizational conditions, f.e.

leadership, individual competences, traits etc. found DCs (Pavlou & El Sawy, 2011; Sprafke et al., 2013).

Aiming at a better understanding of the foundation of DCs, this paper focuses on different leadership styles as intra-organizational conditions. It intends to answer following research questions: Do NPOs actually apply dynamic capabilities and if yes, how does leadership affect the application of dynamic capabilities?

Hence, this paper expects that NPOs coping successfully with refugee migration apply dynamic capabilities and that individual behaviour of leaders can influence their application.

A quantitative study among staff members and managers deployed in refugee camps all across Austria was conducted to quantitatively answer these questions.

The paper makes the following contributions: Firstly, it provides evidence on how leadership and DCs are linked in the nonprofit-sector where DC research is underrepresented. Secondly, it points out how leaders can govern DCs for coping with the changing face of today's challenges.

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