

ABSTRACT

European Research Network On Philanthropy
8th International Conference Copenhagen, July 13-14, 2017

Dynamic capabilities & changing face of NPOs' challenges

Insights from a survey in refugee aid

Submitted by: Katharina Anna Kaltenbrunner
 Organisation: Paris Lodron University of Salzburg, Law, Austria
 Author(s): Katharina Anna Kaltenbrunner
 Keywords: Dynamic capabilities, change, refugee aid, nonprofit-organizations, leadership
 Topic: Efficacy, efficiency and performance evaluation
 Research method: Quantitative
 Geographical focus: Single country (European)
 Type of article: Research article

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.

Most important references:

Eisenhardt, K. M., Furr, N. R., & Bingham, C. B. (2010). CROSSROADS-Microfoundations of performance. *Organization Science*, 21(6), 1263-1273.

Meyer, M., Neumayr, M., & Schneider, U. (2010). Bits and pieces: Daten zum österreichischen Nonprofit-Sektor. *Fachzeitschrift für Verbands- und Nonprofit-Management*, 36(2), 34-47.

Pavlou, P. A., & El Sawy, O. A. (2011). Understanding the elusive black box of dynamic capabilities. *Decision Sciences*, 42(1), 239-273.

Piening, E. P. (2013). Dynamic capabilities in public organizations. *Public Management Review*, 15(2), 209-245.

Simsa, R., & Zimmer, A. (2014). Quo vadis? In A. Zimmer, & R. Simsa (Hrsg.), *Forschung zu Zivilgesellschaft, NPOs und Engagement: Quo vadis?* Wiesbaden: Springer, 11-37.

Sprafke, N., Wilkens, U., Schiffer, B., & Feldmann, L. (2013). Bundles of micro-variables for describing organizational dynamic capabilities – commonalities and idiosyncrasies. Paper presented at the 8th SKM Symposium, Magdeburg.

Teece, D. J. (2014). The foundations of