

Willian Douglas Guilherme
(Organizador)

A Produção do Conhecimento nas Ciências Sociais Aplicadas 3



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APRESENTAÇÃO

Os textos são um convite a leitura e reúnem autores das mais diversas instituições de ensino superior do Brasil, particulares e públicas, federais e estaduais, distribuídas entre vários estados, socializando o acesso a estes importantes resultados de pesquisas.

Os artigos foram organizados e distribuídos nos 5 volumes que compõe esta coleção, que tem por objetivo, apresentar resultados de pesquisas que envolvam a investigação científica na área das Ciências Sociais Aplicadas, sobretudo, que envolvam particularmente pesquisas em Administração e Urbanismo, Ciências Contábeis, Ciência da Informação, Direito, Planejamento Rural e Urbano e Serviço Social.

Neste 3º volume, reuni o total de 25 artigos que dialogam com o leitor sobre temas que envolvem direito, políticas públicas, crianças e adolescentes, o papel da legislação, grêmios estudantis e aspectos legais, assédio moral no trabalho, aborto, orçamento público, dentre outros. São temas que se interligam e apontam críticas e soluções dentro das possibilidades das Ciências Sociais Aplicadas.

Assim fechamos este 3º volume do livro “A produção do Conhecimento nas Ciências Sociais Aplicadas” e esperamos poder contribuir com o campo acadêmico e científico, trabalhando sempre para a disseminação do conhecimento científico.

Boa leitura!

Prof. Dr. Willian Douglas Guilherme

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ORGANIZATIONAL UNLEARNING AND HUMAN OPPORTUNITY IN THE PATH OF RESILIENCE

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ABSTRACT: With the intention of calling attention to a reflection about the organizations providing processes of organizational unlearning through the human opportunity to remain resilient, this theoretical essay expounds, sedimenting its theoretical foundation, on the findings of Leonardi (2013), Jones (2014), Annarelli and Nonino (2016) and Chia (2017). The analysis of the concept and role of organizational unlearning, organizational resilience and its relation to adaptation, non-arbitrary relationship in sociomaterial practices and unlearning and resilience as proactive anticipation and environmental perception are expressed in the intention of a relationship between organizational unlearning and organizational resilience as a path of sociomaterial practices that enables the creation of agile, dynamic and prosperous organizations, facilitating the understanding of these themes in order to make easier the understanding of the different perspectives brought in the literature.

KEYWORDS: organizational unlearning, organizational resilience, sociomaterial practices.

INTRODUCTION

Changes and uncertainties have long been no more intermittent synonyms of the organizational environment, but strongly present attributes. Learning and surviving in this reality is not a challenge, it thrives.

Organizations coexist and compete in an undisputedly interconnected world under the constant challenge of surviving and thriving in the face of challenging environmental demands, with the surrounding perspective of resilience as a sociomaterial practice in the face of organizational changes and the combined paradox of organizational unlearning, without having learned.

The world is often surprised by natural catastrophes, waves of terrorism, economic crises and disruptive innovations, and yet organizations survive. Understanding how they resist and how they unlearn is a challenge.

In this attempt to understand organizational resilience, Annarelli and Nonino (2016) proposed that it can be understood as the ability to face unexpected episodes in advance. Orlikowski and Scott (2008) argued that the term sociomaterial is intended to dictate an emerging stream of research under a new approach, given

the dynamic, distributed, and interdependent nature of the technologies in place, and in order to anticipate the imponderable and new organizational realities of the multiple forms that are and will continue to delineate organizational realities.

By such design, Jones (2014) portrays that a sociomaterial perspective integrates technology, people and organizations in trying to understand the constitutive entanglement of social and material in organizational life. From the understanding of this entanglement, Leonardi (2013) argues that the social and the material exist independently of one another and it is only in their conjunction in human activities that they become sociomaterial.

Jones (2014) then emphasizes that a contribution of sociomateriality may be a latent aspect of practice theory and that this can be encouraged by practice-based approaches to research, such as Engeström and Middleton (1996); or the communities of practice of Wenger (1998); or the strategy as a practice of Whittington (1996). At the same time, it can also advance beyond human centrality in practice theories, in the sense of relating practice to notions of inseparability, performativity, and sociomateriality in a mutual constitution, not only as practices are promulgated but as building the phenomena that approach them.

In this sense, we understand that organizational unlearning is the construct that extends the understanding of resilience as a sociomaterial practice. Recently, Sanita and Cassandre (2017) reflected on the organizational oxymoron, to unlearn what was not even learned, amplifying the meaning of organizational unlearning under the elements that make up its structure, its dimensions and its consequences. This understanding of the structure occurs by establishing the antecedents of unlearning in levels, processes and facilitators. The reflection also happens by indicating the existence of the cognitive, behavioral and contextual dimensions of unlearning.

From this reflection, Sanita and Cassandre (2017) proposed both a concept and a framework for organizational learning. From the concept we have that organizational unlearning is a deliberate and intentional process that instigates obsolete aspects, both individual and organizational, that are harmful and must be excluded and supplied by new ones. From the framework, more extended on the main thematic ones regarding the unlearning organizational, it is possible that this can be analyzed on the three basic axes: the antecedents, the dimensions and the consequences of the unlearning.

The intention in this theoretical essay is to stimulate a reflection on how organizations, interconnected and challenged by the strong environmental requirements imposed, can offer processes of organizational unlearning through the human opportunity to remain resilient.

This work is divided into five subsections. The first deals with the concept and role of organizational unlearning, in the second it will be possible to observe organizational resilience and its relation to adaptation. In the third, we can see the notions of the non-arbitrary relationship in sociomaterial practices. In the fourth, we find resilience as proactive anticipation and environmental perception, and finally, the fifth exposes the

implications of this study.

THEORETICAL BASIS

In this section I briefly present the literature that provides the basis for the conceptual understanding of this work, namely, organizational unlearning, organizational resilience and sociomaterial practice. Although the associations between these themes are explicit in the conceptual approaches, along each subsection, the possible practical relationships of organizational unlearning with organizational resilience stand out.

ORGANIZATIONAL UNLEARNING: THE CONCEPT AND ITS ROLE

Reviewing articles about organizational unlearning we face different semantic similarities in the meanings of the concepts of this theme, such as discarding and eliminating, forgetting, abandoning, obsolete knowledge, new information and new knowledge.

Faced with these similarities and the various definitions of organizational unlearning, we proposed a brief contextualization and, although in a multifaceted way, a conceptual delimitation.

Akhshid (2014) points out that the implications of different concepts of definitions and main themes on organizational unlearning result in intentionality, process, baseline level and orientation to the subject.

From the point of view of intentionality, unlearning can be understood as an intentional, deliberate, planned and premeditated act. At this point we see two common similarities: forgetting and unlearning.

As for the process, it means that unlearning is not something discreet, isolated and unnoticed, a specific action in itself, but a series of actions for a particular purpose.

In relation to the baseline level, for example, Tsang (2008) and Rezazademehrizi (2011) deal with unlearning at different levels of analysis, as is the case of the individual or group.

From the point of view of subject orientation, in common in the definitions of organizational unlearning, we find the obsolete, (Rezazademehrizi, 2011; Bagherzadeh et al, 2012), knowledge (Hedberg 1981; Newstrom 1983; Fernandez et al), the method (Starbuck, 1996), the habit (Newstrom, 1983; Zeng & Chen, 2010), the experience (McGill & Slocum, 1993), the standard (Sherwood, 2000), learning (Becker, 2003; Windernecht, 2004; Becker, 2007), the routine (Tsang & Zahra, 2008; Cegarra-Navarro et al, 2010; McKeown, 2012), the organizational structure (Akgün et al, 2007), the information structure (Cegarra-Navarro et al, 2010; Lee et al, 2011), the procedure (Lee et al, 2011), the assumption (Sherwood, 2000; Esa & Abdulsamad, 2011) and the mental structure (Esa & Abdulsamad, 2011).

In view of these findings of intentionality, process, base level and orientation towards the subject, seen in Akhshid (2014), Sanita and Cassandre (2017, p.12) proposed, first, a broader framework on the main themes of unlearning in order to facilitate the understanding of the different approaches found in the literature for future research on other meanings, especially those reflected in Brazilian research, according to Figure 1, and, second, the understanding that “organizational unlearning is a deliberate and intentional process that instigates obsolete aspects both individual and organizational that are harmful and should be excluded and supplied by new ones.”

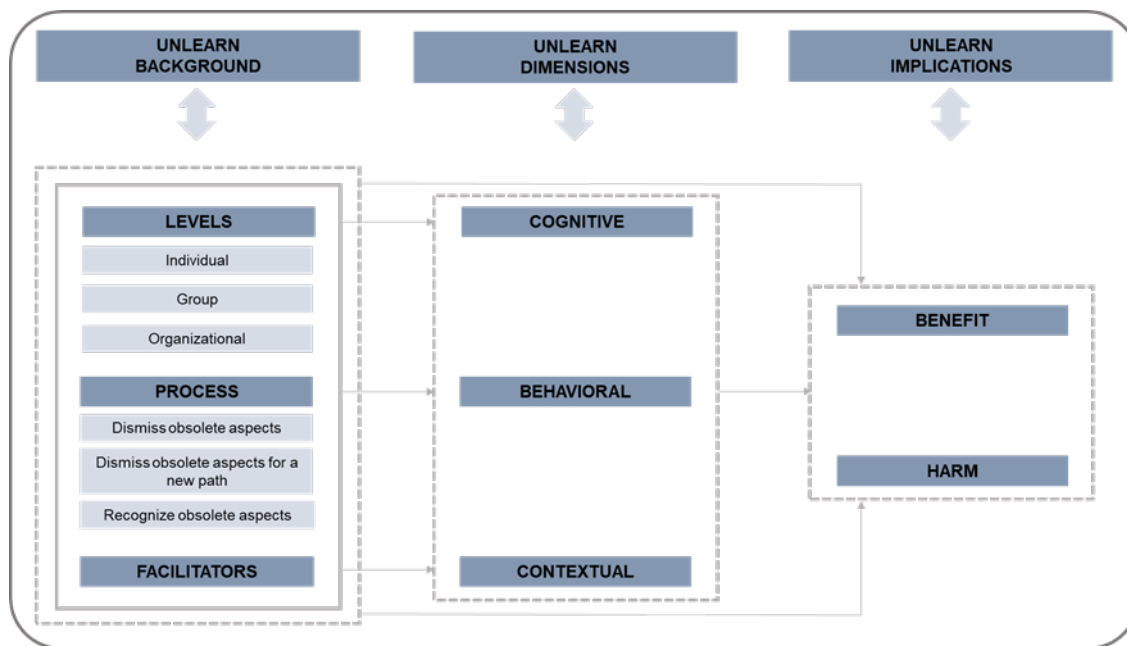


Figure 1 – Key issues of organizational unlearning

Source: Adapted from Sanita and Cassandre (2017)

Thus, as the work of Morais-Storz and Nguyen (2017) reveals, when there is no unlearning, it becomes more difficult for organizations to establish new routines and acquire new knowledge. Therefore, the most important role of organizational unlearning, as a deliberate and intentional process, is to make comprehensible and clear the obstacles created from old routines and obsolete knowledge to pave the way for a new organizational learning. Consequently, unlearning plays an important role in the construction of organizational resilience, as it is an important component in the transformational processes of learning and unlearning, where old routines are discarded, and new routines are acquired.

RESILIENCE: ITS RELATION WITH ADAPTATION

It can be seen that there is an understanding, as a rule of thumb in the literature, that organizational learning and adaptation are fundamental to organizational survival,

such as occurs in environmental crises and turbulences (Stieglitz et al, 2016) or, nonetheless, as Morais-Storz (2016), in times of crisis adaptation is insufficient when it comes to resilience because, due to our world of uncertainty and instability, continuous renewal is necessary.

In this sense, for Souza et al (2017), resilience has been used in the literature as a construction that symbolizes both the adaptability of organizations, in such a way that organizations must be able to match their environmental requirements, and resilience as a dynamic capacity where they capture environmental opportunities.

Tsang and Zahra (2008) show that the ability of organizations to change and adapt is based on their ability to learn continuously to unlearn.

Therefore, as Starbuck (2017) states, in order to learn, one must first unlearn and for this a deliberate action is a necessary condition.

Organizational learning often occurs after episodes of failures and crises in which, although obvious and inevitable, the signs of problems were already evident. Even though organizations need a fuse to unlearn, Starbuck (2017) argues that the unlearning process must occur before a break-point, that is, a crisis or failure, as Sanita and Cassandre (2017), this requires deliberate and intentional action.

Then, resilience and its relation to adaptation reveals an organizational reaction to crises (Fowler et al., 2007; Spillan & Hough, 2003), with the ability to bear and turn back from a setback (Carmeli & Markman, 2011) and the ability to return to a stable state after a setback (Bhamra et al., 2011; Burnard & Bhamra, 2011).

Given the need to better understand resilience, Rupčić (2017) shows that organizations must move from the paradigm of responding to the crisis and find ways to adapt towards an organizational paradigm or behavior whereby resistance is reinforced by continuous metamorphosis. Organizational resilience to Rupčić (2017, p.128) is, therefore, “introducing change before the need for change becomes obvious, difficult to manage and threatens the survival of the organization.”

For Annarelli and Nonino (2016, p. 3) organizational resilience “is the organization’s ability to cope with unexpected disruptions and events in advance, thanks to strategic capacity and operational management linked to internal and external shocks. The essence is static, when founded on prepared and preventative measures to minimize the likelihood of threats and reduce any impact that may occur, and dynamic when founded on the ability to manage disruptions and unexpected events to shorten unfavorable consequences and maximize the speed of the recovery organization for the original or for a more desirable new one. “

Annarelli and Nonino (2016) even proposed seven different directions on the future of research on the issue of organizational resilience:

- Theory tests on design, implementation and improvement processes to increase organizational resilience;
- Measuring organizational and operational resilience;

- Resilience in small and medium enterprises;
- Models of restorations for the supply chain and operational processes;
- Impact of the introduction of information systems on organizational resilience;
- Preventive innovation to improve resilience processes;
- Strategic approach and dynamic capabilities to become a resilient organization.

Therefore, this theoretical essay comprehends a better alignment with this last research direction proposed by Annarelli and Nonino (2016) on the strategic approach and dynamic capacities to become a resilient organization.

According to what have been seen until here, both the concept of organizational unlearning and its role as the understanding of resilience, and its relations with the adaptation and dynamic capabilities, are necessary to contextualize the work of Orlikowski and Scott (2008), that traverse that, although we have a flow of sociomaterial research, it is still recent and not possible to establish a unified approach. Still these authors point out some characteristics common to this theme, and thus suggest: first, a relational ontology to realize entities, human and technology, which have no inherent properties, but can acquire them through mutual intricacies including; second, an approach performativity so that the descriptions of reality are not limited to the world of reflection, such as it is, but in the intervention and the creation of the phenomena that describe; and, third, in view of the guidance to the practices in order and through which the relations and the boundaries between the social and the material are advocated.

That said, in the next section, we strive to bring sociomaterial practices.

SOCIAL-MATERIAL PRACTICES: A NON-ARBITRARY RELATIONSHIP

Orlikowski and Scott (2008, p.437) sought to understand if the term sociomateriality determines an emerging flow of research, especially those that neglect technology in organizations, despite the omnipresence on this subject in contemporary literature and, therefore, argue that “it is particularly necessary, given the dynamic, distributed and interdependent nature of the technologies in use today, and the multiple and unprecedented ways in which they are shaping and will continue to shape organizational realities.”

Jones (2014) says that to some extent Orlikowski and Scott’s description of sociomateriality (2008) is an umbrella term under which research is organized under various theoretical traditions, such as the theories of actor networks (Callon, 1986; Latour, 2005), of the ethnographic studies of practices (Suchman, 2007), of post-humanist performance (Barad, 2003) and of practice (Pickering, 1995). In this sense, Monteiro et al (2012) and Jones (2014) suggest that sociomateriality may simply be an externally applied label that groups together certain theoretical traditions.

In this way, in times of implacable and constant changes and the indispensable need for organizations to learn to stay alive and prosper, social practices provide the necessary substrate as an alternative to understand how organizations can be able to learn and respond to environmental demands without being overly dependent on cognitive actions (Chia, 2017, Bourdieu, 2002, Schatzki, 2001 and Dreyfus, 1991).

Ingold (2000, p. 3) makes clear that for practitioners, they are the practices and actions that produce the individual and the collective, not the reverse, and that structure and agency, consciousness and intentionality are secondary effects of practices, since individuals are not isolated and autonomous units, but are as “a place of development within a network of social relations and practices.”

Schatzki (2005, p. 466) reinforces this idea that collectivism itself is not a modest entity, but “a broader form of individualism” in which the bundles of relational practices, their sensitivities and predispositions are temporarily stabilized.

As a basis for this theoretical essay, we focus on Orlikowski and Scott (2008) on the five interrelated notions of sociomateriality - materiality, inseparability, relationality, performativity and practice.

It is also emphasized that, as Jones (2014, p.899) states, the “five notions separately would seem insufficient to justify the designation of sociomateriality as a distinct research approach, since none of them is exclusive to the concept”, this theoretical essay, then deals with the notion of practice to understand the possible relationships between unlearning and organizational resilience, and therefore “there is a non-arbitrary relationship between notions that are meaningful for conducting the research and justifying the claim that the various theoretical traditions share some common ground. “

UNLEARNING AND RESILIENCE: PROACTIVE ANTICIPATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PERCEPTION

Chia (2017) inspires a behavioral approach that emphasizes organizational learning through direct involvement and adaptive action, in such way that we could offer an alternative way of understanding how organizations are able to learn and respond to environmental demands without over-reliance on conscious cognition.

If March (1972, pp. 419-423) has pointed out that our dominant theories of learning and action assume that “thought must precede action, that action must serve a purpose, that purpose must be defined in terms of a consistent set of pre-existing goals”, then Chia (2017, p.112) argues that there are many practical circumstances in which people “act before they think” and “contrary to the principles of environmental determinism, individuals and organizations respond to their environment environment, not by a passive adaptation to the latter’s demands, but by actively selecting those aspects that offer opportunities for incorporation into their own need for survival and

growth.”

Given that organizations respond to the environment, it is imperative that they be sensitive to what the medium is transmitting or providing, so that the perception of what is being transmitted or provided can provide more value and better social interactions between organizations, although these perceptions vary from individual to individual and from organization to organization.

Thus, the idea of learning in the sense of the sensibility of perception towards what the environment transmits is important for organizational development. More than this, it also reveals the need to understand, as Teece observes (2012, p.1396), the dynamic capacity of organizations to be “an organization’s ability to feel, seize and transform the opportunities detected in its environment.”

Although, for Chia (2017), this perception of organizational sensitivities and predispositions is still not well understood in the literature, and, as a consequence, there have been several contradictory attempts in order to define dynamic capacities and what is missing, according to this author, is the understanding of the empirical sensitivity as an element of organizational success and as a way for organizations to learn and respond through the process of finding a path that entails the real possibility of surprises, fortuitous discoveries, and hidden potentials, so that we as individuals or as organizations, be prepared to deal with the unexpected, with the unthought and unthinkable in a positive and proactive way.



Figure 2 – Proactive organizations and the unthinking and the unthinkable

SOURCE: Prepared by the author.

It is in this way that there will be a relationship between organizational unlearning and organizational resilience as proactive anticipation of environmental perceptions as a path of sociomaterial practices, as shown in Figure 2, to forge agile, dynamic, and prosperous organizations.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

From organizational unlearning as a concept and its role, from organizational resilience and its relation to adaptation, from sociomaterial practice and its non-arbitrary relationship and from unlearning and resilience as a proactive anticipation and from environmental perception, our contribution to this work is to promote a reflection about the organizations to enable processes of unlearning, enabled to human desire and openness, to remain resilient.

Both this theoretical essay itself and the basis that reinforces it show that we still crave for more theoretical and empirical research on these themes. The main shortcomings are for a better understanding of the possible relationships between sociomaterial practices, resilience and organizational unlearning.

Thus, even if we do not have a unitary perspective on the concept of sociomateriality, as it was, it was possible to establish, based on Jones (2014), that there is a non-arbitrary relationship between concepts that are meaningful and justify sharing common characteristics, as was the case in this essay, of practices, and furthermore, as argued by Leonardi (2013), sociomateriality has practical consequences that can improve the way organizations succeed. There is also an inspiration in Chia (2017) about the sensitivity of organizations to what is diffused by the environment. From Annarelli and Nonino (2016) we address the dynamic capability approach that anchor resilient organizations.

Finally, reflecting on the title of this essay, and considering what has been exposed to this point, we can recognize that organizations that are interconnected and challenged with the environmentally imposed requirements should provide processes of organizational unlearning through the human opportunity to remain resilient.

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