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Review article

## Entrepreneurial Action: Redefining the Sense and Building Resilience as Coping Strategies for SMEs and Traditional Enterprises Facing the New Digital and Crises Environment

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**Abstract.** The new digital environment and the COVID-19 crisis, having drastically increased the amount of teleworking and e-commerce, seem to have benefited GAFAM and digital platforms. Under the current conditions, SMEs and traditional businesses are forced to look for adaptive strategies. Some researchers (e.g. A. Carmeli and G.D. Markman) argue that they SMEs and traditional businesses need to build *entrepreneurial* and *organizational resilience*. And it is in this respect, in particular, that psychology can be usefully mobilized to analyze new forms of economic competition. On these grounds, the authors of the paper defend the idea that the SMEs and traditional businesses will be able to exist and assert themselves against their new competitors. In this new interconnected, turbulent and uncertain environment, this self-assertion passes through a strategic and organizational reconfiguration, but also and above all, through *entrepreneurial action* in its *effectual* logic which can lead to *resilience* and, moreover, to *antifragility*.

**Key words:** digital environment, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial action, effectuation logic, communicative action, resilience, antifragility

### Introduction

The new digital environment and the COVID-19 crisis, having drastically increased the amount of teleworking and e-commerce, seem to have benefited GAFAM<sup>1</sup> and digital platforms. Under the current conditions, SMEs<sup>2</sup> and tradi-

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<sup>1</sup> GAFAM – an acronym for five worldwide dominant American technology companies, that are Google, Apple, Facebook (the activities of Facebook, which owned by Meta, is recognized as extremist and banned in Russia), Amazon and Microsoft.

<sup>2</sup> SMEs – small and medium sized enterprises. SMEs are mostly defined by the staff headcount (249 employees or less) and either annual turnover (50 million euros) or balance sheet total (43 million

tional businesses are forced to look for adaptive strategies. Some argue that they need to build *entrepreneurial and organizational resilience* (Carmeli, Markman, 2011). And it is in this respect, in particular, that psychology can be usefully mobilized to analyze new forms of economic competition. However, on the one hand, the SMEs and traditional businesses often have less experience in teleworking and therefore have to restructure their organization; on the other hand, the rapid and constant changes in their new competitive environments no longer allow them to really accomplish the adjustments that usually keep them in the competition in response to adverse actions. Thus, for ACCOR Hotels Group, the main competitor is no longer *Louvre Hotels Group*, but Air B'n'B. Similarly, G7 taxis have to compete with *Uber* despite the G7's legal constraints (of being bound by the employment contracts to their drivers, contrary to Uber).

These two salient examples bring into question two strategic models: the traditional model based on the Clausewitzian approach to strategy (Le Roy, 2006) and the model of new actors breaking the codes of the previous ones. In the traditional approach, the understanding of *competition* is similar to the symmetrical war of the Napoleonic spirit. The actor weighs his advantages against the strengths of his competitor and the strategy is thought of as an action-reaction and/or imitation process, as shown by Faouzi Bensebaa (2021) or in observations of famous rivalries (e.g., Coca-Cola vs. Pepsi; Boeing vs. Airbus).

In contrast, the confrontation between traditional businesses and new actors is more likely to fall under the “asymmetric war” modelled by David Galula (1963, 2006).

On these grounds, the authors of the paper defend the idea that the SMEs and traditional businesses will be able to exist and assert themselves against their new competitors. In particular, we will point out that in today's interconnected digital and highly uncertain environment, the SMEs use “*effectual logics*” in their entrepreneurial actions: the procedural action strategies that are based on the principles of *complexity* (an open “self-eco-regulating” system, constantly interacting and readapting to/with its environment, as theorized by Le Moigne, Piaget, Morin) AND of *distributed cognition* (an action drawing its rationality from the immediate context but not from the motivations/intentions). These logics of action express the strategies of *organizational resilience* to different degrees, ranging from a maladjustment to the changing environment to an *antifragility*, the latter allowing the occurrence of a crisis to be transformed into an opportunity. That is, in the new digital environment and crises (section 1), the self-assertion of the SMEs passes, as we said before, through a strategic and organizational reconfiguration and, above all, through the *entrepreneurial action* in its *effectual logic* (section 2) which can lead to *resilience* and, moreover, to *antifragility* (section 3).

### **New business environment: digitalization and crises**

***Increasingly interconnected and “coopetitive” environment.*** We should note the emergence of *coopetition* as a strategic phenomenon that allows SMEs to maintain a competitive profile against the giants of the sector (Gnyawali, Park,

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euros). See: European Union. (2003). Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (text with EEA relevance) (notified under document number C(2003)1422). *Official Journal of the European Union*, L124, 46, 36–41.

2009). This phenomenon is an expression of the *shift* from atomistic competition to reticular competition (Gomes-Casseres, 1994; Hani, Dagnino, 2021). Competition fades and drowns in this reality of *interconnectedness* (Zaheer et al., 2010).

We can also observe the development of *coopetition* at all levels, both between global networks and within digital platforms (Hani, 2015; Peng, Bourne, 2009; Gnyawali, Madhavan, 2001).

***Towards a digitalized, turbulent and uncertain environment.*** The concomitant spread of digital transformations, on the one hand, and the COVID-19 pandemic, on the other hand, have drastically changed the lives of organizations, societies and countries, thus marking the end of an era (Tasselli, 2019) and modifying the boundaries of the firm (Afuah, 2003).

New trends of *platformization* are increasingly disrupting the business world, radically transforming the traditional entrepreneurship (Cenamor et al., 2019; Nambisan, 2017) and, therefore, the way the companies build their *competitive advantage* (Eisenmann et al., 2011).

Researchers unanimously emphasize the need to revise the existing enterprise theory, urging the development of new theories (Nambisan et al., 2019).

In order to adapt and move beyond these new constraints of the interconnected, turbulent and uncertain environment, we propose to consider business strategies from the perspective of *entrepreneurial action*.

## **Entrepreneurial action and effectual logic**

***Entrepreneurial action and the effectual logic as strategies for coping with new environment: context and distributed cognition.*** *Entrepreneurial action*<sup>3</sup> refers here to a proactive action under uncertainty, taken to exploit business opportunities to create value (cf. McMullen, Shepherd, 2006). According to Schmitt, *entrepreneurial action* is based on the symbiosis between the entrepreneur and the ecosystem<sup>4</sup> (Schmitt, 2015) and involves the co-creation of sense from the three components of the system, seen as an “open” system: (1) the entrepreneur or the enterprise, (2) the artifacts, and (3) the ecosystem. As Schmitt (2015) points out, “*sense is not in the action: it is introduced by the interpretation acts as the entrepreneurial situation evolves*”. The successful entrepreneur is the one who steps outside of his/her frame of reference (Schmitt, 2015. P. 132).

This view underlies an *effectual logic* rather than *causal logic* approach to business and life (Sarasvathy, Venkataraman, 2011; Silberzahn, 2014), the logic which also refers to the concepts of *distributed cognition* and of *situated action* (Gibson, 1979; Hutchins, 1991, 1996; Suchman, 1987 cited in Schmitt and Husson, 2017), explored here at the organizational level. To characterize this view initiated by Sarasvathy, the disciple of Herbert Simon, the authors list the following five principles (Sarasvathy and Venkataraman, 2011):

<sup>3</sup> Broadly, the application of theories of human action and rationality (philosophy, psychology and sociology of action) to the entrepreneurial decision-making and action within the processes of entrepreneurship and of organizations creation.

<sup>4</sup> Schmitt, C. (2017, May 2). Comprendre l’entrepreneuriat à l’aune de l’agir entrepreneurial. *The Conversation*. Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://theconversation.com/comprendre-lentrepreneuriat-a-laune-de-lagir-entrepreneurial-76958>

1. **Start with the available resources** (anti-planning position): which has been aptly demonstrated in recent years by one of the ACCOR hotels' counter actions against Air B'n'B. Based on their hotel's know-how as a resource (serving breakfasts, housekeeping), they bought the *Onefinestay platform* and offer customers these services in Paris. Similarly, to deal with Uber, G7 taxis have used their knowledge of the city and Parisian tourist attractions to offer transportation and travel advisory services.

2. **Acceptable loss**: determining what can be lost and limiting losses over time. This is how Nike buys the startup RTFKT (for Artifact), or how Adidas buys land for \$1.6 million in the online game *The Sandbox*.

3. **The "crazy patchwork"**: relying on the resources of stakeholders (customers, suppliers) and co-constructing with them... *Co-opetition* is a manifestation of this principal, although it involves a particular interaction of the psychosocial abilities of the entrepreneurs and managers, as suggested by Weick (1979).

4. **The "lemonade"**: taking advantage of unexpected events and transforming surprises into opportunities... Sarasvathy and Venkataraman (2011) give the following example: "*If I sell lemons and the price of lemons drops on the market, I adapt myself and I sell them as lemonade... at three times their price...*". This position is in line with that of Chantelle Lingerie Company (panties, wonderbras), which saw a significant drop in its sales after a hard blackout in March 2020 and switched during the crisis to manufacturing anti-COVID masks of exquisite quality. In fact, this feature is consistent with work on the particular psychology of the entrepreneur (Bullough, Renko, 2013; Bullough et al., 2014), which presents *resilience* as a positive quality and emotion.

5. **The "pilot in the plane"**: the idea is that the future can be better controlled by acting rather than by planning and by taking an intuitive approach when necessary. For example, the idea of ACCOR Hotels Group that sought to listen to the most digitally sensitive Generation Z and therefore created a *Shadow-Executive Committee*. This committee, made up of 20–30 year-olds, reviews all strategic reports the day before they are considered by the management committee and can make any criticisms or suggestions. The reaction of the French railway company (SNCF) to the new competition from carpooling and long-distance bus sharing is the same. They created the *low-cost TGV* (High Speed trains) on the busy Paris – Lyon – Marseille and Paris – Bordeaux lines, thus establishing a long-distance transport market in France and making breaks in competitive dynamics (Bensebaa, 2021). In the *low-cost train* segment, the SNCF is unassailable. In other cases, competitive dynamics is limited by the environment. Thus, one of the new challenges for SNCF (French rail transport) is to be open to competition with the emergence of new players, such as *Trenitalia* (Italy), on the Paris-Lyon route.

As we can see, the *Entrepreneurial action* approach focuses on action and reconciles the entrepreneurial intention and the context of *effectuation* (Schmitt, 2015).

**A perspective that combines entrepreneurial and communicative action: re-defining sense and co-constructing social reality.** The *entrepreneurial action* approach opens up more opportunities for *adapting* or even *pro-actively anticipating*, beyond simply taking into account the hegemonic stakeholder in the competitive environment (adversary, customer, etc.), but developing the effective action scenarios since any stakeholder can count on itself (Roubelat, Marchais-Roubelat, 2021).

Effectively, both ACCOR and the G7 have outlined countermeasures that fall squarely within the scope of *entrepreneurial action*, particularly through the creation of sense. As we said above, according to Schmitt (2015), the *entrepreneurial action* involves the creation of artefacts based on the symbiosis between the entrepreneur and the ecosystem, and the *co-creation of sense* among the three components of the system (the entrepreneur or the company, the artefacts, the ecosystem). The sense of the artefact “*is not in the action*” (intentional and planned), but is co-created by the entrepreneur-in-context: “*introduced by acts of interpretation as the entrepreneurial situation evolves*”. The *sense* is thus perpetually redefined, in this approach of an *open system* (complexity) and of a *distributed cognition (situated action)*.

Thus, for G7, it was about creating sense for its customers by promoting the know-how of its drivers and by offering visits and travel tips for Paris, that is to say, by redefining the services offered to stand out from its new competitor. ACCOR's response is even broader. To deal with Uber, the hotels group, like G7, questioned its service offering, buying a rival platform from Air B'n'B,<sup>5</sup> but offering its users breakfast at home and housekeeping, thus enhancing its powers to fight the competitor on the same ground.

ACCOR has also focused on diversifying its offer to reach young customers by offering “youth hostel” type services with the option of accommodation in six-bed hostels, particularly in *Formula 1 Hotels* for less than 30 euros per night. Finally, the management has created a *Shadow Executive Committee* made up of young Gen Zers, who are consulted on all strategic issues before management executive committees are convened to make decisions. The Shadow Executive Committee actually allows the group to keep being up to date in its ecosystem monitoring, particularly within the above new segment. And, according to Jeff Bezos, this system has enabled the hotels group to integrate the customer into the competitive analysis. To the founder and leader of Amazon: “*If you are competitive, you have to wait for a competitor to do something. Being customer-focused allows you to be more pioneering.*” This is truly a challenge of targeted *entrepreneurial action* for traditional companies such as ACCOR.

By doing so, these companies are using an *economic intelligence* approach (Paturel, Levet, 1999; Levet, 2008; Rouzeau, 2015). On this basis, by developing the analogy with military strategy, referring to the work of Galula, which was mentioned above, their *adaptive strategies (coping strategies)* would refer, as a former naval officer and doctor of management (Eric Rouzeau) pointed out to us, to proactive actions “by project”. These actions are aimed at modifying

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<sup>5</sup> Air B'n'B's strong market capitalization ruled out what would have been the most classic strategy for a traditional company like ACCOR: takeover of its dangerous competitor. On the contrary, Nike's recent takeover of startup RTFKT (by Artifact) is just in line with our comments. Before being surpassed, the well-known sports equipment manufacturer is taking over the latter virtual shoe maker (selling virtual shoes with their blockchain-registered ownership certificates for avatars of surfers and players looking for a digital identity). As noted by the CEO of Nike (Le Figaro, 2021, December 14), “*this acquisition aims to speed up the digital transformation of Nike*” and is part of an essential strategy of *entrepreneurial action* by traditional companies in the face of the digitalization of economies. A few weeks earlier, Adidas purchased land for \$1.6 million in the online game *The Sandbox*.

the ecosystem, and information plays a major role, as evidenced by modern asymmetrical confrontations.

These orientations contribute to the new modes of *creation of sense* in the company and deserve to be questioned in light of the *communicative action* of Jürgen Habermas (1987).

**Entrepreneurial action.** Schmitt's book (2015) *Entrepreneurial action* is not directly inspired by Habermas' works on *communicative action*, as the title might suggest. However, there are general provisions of epistemological influence and certain concepts, which we will present below.

In his book, Schmitt proposes his *theory of entrepreneurial action*. The author contrasts the *positivist* vision of *entrepreneurial action* with a *constructivist* vision (teleological and contextual pragmatism of action) from a phenomenological perspective (inter-subjective action based on *experienced reality*). The *positivist* framework encompasses here three approaches to *entrepreneurial action*<sup>6</sup> (Schmitt, 2015): 1. "Rational action" – *what* does the entrepreneur realize as an action, what kind of entrepreneurial economy and with what effects? 2. "Normative action" – *who* is the entrepreneur, what kind of social actor, what skills and norms determine his action? 3. "Cognitive action" – *how* is the entrepreneurial decision made at a cognitive level?

To this *positivist* vision, the author opposes and supports the *constructivist* and *phenomenological* vision of *entrepreneurial action*, i.e., an action *situated* in its social context and anchored in perceived reality (experiences) of the entrepreneurs. The author borrows from Habermas the notion of "*intercommunication*", defined here as the communication between the stakeholders that activates and transforms *entrepreneurial action*.

**Habermas and Communicative action.** The work of Habermas has several sources of inspirations: the *critical sociology* of systems (Frankfurt School), Piaget's<sup>7</sup> *constructivism* of social cognition and of social reality, *psychoanalytical* inter-subjectivism of the *structuralistic approach* as well as *linguistics* with its *formal pragmatics* and *communicational statements performativity*.<sup>8</sup>

In his philosophical and sociological works on social action, Habermas proposes to deconstruct the logic of transcendent universalism as transferred to social reality, in relation to the modes of its moving forward (in the acquisition of knowledge) and the goals of empirical "proof". He suggests abandoning the "ultimate justifications" in tempting to explain the social reality.<sup>9</sup> Technology and science are

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<sup>6</sup> Schmitt, C. (2017, May 2). Comprendre l'entrepreneuriat à l'aune de l'agir entrepreneurial. *The Conversation*. Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://theconversation.com/comprendre-entrepreneuriat-a-laune-de-lagir-entrepreneurial-76958>

<sup>7</sup> The cognitive psychologist and epistemologist Jean Piaget (1967, 1970) developed his work on the *constructivism* of human cognition and learning processes, which was further applied to social cognition, organizational cognition and society theories by H. Simon, J-L. Le Moigne, J. Habermas, E. Morin and others.

<sup>8</sup> The concept of *performativity* refers to the influencing power of communicational acts, when *communicating* becomes *performing* over the reality, transforming this latter. Performativity is an interdisciplinary concept associated with linguistics and also with the psychology of influence and of communication.

<sup>9</sup> Pesqueux, Y. (2015). J. Habermas et l'«Agir communicationnel». *HAL*. halshs-01242386. Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01242386>

also a matter of *ideology* but not of transcendent universalism. Thus, he proposes instead to find the *norms* of inter-subjective *morality* (of what would be universally recognized as *Just for everyone*), with these morality norms being socially constructed within a *discussion* (communication) in the *public space*. It is the communication that ‘acts on’ social reality and thus transforms it: the *Communicative action*, which for Mattelart and Mattelart (2004) would be like the *dialogue* principle of the ancient philosophers. This dialogic approach to morality is also based on the *formal pragmatics* works on the *performativity function* of communication.

Then the *Communicative action* is seen as “the activation of possible futures” (Piaget). Social action, for being moral (or *Just*), should be constructed through the dialogic communication of inter-subjectivities in a public space. Therefore, for Habermas, *communication* should not impose a universal *reason* but be critical of it and take place in a situation of free speech and rejected “strategic” behaviors.

***Entrepreneurial action and Communicative action: intersection points.***

Here we can note several common markers, points of intersection of two conceptualizations of action: 1) The *constructivist* and *phenomenological vision* of social reality based on the reality experienced by the actor; 2) The principle of *acting communication* which makes the collective action possible; 3) Schmitt imprints the concept of *Intercommunication*, applying it to the entrepreneurial situation, but without its *critical dimension* in relation to the structural factors: here, it is rather the *intercommunication* of stakeholders (but not a public or deliberative discussion of the society moral norms). The public space is replaced by a space of dialogue between the stakeholders.

In his theorizing of entrepreneurship, Julien (2005) transposes the work of Habermas as a theoretical framework suitable for studying *entrepreneurial action* in a particular situation: where a *highly uncertain and ambiguous context* pushes the actors towards *strong procedural and social rationality* (as opposed to *substantial rationality* of acquired knowledge).

Thus, there are epistemological, methodological and teleological links between the *entrepreneurial action* and the *communicative action*. Both theories also highlight the systemic and contextual complexity of social action, where *communication* is an integral part of this latter. However, as seen above, it is potentially possible to deepen furthermore the theorizing of *Entrepreneurial action* in light of Habermas’ philosophy and sociology of *Communicative action*. On the one hand, we can mobilize the *critical* and *moral* dimensions present in Habermas’ work: how can *entrepreneurial action* impact (*perform on*) the societal structural system and how can it take into account the morality of *Just*? Can we mobilize here the emerging “alternative” entrepreneurial logics, the *Alter-entrepreneurship*? On the other hand, following Schmitt’s call (2015), we can further question the relationships between the *entrepreneurial action* and the *communication* as its key defining component. As shown in a recent paper (Velmuradova et al., 2022), it would be relevant to further explore the interdisciplinary links between the fields of *entrepreneurship* research in the management sciences and *organizational communication* research in communication sciences (in particular, approaches of *organizing communication* and *instituting communication*).



## Towards and beyond organizational resilience

**Putting entrepreneurial action into practice to cope with crises and uncertainty.** Thinking about the crisis naturally leads to thinking about *resilience*, even at the organizational level. In its psychological definition, *resilience* is “a biological, psychoaffective, social and cultural process that allows a new development after a psychic trauma” (Cyrulnik, 2012. P. 8). This involves “successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences” (VandenBos, 2015). More broadly, the *resilience* of individuals and groups is both an *innate capacity* and a *learned-shared skill* that can be turned into an asset (Abi-Hashem, 2020). Hence, it is dynamic capacity (Yates et al., 2015). At the organizational level, the *resilience* represents the adaptive capabilities that enable an organisation to survive and sustain during turbulent times (Yilmaz Borekci et al., 2015). Lengnick-Hall et al. (2011) thus define *organizational resilience* as the ability of a company to absorb, respond to, and also take advantage of events that have occurred following environmental changes. Bégin and Chabaud (2010) define it as the ability of a company to deal with unforeseen circumstances.

These artefacts relate to *entrepreneurial and organizational resilience*, some definitions of which are given below (Table 1).

Table 1

Definitions of entrepreneurial and organizational resilience

Definition of resilience	Authors	Resilience analysis units retained
“Ability to develop an appropriate strategy for organizations to survive and thrive in a competitive environment”	Carmeli, Markman, 2011	To give oneself the means to achieve the desired objectives despite the constraints of the environment
“A firm’s ability to effectively absorb, develop situation-specific responses to, and ultimately engage in transformative activities to capitalize on disruptive surprises that potentially threaten organization survival”	Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011. P. 244	To give oneself the means to adapt to a virulent environment to achieve the set goals
“Organizational resilience represents the qualities and adaptive capacities that allow an organization to survive and sustain itself during the periods of turbulence”	Yilmaz-Borekci et al., 2015. P. 6839	To give oneself the means to adapt to a virulent environment to achieve the set goals
“Organization’s ability to absorb, strain and preserve or improve functioning despite the presence of adversity”	Khan et al., 2018. P. 509	To give oneself the means to adapt to a virulent environment to achieve the set goals
“The ability of an organization to maintain or regain a state of dynamic stability that allows it to continue its operations during and after a major incident or in the presence of a continuous stress”	Mitsakis, 2020	To give oneself the means to achieve the set goals by adapting to environmental disturbances
“The ability to overcome an obvious danger”	Hillmann, Guenther, 2020	To give oneself the means to withstand a virulent environment to achieve the set goals

To go beyond these approaches of management sciences, it is useful to be open to engineering sciences’ view. Here, we consider the *resilience* (for example, for a nuclear energy device) in terms of industrial safety. If we follow Reason’s argument (1990), who invites us to keep in mind the human safety beyond the notion of error, we can reread the incidents at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant: in particular, how, by analyzing them *a posteriori*, other operators became more *resilient*. We know that the operators panicked a little because of the rise in temperature in

the reactor, which further exacerbated the crisis. In order to remedy such possible situations and enhance industrial safety, the French electric operator (EDF) modified its *processes* by inviting its inspectors to work as a team and in “communities of practice”, thus betting that the team will manage a major accident better than individuals who would scrutinize and manage each reactor at a time.

This approach refers to Le Moigne’s *open systems theory* (1977) and Morin’s *complexity* paradigm (2015), for whom, only complexity can deal with complexity.<sup>10</sup> While encouraging the collective management groups, EDF recommends to its agents to demonstrate *serendipity* (Hollnagel, 2013, 2014; Sundström, Hollnagel, 2011). In other situations, they may be faced with the need to look for new opportunities, which motivates us to enrich the usual approach to *resilience* with the concept of *anti-fragility*.

**From resilience to anti-fragility.** As shown in Table 2 (adapted from Frimousse, Gaillard, 2021. P. 272), *fragility* reflects the situation of the company (or individual) suffering from the crisis. *Resilience* characterizes a person who responds to the crisis and can even come out of it stronger. But we can distinguish several degrees of *resilience* (as we showed in our previous examples):

– **zero resilience:** no capacity is developed. Therefore, the company remains *fragile*;

– **partial resilience:** the resilience that groups one out of two capacities. It is focused either on the achievement of the objectives, or on the mobilization of the resources, or on the management of the context. Thus, during the COVID-19 crisis, faced with the drop in its sales of lingerie, Chantelle Group refocused its production towards the manufacture of masks;

– **major resilience:** The resilience that combines two out of three capacities. It is focused either on the capacity to manage the context and to achieve the objectives, or on the capacity to manage the context and to mobilize the means, or on the capacity to mobilize the means and to achieve the objectives. This is in line with the policy of the G7 taxi group, using some of the experience of drivers to retaliate against Uber;

– **total resilience:** The resilience that combines all the capacities: the capacity to achieve the fixed objectives, the capacity to mobilize the available means and the capacity to manage the crisis context. We see it in ACCOR Hotels Group’s approach to dealing with Air B’n’B.

The work of Frimousse and Gaillard (2021) extends on that of Hollnagel (2013, 2014) and is of interest since it considers that beyond the *fragility* and the different levels of *resilience*, there would be another position: *anti-fragility* in which the company (or the individual) seeks crisis to assert itself. Indeed, developed by Taleb (2013), the concept of *anti-fragility* is the “opposite of fragility” and refers to organisms that benefit from crises and come out from them even stronger. *Anti-fragility* is fragility with a negative sign in front of it, which conveys robustness, strength, and unbreakability (Taleb, 2013. P. 32).

<sup>10</sup> Le Moigne’s work is related to Piaget’s *constructionist* theories of cognitive learning (Le Moigne, 1977), H. Simon’s theories of organizational cognition and E. Morin’s epistemology of *complexity* (Morin, 2015). Indeed, Morin and Le Moigne consider an organization as an open system or as a “self-eco-regulatory system” (referring to the psychological theories of self-regulation and self-determination combined with the systemic constructivist approach).

Table 2

**Anti-fragility and resilience  
(adapted from: Frimousse, Gaillard, 2021. P. 272)**

	<b>(1) Fragile</b>	<b>(2) Resilient</b>	<b>(3) Anti-fragile</b>
<b>Definition</b>	Encountering the crisis implies a weakening	Encountering the crisis implies enduring	Encountering the crisis implies a strengthening
<b>Decision making</b>	Classic model	Classic model	Complexity model
<b>Relation to the environment</b>	Strong dependence	Dependence	Dependence
<b>Environment of predilection</b>	Stable and predictable	Risky	Chaotic (uncertain)
<b>Post-crises state</b>	Initial in the best case, but with consequences	Initial with individual learning	Reinforced with learning and capitalization on the crisis

In support of this, we can cite the case of Lebanese entrepreneurs who left for Iraq after the Gulf War, where the economy was in chaos. They knew that by being the first on site, they would find business opportunities to contribute to the reconstruction. We can imagine, as Dzaka-Kikouta and Levy-Tadjine (2016) show with regard to Lebanese entrepreneurs in Africa, that this *anti-fragility* involves a much more intuitive practice, “with flair”, than the practices of *fragile* companies. In the cases of *partial* or *total resilience*, the actors compromise between *planning* and *effectuation* logic, recognizing that the art of forecasting is difficult because it involves risk reduction while we live in a world of uncertainties that are difficult to enumerate and define.

**Conclusion**

Times of crisis that stress enterprises and organisations also provide opportunities for those who are able to take advantage of them. While some actors already have the resources and skills to match the new conditions, others are forced to find ways to cope with the changes. Thus, the COVID-19 crisis creates a favourable situation for digital companies which can only continue to play in their playground, while SMEs and traditional businesses find themselves on the wrong side in this “*asymmetric war*” (Galula, 2006) intensified by the crisis.

In this study, *entrepreneurial and organizational resilience* (Carmeli, Markman, 2011) are used to present the efforts made by traditional businesses to integrate into the competitive environment in the digital age. By adopting entrepreneurial attitudes and relying on their competitive differentiation skills, they seek to bridge the gap and create a new balance. In their *entrepreneurial action* practices linked to *communicative action*, in the face of the crisis, the *effectual* logic operates (Sarasvathy, Venkataraman, 2011). We see some companies returning to their know-how (e.g., ACCOR, G7); or others trying to limit losses by buying digital start-ups (e.g., Nike) or acquiring virtual goods (e.g., Adidas); or those cooperating to resist the big ones; or those reacting opportunistically to take advantage of the crisis (e.g., Chantelle); or, finally, those adapting their activities either by causing the competitive rupture themselves (e.g., SNCF) or by creating teams up to date.

All these forms of *entrepreneurial action* present different ways of managing the crisis context and building *resilience* at different levels. *Partial resilience*, *major resilience* or *total resilience* are defined depending on the scale of the decisions made in the context of the crisis. However, despite the need to cope with the increased unpredictability of today’s world, the concept of *resilience* as the cor-

nerstone of reflections on crises so far, would probably not be sufficient to describe the position of certain actors defined as “*anti-fragile*” (Frimousse, Gaillard, 2021). As described above, the concept of *anti-fragility* developed by Taleb (2013) is the “opposite of fragility” and refers to organisms that benefit from crises and come out from them even stronger. Within this framework, *resilience* lies between the two aforementioned extremes, encompassing the actors who have survived the crisis and who have managed to adapt to new conditions.

Hence paradoxically, it seems that the digital age is updating the psychological approaches, where it comes to the analysis of management and competitive behavior of organizations. In our study, we analyzed the possible ways in which SMEs and traditional businesses can cope with their new environment: the *entrepreneurial action* and the *communicative action* of the latter, their possible *co-competitive* involvement (Nalebuff, Brandenburger, 1996; Dagnino, 2007; Hani, 2015; Hani, Dagnino, 2021) and the *redefinition of sense* are thus repositioned and discussed in light of the theories of *resilience* and *anti-fragility*. In our lines, we have highlighted how the digitization of economies and the COVID-19 crisis are disrupting the competitive dynamics. However, all the actors in place (even SMEs) can cope with this by developing *adaptive strategies* (*coping strategies*) and, furthermore, *pro-active* strategies based on *entrepreneurial action* and *resilience*.

Following our review of these concepts, we have aspirations to model the links between *entrepreneurial action* and forms of *resilience* and *antifragility*. In addition, a cross typology of entrepreneur profiles would be potentially relevant.

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## Переосмысление и повышение резильентности как стратегии выживания для традиционных предприятий в новой цифровой и кризисной среде

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**Аннотация.** Кризис COVID-19, резко увеличивший долю удаленной работы и электронной коммерции в новой цифровой реальности, во многом принес выгоду доминирующим транснациональным высокотехнологичным компаниям (Google, Apple, Amazon и др.) и другим цифровым платформам и сервисам. В сложившихся условиях обычные малые и средние предприятия и традиционный бизнес вынуждены искать новые адаптивные стратегии. Некоторые исследователи утверждают, что всему традиционному бизнесу необходимо повышать предпринимательскую и организационную резильентность. И именно в этом направлении, в частности, психологическая наука может быть очень полезна для анализа новых форм экономической конкуренции. Основываясь на этом, авторы статьи защищают идею о том, что малые, средние и традиционные предприятия смогут не только существовать, но и по-новому заявить о себе на фоне «цифровых» конкурентов. В этой новой взаимосвязанной, турбулентной и неопределенной среде такое самоутверждение требует как стратегической и организационной реконфигурации, так и, прежде всего, специально организованных в соответствии с логикой принятия решений предпринимательских действий, направленных на повышение резильентности и, более того, антихрупкости.

**Ключевые слова:** цифровая среда, предпринимательство, предпринимательское действие, логика принятия решений, коммуникативное действие, резильентность, антихрупкость

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