

Masaryk University  
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**Towards organizational resilience: Development  
of skills for coping with the unexpected**

Habilitation Thesis

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## **Abstract**

A sensemaking perspective is taken to developing a model of resilient action in situations where established rules or behavioral routines are either not available or misleading. The model suggests that an 'action space' must be created by stabilizing the action system and expanding options for action. The model is based on qualitative research in the Austrian military on cases of resilient field action. It is proposed that different types of drill combined with the acquisition of background knowledge are essential for organizational resilience, management of unexpected situations, and the explanation of success, leading to controlled reproducibility of typical problem solutions. As an antecedent for installing the action space, exaptation of drilled procedures is explored, which is the transfer of procedures to serve novel requirements, leading to properties that contribute to recovery from shock in critical situations through innovation. For this, the impacts of different communication styles and cultural awareness are described. In conclusion, strictly applying rules does not lead to resilient action in unknown or unexpected situations. A corrective understanding and reflective use of rules and routines are causally related to the ability to deal with surprise, thus supporting organizations' resilience and long-term success.

## **Keywords**

Organizational resilience, coping with the unexpected, skills development, expertise, military