



# Leveraging intersections in management

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## 1 Introduction

The legitimacy of management scholars in the institutional and business communities increasingly rests on their ability to create economic and social value by finding solutions and offering effective guidance stemming from sound theory and evidence-based research (Currie et al., 2016; Tihanyi, 2020).

In addressing the global and multifaceted challenges confronting businesses and society, contemporary research must seamlessly integrate technical and social dimensions. Furthermore, it needs multiple approaches that transcend traditional boundaries, such as disciplines, methods, levels of analysis and so on. This combination of diverse approaches enhances our understanding and fosters innovative solutions to puzzling global issues (Eisenhardt et al., 2016; George et al., 2016). This milieu is particularly evident in light of the unprecedented economic, societal, health, and environmental challenges that firms and governments worldwide are currently grappling with, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the numerous conflicts

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afflicting the globe (Dagnino et al., 2021; Muzio & Doh, 2021; Ketchen & Craighead, 2020). UN Agenda 2030 echoes such concerns by presenting significant challenges that can only be achieved through the engagement of scholars and “actors with various perspectives, roles, and base of legitimacy” (George et al., 2016, p. 1885). Such challenges are also clearly traceable in the *Next Generation EU program*. As Butera (2022, p. 23, our translation) observed, the specific national plans linked to Next Generation EU are “not just a multilevel governance system for financing investments and reforms but a lever to activate cohesion and innovation between the public and private sectors.” Arguably, these cohesion plans necessitate the engagement of various firms, organizations, and stakeholders, as well as the integration of multiple initiatives that connect firm resilience with both ecological and digital transitions.

The ability of scholars, firm consultants, and business practitioners to provide the flexible and timely responses required by modern firms forms the essence of their *raison d'être* (Knights & Willmott, 1997). Nevertheless, technological, demand, supply, and institutional uncertainties in increasingly global and digital markets have become prominent. Such circumstances have rendered resource orchestration and firms' ability to face adversity and achieve competitive positions increasingly multifaceted (Hoskisson et al., 1999; Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Kumaraswamy et al., 2018). Furthermore, the concept of organizational performance itself is evolving into a multidimensional one (Aguilera et al., 2024; Kotlar et al., 2018; Zollo et al., 2018), extending beyond economic and technical dimensions to embrace a more extensive set of domains, such as sustainability (Alosi et al., 2023; Minà & Michelini, 2024) and societal impact (see, for example, francescoeconomy.org, 2020).

Perhaps more than ever, management scholars are thus tasked with developing frameworks and theories capable of effectively navigating various tensions in complex organizational dynamics. Therefore, echoing Guatri's (1988) intuition at the foundation of the Italian school of management, in this piece we aim to reflect on the value of leveraging *intersections* in management research. We define such practice as the activity of developing research contributions that may derive from adopting different disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological perspectives, as well as by considering different levels of analysis (Eisenhardt et al., 2016; George et al., 2016). We believe that adopting such an approach is paramount to shed light on the multifaceted phenomena that underlie firm performance and societal advancement. Furthermore, given the phenomenological nature of the challenges society is facing, scholars are pressured with the fundamental need to anchor their scholarly inquiry to aspects of interest for the world of practice and policymaking (König et al., 2013).

We have organized this essay to elucidate the numerous opportunities connected with intersections among disciplines, theories, levels of analysis, and methodological approaches. Emphasizing the importance of leveraging these intersections, we discuss their benefits by exploring – as an illustrative case – the potential of investigating organizational resilience across the aforementioned domains – an empirical phenomenon that is both timely and critical given the aforementioned grand challenges that society and business are facing. We also select this theme because extant literature agrees that organizational resilience is a multifaceted construct. On the one hand, “it may be defined differently in the context of individuals, families, organizations, societies, and cultures” (Southwick et al., 2014, p. 1). On the other hand,

developing organizational resilience requires collaborative efforts among multiple actors, drawing upon their diverse disciplinary backgrounds to integrate models and data effectively to manage uncertainty (Berke et al., 2021). This essay incidentally contributes to resilience research by adopting a holistic perspective and a systemic approach, examining the broader landscape rather than concentrating solely on single components.

## 2 Leveraging intersections among disciplinary backgrounds

Over time, research has shown the emergence of increasing diversity, fragmentation, and specialization, resulting in the development of various disciplinary backgrounds. Consequently, scientific progress has become entrusted to distinct and independent disciplines, each typically grounded in specific ontological and epistemological foundations, often hindering easy connections with knowledge developed in other disciplines (Kuhn, 2012).

Additionally, within the management research field, we observe multiple disciplines such as strategy, supply chain, international business, organizational behavior, human resources, and so on (Mathieu & Chen, 2011; Knights & Willmott, 1997). This circumstance becomes apparent through the increasing specialization of journals, divisions and interest groups in management scholar associations, and management conferences, as well as in teaching through the growing subject specialization in both graduate and post-graduate degrees (Molina-Azorín et al., 2020; van Baalen & Karsten, 2012).

Adhering to a specific disciplinary background yields advantages from the opportunities associated with in-depth exploration of specific themes. Additionally, the review process in top journals often tends to prefer papers that largely adhere to disciplinary standards and remain within disciplinary boundaries (Rafols et al., 2012). However, it also gives rise to drawbacks linked to heightened research segmentation and fragmentation (Durand et al., 2017). The drawbacks are amplified by the fact that, in real business practice, management addresses complex and integrated issues that often require the capacity to bridge different perspectives to reach effective solutions (Hitt et al., 2007; Molina-Azorín et al., 2020; Pettigrew & Starkey, 2016; Siedlok & Hibbert, 2014).

Valuable and relevant management research calls for the simultaneous consideration of the different disciplinary traditions within which specific issues have been studied. Zahra and Newey (2009) suggest that the interpretation of business phenomena requires a careful combination of disciplinary backgrounds. Indeed, such combinations might provide a provocative context that emphasizes the advantages and disadvantages related to a specific discipline whilst boosting its potential explanatory power by clarifying and outspreading it. Along these lines, Eisenhardt and colleagues (2016) underline that addressing grand challenges requires solutions that harness multiple variables, uncertain timing and diverse interdisciplinary pathways. We echo Popper (1963, p. 88) affirming that grand challenges “may cut right across the borders of any subject matter or discipline.”

Arguably, leveraging disciplinary intersections is not easy, it poses identity risks for scholars and the management research discipline as a whole, and it may lead to problematic paradigm convergence, thus requiring caution in cross-border theorizing (Zahra & Newey, 2009; Markóczy & Deeds, 2009). Leveraging the intersections between different disciplinary backgrounds is frequently discounted, and assessed with prejudice and suspicion (Bruce et al., 2004; Fini et al., 2023; Weingart, 2000). Currie et al. (2016) observe that leveraging intersections among disciplines is challenging due to the “epistemic walls” inherent in disciplinary traditions, which hinder collaborations among scholars from different disciplines. Adjustments are necessary to ensure consistency in language and clarify that scholars are hindered in collaborating across disciplines, not the collaborations themselves. While we acknowledge the risk of other disciplines absorbing ideas and content from management (Currie et al., 2016), studies that “construct bridges that link apparently disparate concepts together in these zones” (Gioia & Pitre, 1990) may significantly contribute to filling relevant gaps in the management field.

Zahra and Newey (2009) offer a helpful framework with three primary approaches to develop interdisciplinary research. The first approach involves *borrowing and replicating* research findings from diverse fields within management studies. For example, the word “resilience” is rooted in physics to identify the ability of a material to spring back into shape, or in other words, the materials’ elasticity and successively used in other disciplines (Hillmann, 2021). In the ecology literature, evoking studies in physics, Holling (1973) considers resilience as a “measure of the persistence of systems and of their ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain the same relationships between populations or state variables” (Holling, 1973: 14). Similarly, Rapoport (1989) discusses the relationship between constancy and change in organizational systems and calls attention to the resilience of the management system.

The second approach regards *borrowing and extending* to intersect disciplinary backgrounds (Zahra & Newey, 2009). In this regard, Hartmann et al. (2022) offer a good example; they provide a comprehensive literature review illustrating how concepts from psychology have contributed to the development of organizational resilience theory. By examining the connections between entrepreneurship and psychology, authors delve into the potential adverse aspects of resilience.

Lastly, effective integration among disciplinary traditions has the potential to fundamentally *transform the core*, namely, alter some principles of the original discipline (Zahra & Newey, 2009). This occurs when concepts borrowed from one discipline expand upon existing theories and reshape the principles of related fields and disciplines (Zahra & Newey, 2009). For example, Manfield and Newey (2018) move from organizational theory on resilience to evaluating various resilience responses within an entrepreneurial context. In this integration, the authors utilize the concept of an entrepreneurship portfolio within the resilience framework. Subsequently, Manfield and Newey (2018) shift the notion of resilience capability from a single capability to a portfolio of capabilities.

### 3 Leveraging intersections among theories

The multifaceted nature of firm phenomena suggests that frequently “two theories can speak to the same phenomenon but from different perspectives (therefore addressing the same dependent variable, but adopting different explanatory variables)” (Mayer & Sparrowe, 2013, p. 917). Accordingly, Mayer and Sparrowe (2013) argue that new insights within the management domain may emerge from the adoption of a combination of theories (see also Nadkarni et al., 2018). At the same time, the validity of management studies is being questioned, and some reflect on the fact that management theorizing might have reached crisis, exemplified by the increasing presence of tautological hypotheses “written to conceal rather than reveal” (Tourish, 2019, p. 174). Along with the measurement complexities that are typical of our field, such risk of tautology can lead to difficulties in observing clear and robust causality (Tourish, 2019).

In this section, we reflect on some of the challenges of theorizing in management. While broad and inclusive, management studies encompasses a variety of sub-disciplines, each with its own epistemological and ontological traditions. In turn, this leads to the parcelizing into isolated sub-conversations, that often speak “their own language” and conduct their own debate with minimal worry on breaking their own silos and establishing the basis to cumulate their scientific advances with those from other conversations. One of the most evident consequences of this is the use of different labels for the same concept and this creates confusion in theory development. For example, as Brown and colleagues (2006, p. 101) notice, for some scholars the concept that represents “Who are we as an organization?” is to be labelled as “collective identity” (Pratt, 2003), for others as “organizational identity” (Gioia et al., 2000), for others again as “corporate personality” (Markwick & Fill, 1997). Another example: for some scholars, firms characterized by “early internationalization” are to be labelled as “international new ventures (INVs)” (Oviatt & McDougall, 1994, p. 49), for others as “born globals” (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004, p. 124). Similarly, exploring resilience literature, we note that scholars often use different terms to refer to the same concept or closely related concepts. Munoz and colleagues (2022, p. 185) dissect this variation and assert that “the umbrella concept of resilience is multifaceted and should include the distinct outcomes of resilience, robustness, and antifragility.” Such ‘re-labelling’ practice worryingly limits the cumulability of science, thus confusing scholars and practitioners alike on how to make sense of the different contributions and related applicability. An additional consequence of the proliferation of labels for the same or similar concepts is the exacerbation of the common stereotype of scholars “reinventing the wheel.” At the origins of this risk is “the anxiety of influence” (Tourish, 2020, p. 99) and a tendency to prioritize theory contributions and new theory development over a critical re-examination, and eventual integration, of the existing theories (see Drnevich et al., 2020). Often, instead, rigorous examination and potential refinement of existing theoretical frameworks may yield greater scholarly impact than the constant introduction of novel constructs and frameworks. We thus recognize the risks of compartmentalization within management scholarship, where researchers often concentrate their efforts on distinct subfields.

While specialization is undoubtedly essential for rigorous exploration, we draw attention to the potential benefits that may derive from the cautious adoption of a more holistic approach. Following in-depth examinations of specific areas, scholars should re-emerge and engage with the broader theoretical landscape. As underscored previously, this requires interdisciplinary communication and collaboration. By triangulating insights from diverse perspectives and integrating theoretical frameworks, we can achieve a more comprehensive and robust understanding of discovered truths on managerial phenomena (Pratt et al., 2020). In this regard, Williams et al. (2017) offer an exceptional example of the benefits of re-emerging and engaging with literature within the broader theoretical landscape. They integrate crisis management and resilience research to shed light on common theoretical mechanisms, including time, complexity, and mindfulness.

The compartmentalized approach often seen in management research mirrors recent observations in medicine. Just as medical practitioners have moved away from treating individual organs in isolation, recognizing the interconnectedness of the human body (Barabási et al., 2011), a similar shift is needed in our field. This compartmentalization is evident in the tendency to concentrate on specific organizational functions or theoretical frameworks, neglecting the broader organizational system and the interplay between its various elements. This siloed approach can hinder our ability to fully comprehend complex organizational phenomena. Much like treating a single organ without considering the entire body can lead to suboptimal outcomes for the patient, focusing on isolated aspects of an organization risks overlooking critical interdependencies and interactions that are essential for effective organizational functioning.

To address this set of limitations, we advocate for a more holistic approach to management research, drawing inspiration from the interconnectedness of the human body. This approach involves integrating insights from diverse theoretical frameworks and considering the broader organizational context. By adopting a holistic perspective, we can gain a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of management phenomena. This approach aligns with the synergistic nature of effective business operations, where various organizational functions work together in an integrated system. *But when is theory integration a smart move?* Shaw et al. (2018) identify at least three cases/motivations: when scholars need (1) to address unanswered puzzles in management literature; (2) to explain recurring patterns of findings (“stylized facts”) in the literature; (3) to offer fresh perspectives on existing issues or phenomena. We will discuss the “better” or “best” characteristics of these practices in the section where we present the papers included in this special issue.

#### 4 Leveraging intersections among levels of analysis

Management scholars identify distinct levels of analysis based on the purposes pursued through their investigations (Eckardt et al., 2021; Mathieu & Chen, 2011; Molina-Azorín et al., 2020; Rousseau, 2011). The existence of a plurality of perspectives and diversity among observers leads to the reflection that a firm is simultaneously a supersystem and a subsystem (McKelvey, 1997; Stacey, 1995). Building

on complex system theory (Kontopoulos, 1993; Lewin, 1999; McKelvey, 1997; von Bertalanffy, 1968), firms correspond to complex multilevel organizations (or “tangled composite structures”). On the one hand, firm dynamics are influenced by the constraints and conditions of higher-order dynamics to which a firm belongs (Stacey, 1995). On the other hand, a firm influences and sometimes imposes constraints on the dynamics of its parts. This peculiarity originates from the fact that complex systems are not objectively identified and delimited; similarly, there are no objective hierarchical relationships among systems, subsystems, and supersystems (McKelvey, 1997). The boundaries and hierarchical relationships are established by the observers of the reality under study, based on their perception contextualized in time and space (Levanti, 2018). Accordingly, the relationships and processes that occur at each level are semi-autonomous, as they differ partially from what happens at lower levels, ensuring that each level has specific properties and a certain degree of autonomy (Rousseau, 2011). Simultaneously, the levels co-evolve with one another driven by cross-level effects arising from interactions and reciprocal influences of the dynamics occurring in both higher and lower levels while also adapting to stimuli from the external environment (Levanti, 2018; Lewin & Volberda, 1999). The partial autonomy and coevolution of distinct levels mean that an appropriate understanding of firms, and the activities and processes they achieve, entails the simultaneous consideration of each level involved, the interactions among the different levels, as well as between them and the environment (Kozlowski et al., 2013).

In parallel to the advantages of adopting a multilevel approach, extant literature identifies two primary risks. The first is termed the *ecological fallacy*, which concerns the logical error that occurs when events at a higher level are immediately attributed to a lower level without providing a logical explanation for the attribution process or acknowledging its partiality (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000; Hox et al., 2017). The second risk – operating in the opposite direction of the former – is known as the *atomistic fallacy*, which involves attributing events happening at a low level directly to a higher level of analysis (Ostroff, 1993; Hox et al., 2017). The benefits and pitfalls of multilevel studies in management prompt us to evoke Felin and Foss’ alarm (2006, p. 254), questioning whether “we always need to invoke micro-level explanatory mechanisms when trying to explain some macro-level phenomena” and to define the circumstances under which such multilevel theorizing is fruitful.

At this point, we can identify several pivotal levels in management research. The *micro-foundations* of management usually shed light on how people make judgments and decisions in organizations and leverage findings in fields such as psychology, HR, and micro-OB. Though management studies are often focused on the firm, the latter are not impersonal units, and decision-making processes are not linear (Barney & Felin, 2013). Scholars should keep in mind, however, that decision-making processes are not additive. Attention should be paid to the processes underlying the aggregation of individual contributions to overall decisions, as well as to the role of interaction, unintended consequences, and emergent phenomena (Barney & Felin, 2013). Examples of studies on the micro-foundations of organizational resilience acknowledge resilience as a mindset rather than a personal trait (Smith et al., 2022). Sajko et al. (2021) contend that CEO greed may affect organizational resilience by excessively prioritizing current earnings. Patel and Cooper (2014) suggest that nar-

cissistic CEOs are less inclined to safeguard against potential shocks, while Buyl and colleagues (2019) extend the discourse to examine the interaction between narcissistic CEOs and corporate governance mechanisms.

At the *interpersonal and intra-organizational levels*, certain studies concentrate on individual dynamics that inform decision-making processes. For example, Raetz et al. (2021) reported a series of studies investigating how resilience originates within teams, involving top management teams (Carmeli et al., 2013), entrepreneurial teams (Schippers et al., 2019), project teams (Li et al., 2021), and work teams (Stoverink et al., 2020).

At a higher level of analysis, we recognize the importance of considering *interfirm aggregations* (such as global supply chains, strategic networks, business ecosystems, business groups, and alliances). Since interfirm aggregations allow firms to access supplementary and complementary resources, it is of paramount importance to understand how coordination and governance mechanisms affect the extent to which firms may benefit from the participation to interfirm aggregations (Dagnino et al., 2015, 2016). Research may exhibit inconsistencies without a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes arising from such aggregations (Moliterno & Mahoney, 2011). Therefore, it becomes imperative to appreciate the genesis and evolution of their underlying multilevel architectures and their subsequent effects on firm processes and performance (Ahuja et al., 2012). For example, scholars explored the firms' resilience by considering the role of business networks (Xie et al., 2022), entrepreneurial ecosystem (Khurana et al., 2022), and so on.

Finally, we observe that firms interact with numerous dimensions of *external contexts*, each of which poses limits and offers opportunities for firm actions (McGahan, 2019). In parallel, firm actions directly or indirectly affect many spheres of external environments. For instance, numerous studies highlight the role of COVID-19 as a health crisis that has precipitated an economic downturn and has shaped the resilience capacity of businesses (Rai et al., 2021). Given the relevance of such influences, management research also addresses the reciprocal relationships between firms and external contexts (such as society, institutions, technology, demography, economy, and natural and cultural resources), also in order to inform public policy about current interactive behavioral, socioeconomic, and technological tendencies and, eventually, orient public decisions.

After recognizing the importance of multilevel analysis, it is crucial to highlight the implementation of such analyses (Dansereau et al., 1999; Hitt et al., 2007) and the various types of multilevel models that elucidate the relationships among distinct constructs (Klein and Kozlowski, 2000; Kozlowsky and Klein, 2000). Drawing upon Klein and Kozlowski (2000), various multilevel models can be identified: (a) cross-level direct model; (b) cross-level moderator model; (c) cross-level frog-pond model. In the *cross-level direct model*, an independent variable influences the dependent variable at a lower level of analysis (top-down model). For example, Islam and Fatema (2023) explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (independent variable) on a firm's survival (dependent variable). Although less common in the literature, it is also possible for an independent variable to influence the dependent variable at a higher level of analysis (bottom-up model). For instance, Li et al. (2021) illustrate in their model the pivotal role of focal firms' actions in mitigating disruptions within the sup-



ply chain network. They demonstrate how these actions alter node-level influencing factors, subsequently affecting risk assessment and recovery mechanisms. The *cross-level moderator model* pertains to the possibility that two variables at different levels of analysis interact to influence the dependent variable at a lower level of analysis. For instance, Li et al. (2022) explored the interaction between supply chain coordination and a firm's market acuity impacting the firm's resilience. Finally, the *cross-level frog-pond model* considers the role of individual group members prevailing within a group on individual-level outcomes. A clear example can be found in the multi-level framework on resilience proposed by Raetze et al. (2021). The authors highlight that team-level antecedents—such as team characteristics, team resources and processes, and leadership behavior—impact team-level resilience, which encompasses individual capacities, sets of resources, and processes. This team-level resilience, in turn, influences individual-level resilience, including team capacity and beliefs. Also, there is an interaction between team-level resilience and individual-level resilience.

In conclusion, we recognize the importance of multilevel studies that shed light on the transfer of knowledge and resources across different levels, the negotiations within firms, interactions among firms and other actors, and the reciprocal influence of opportunities and constraints stemming from these diverse levels (Brass et al., 2004). For example, Wulandhari et al. (2023) propose a multilevel study to explore organizational resilience along the supply chain during the COVID-19 pandemic. The significance of multilevel studies is particularly evident in research focusing on global supply chains, where suppliers and customers cooperate and compete simultaneously. Furthermore, actors within global supply chains are embedded in an external context characterized by multiple, possibly conflicting, and influential political, social, economic, and technological variables (Scott, 2005).

## 5 Leveraging intersections among methodological approaches

Traditionally, the management field has witnessed a divide between supporters of quantitative methods and those of qualitative methods (Bryman, 1984). This is not surprising. Such different methodological approaches often come from polar apparently incompatible epistemological perspectives. For example, while quantitative studies move from the assumption that social phenomena can be objectively measured and observed, a stream of qualitative research – rooted in a more subjective and interpretivist approach – questions the possibility of such objective measurements, not only because of the fallacy of the measuring instruments, but also because of the subjective and performative nature of the measurement practice, as well as the biases in the measuring actors (Gond et al., 2016).

Today, common wisdom in most conversations in management is that both qualitative and quantitative approaches can jointly enhance our knowledge of management phenomena and prompt new, nuanced understandings concerning relevant questions and challenges (Edmondson & MacManus, 2007; Molina-Azorin, 2012; Wellman et al., 2023). The complementarity of such approaches can be developed in at least two ways. First, across *multiple single-method studies* that leverage similar assumptions and boundary conditions to offer a multifaceted, synergic answer to the same ques-

tion and phenomenon. Second, in *multi-method studies*, which overcome limitations of each method by combining two or more empirical approaches in a complementary fashion within the same manuscript.

Former studies highlight the state of prior theoretical development within a conversation offers a valuable set of options which method(s) scholars can undertake to further advance scholarly understanding – thus determining the ideal “fit” between method and research question (Edmondson & MacManus, 2007). Mixed methods are ideally suited to address research questions that are at an intermediate state of theoretical development, where some constructs and insights do exist, but the conversation is not fully defined yet in a comprehensive set of insights and assumptions. As a matter of fact, an inductive, qualitative exploration can help identify some key mechanisms to quantitatively test later on; or, vice versa, some quantitative effects between main explanatory variables can be complemented with a qualitative insight that unveils underpinning mechanisms that cannot be fully tested quantitatively.

Mixed methods are helpful to research as they provide a robust solution to triangulate findings (Jick, 1979) – with triangulation being generally defined as “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon” (Denzin, 1978: 291). More recently, Turner and colleagues (2017) have highlighted how triangulation can be of three kinds: (1) *Convergent triangulation*, which aims at obtaining superior validation by finding consistent results in testing the same theory by running different tests with different methods; (2) *Holistic triangulation*, which aims to combine two or more research strategies to obtain a broader understanding of a phenomenon for theory development; and (3) *Convergent and holistic triangulation*, where both approaches can be used in tandem with the aim to both test and expand theory within the same study.

While is it beyond the scope of this introductory piece – and of our special issue – to fully cover the complex epistemic rationale for the different uses of mixed methods in management research, we find it important to underline how mixed methods are perfectly complementary for the observation of contemporary organizational phenomena developing at the intersection of disciplines, theories, levels of analyses. For example, the recent calls for research able to tackle grand societal challenges (Agarwal et al., 2024) require a profound understanding of the so-called “wicked problems” (Grewatsch et al., 2023). These are complex issues that, by emerging at the intersection of multiple domains (e.g., consumption habits, deployment of natural resources, system challenges of global scale, etc.) require approaches that are interdisciplinary in nature (e.g., combining social sciences and natural sciences) and thus ideally suited to be investigated by adopting a variety of methods which pertain to each scholarly domain of research. As an additional example, the developments of complex digital platform ecosystems often require investigations including the digital domain, the physical domain, and the interaction between the two – the so-called “phygital” domain. While certain adoption patterns (e.g. the contribution of complementors to the platform strategy) can (and have been) explored with quantitative analyses of large-scale datasets (often referred to as “big data” – George et al., 2014), the lifecycles of such ecosystems and the interplay of its actors with intangible elements such as value propositions and new collective identities can be better investigated with qualitative approaches. Finally, the increasing digitalization of human

and business activities is leading to the proliferation of data sources that excel both in depth and breadth, opening major opportunities for granular mixed method investigations – see recent remarks on the use of sport data to advance management research (Fonti et al., 2023). In their literature review, Hillmann and Guenther (2021) do not emphasize the use of multiple methods in existing research. With regard to our reasoning on the phenomenon of resilience, we believe that employing various methods is particularly crucial. This is because the current literature is still developing, empirical studies require cross-validation of findings, and the debate about the antecedents and management of resilience remains incomplete.

## 6 The articles in this special issue

In this section, we present the papers selected for the special issue. The chosen articles offer the opportunity to underscore the advantages of research that capitalizes on the intersections outlined in this essay. To achieve this, we follow the cross-disciplinary theorizing practices proposed by Shaw and colleagues (2018).

The first best practice is to aim for *disciplined integration*. Insights across disciplines must be rigorously examined (e.g., Agarwal & Hoetker, 2007). Researchers should clearly articulate the different assumptions underlying the integrated theories. This practice involves identifying both points of agreement and disagreement. The authors should explain how their integration advances the literature or establishes boundaries for the new theory. By unpacking these differences, scholars can unearth new insights or solutions to longstanding puzzles in the field, indeed, conflicting explanations often arise from diverse underlying assumptions. Lo Presti et al. (in this special issue) analyze universities' dedication to public engagement in advancing inclusion and social justice. This study is pertinent to the theme of this special issue for two primary reasons. First, the authors use a combination of qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques. Second, they underscore the intricate interplay of diverse motivations influencing university choices. Indeed, public engagement broadens the purview of universities, extending beyond mere course provision to actively fostering social justice and inclusion. Authors emphasize the idea that in the field of management, useful theories are those that blend technical and social aspects (Markides, 2011) with an interdisciplinary approach. In their work, the intersection of concepts related to university public engagement, social sustainability, and stakeholder involvement offers a more comprehensive lens for the interpretation and theorization of real-world university management decisions.

The second best practice is to *integrate “at theoretical intersections”* (Shaw et al., 2018, p. 2). Disciplines often have non-overlapping domains, making cross-disciplinary work valuable at these intersections (Zahra & Newey, 2009). These intersections frequently occur at different conceptual levels. Cross-disciplinary theorizing often takes the form of cross-level theorizing. This circumstance bridges gaps between fields, offering deeper explanations for a richer theoretical picture. Alternatively, it can explain how higher and lower levels influence the phenomenon of interest (Hackman, 2003). An example in this sense is the approach adopted by Conz et al. (in this special issue) to explain how lower-level factors interact with the family level and

macro-level factors in explaining firm longevity. The theoretical roots of Conz and colleagues incorporate key assumptions across business history, management, economics, and sociology, both within and outside the family business field. The emerging framework suggests a multilevel theory of longevity preservation in family firms, contributing to management and family business studies on longevity. Furthermore, Campagnolo et al. (in this special issue) make a valuable contribution to the interplay between different theories linking studies on business models with research on competitive advantage. The authors argue that when choosing market scope, firms need to consider both sources of competitive advantage and the logic of value creation and appropriation inherent in the business model. Such investigation presents also a laudable interplay among different levels of analysis, insofar the configurations encompass meso- and macro-level conditions.

Finally, the third best practice is to aim for *reciprocal integration*. Researchers should strive for a true or reciprocal exchange of ideas between disciplines whenever possible. Management journals that simply apply existing ideas from other fields lose their potential for unique contributions. Instead, the goal is to develop insights beyond what each discipline offers alone. By achieving this, management research can drive theoretical innovation within the borrowed-from disciplines (Zahra & Newey, 2009). An excellent example of reciprocal integration is the work of Cozzolino and Verona (in this special issue). The authors explain that today's rapidly changing environment demands flexible organizational adaptation strategies. Existing theories on adaptation are often fragmented, making it hard to choose the right approach. The work of Cozzolino and Verona addresses this gap by creating a holistic, unified decision tree that integrates four key adaptation theories (dynamic capabilities, ambidexterity, vertical, and horizontal strategic alliances) to guide companies in responding to radical changes. Notably, the decision tree proposed by Cozzolino and Verona helps leverage dynamic capabilities more effectively by pinpointing when to integrate other theories like ambidexterity or strategic alliances. In addition to leveraging theories, authors adopt a multilevel perspective that acknowledges internal adaptation as a response to external changes.

## 7 Conclusion

In addition to briefly presenting the published papers, the introduction essay of this special issue has provided two main contributions. First, it highlighted the importance of studies that contribute to business practice and society and the consequent need to value the efforts made to leverage the intersections between disciplines, theories, methods, and levels of analysis (Foss, 1999). From our perspective, an increasingly complex environment needs updating the research agenda of management scholars, who can no longer dwell solely within the confines of singular ontological and epistemological perspectives, but rather requires versatile approaches and tools to address multifaceted cognitive challenges. Furthermore, management studies have the purpose of providing guidelines to improve performance, and they do so by presenting theoretical arguments or else by elaborating upon statistics and/or case studies. Specifically, management studies in corporate social responsibility have contributed

enormously to expand the scope of these very notion of performance, thereby enlarging the set to aspects include when considering performance, stemming from the ever-changing awareness of societal issues (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). In fact, societal issues are now front and centre, as far as management studies are concerned. All in all, the combination of diverse methods, taken both from established research practices and emerging ones – see among others the recent use of generative AI for research purposes – can offer powerful tools and frameworks to investigate complex management and organizational phenomena. The multifaceted and multi-disciplinary nature of management and organization scholars - who adopt and develop theories, approaches, and methodologies from disparate fields such as economics, psychology, sociology, informatics, and history (see, Argyres et al., 2019) - places our community in a privileged standpoint to offer insightful lessons to both the scholars' and the practitioners' communities.

The second contribution is linked to the application of the ideas proposed in this essay to the literature on resilience. By offering an illustrative case of the benefits of an approach and instruments at the intersection, we also contributed to resilience studies by tracing a comprehensive, integrative depiction of this complex phenomenon. The Next Generation EU program called for new contributions to research that do not shy away from entering the political and public debate and feel free to trespass empirical cautiousness. This caution has typically characterized the management disciplinary tradition. However, since “there is something of a symbiotic relationship between business and government, or, to put it more broadly, between the market mechanism and the public policy process” (Buchholz & Rosenthal, 1995, p. 262), we support the idea that management studies can contribute to, and improve the quality of, the discussion in the public debate on issues that require vision (such as diversity, climate change, to name a few), endowed as they are with a coherent and objective perspective, as well as with a sound, integrative methodological approach.

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