Introduction

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This volume is a collection of 11 case studies, intended to bring together a broad span of experiences, in order to tackle the topic of good governance and resilience from a comparative crisis perspective, in five European countries that belong to different socio-economic regions, both old and new EU member states; namely Iceland, Spain, Croatia, Lithuania and Romania. Furthermore, by including Iceland, the analysis extends beyond EU to European Economic Area and allows the analysis Northern and Southern governance experiences.

The introduction briefly presents the conceptual framework applicable to the national case studies, to make the audience familiar with main concepts illustrated in the chapters: good governance, resilience, crisis management, COVID-19 crisis, change management, public governance, multilevel governance, public-private partnerships, corporate social responsibility, business restructuring, multi-stakeholders, and human resource management.

An overview of country cases is then presented, containing a short description of each of the five countries in the light of the cases that were presented, as well as a joint presentation of the national cases, showcasing the peculiarities of each.

This general introduction into the problematic of good governance and resilience in times of crisis is followed by 11 case studies. Chapters 1 and 2 provide country cases from Iceland. Chapters 3 and 4 provide country cases from Spain. Chapters 5-7 offer country cases from Croatia. Chapters 8 and 9 addresses cases from Lithuania. Chapters 10 and 11 provide country cases from Romania.

Conceptual framework

The various chapters included in this volume use different theoretical lenses to present actual situations involving challenges, decisions, and opportunities, problems related to good governance and resilience in various institutional contexts in times of crisis. In order for readers to get a better understanding of the country case studies developed in the chapters, the volume first provides a synthesis of the main concepts that will be explored from an empirical point of view.

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Good governance

Good governance has long been an important topic for academics of different disciplines, despite the fact that it does not have a single, clear and overarching definition. Most often governance is used to connote a complex set of structures and processes, both public and private (Thomas, 2010). The World Bank defines governance as ‘the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development’ (World Bank, 1992).

Starting with the 90s, researchers and practitioners have focused increasingly on the concept of “good governance” as both a means of achieving development and a development objective *per se* (Thomas, 2010). Despite its popularity there is a lot of confusion surrounding the good governance concept (de Graaf and van Asperen, 2016). Good governance is supposed to be the opposite of bad governance according to some authors , used in the public arena to discourage certain government actions and to promote others (Bouckaert, 2003; 2015). Some authors highlight that good governance is associated with the promotion of economic development (de Graaf & van Asperen, 2016), while for other scholars’ good governance translates into performance and results (Rotberg, 2016) and focuses on efficiency, effectiveness and good quality public services (Massey & Johnston 2015).

There is a quite large consensus among scholars that it was the World Bank that introduced the concept originally in 1989, making good governance a special requirement for developing countries who wanted to borrow money (de Graaf & van Asperen, 2016). Not surprinsingly, one of the most cited definition for good governance originates from the World Bank, where it refers to (1) the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; (2) the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and (3) the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them (de Graaf & Van Asperen, 2016).

Crisis situations, no matter their nature, are inevitably major tests for governments, challenging their capacity to resist and overcome the crisis. Obviously, when threatened with such pressure, governments need to plan and prepare carefully. However, despite the fact that governments can learn from their own mistakes or from the best practices of other similar institutions, it is almost impossible to anticipate the nature and the specific context of a crisis. Thus, the best strategy for getting ready and facing a crisis is to develop flexible and adaptable government structures (Peters, 2003).

In this volume we refer to good governance as a mode of governance that brings multiple stakeholders together, based on the optimal collaboration between the public sector, private companies and civil society organizations. In this conception, the public actors plays a crucial role, but other actors, such as business organizations, non-profit organizations, foundations, labor unions, etc, and the inter-organizational collaboration among these various actors - may play important roles as well (Wolman, Levy & Hincapie, 2011).

Crisis management

One the most important reason for which good governance is a vital topic in all society fields is linked to crisis situations, because crisis, no matter its nature requires that resources (human, time, financial, etc.) are allocated in a way that guarantees results (Bouckaert, 2015). In contemporary societies, changes are very difficult to predict, as the environment has become very dynamic and volatile. Therefore, crisis management becomes crucial and demands for knowledge, skills and partnership between different types of actors.

Crisis can be defined as a process of transformation, where the old system cannot be maintained anymore (Mikušová & Horváthová, 2019), which contains both a threat and a surprise element and requires short time decisions. Osmanagić Bedenik (2010) identifies three phases that correspond to a successful crisis management. These are anticipatory crisis management (pre-crisis phase which focuses on prevention measures), identification of the crisis (the crisis phase where the focus is on recognizing the crisis and correctly assessing its magnitude) and reactive crisis management (post crisis phase focusing on recovery and learning from the crisis).

COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 pandemic has all the elements to be considered a severe public health crisis that impacted all sectors of society, including public and private actors, namely public services and business organizations. All these stakeholders had to quickly respond to the COVID-19 crisis, overcome its challenges and/or take advantage of its opportunities and learn from this experience in order to become more flexible and more resilient, as illustrated in the abovementioned crisis management phases. However, COVID-19 was different from previous crises (Ng et al., 2022), being declared by the WHO a ”public health emergency of international concern” on 30-th of January 2020 and classified as a pandemic on 11th of March (WHO, 2020), as the total number of confirmed cases worldwide grew at a historically high rate, reaching over 6.3 million by November 2022 (WHO, 2022). Apart from the severe public health crisis, COVID-19 crisis has led to great uncertainty and disruption of the global economy.

Because of travel restrictions and social exclusion measures, the survival of many businesses was seriously threatened on one hand, while for other companies it proved to be a lever. Nevertheless, COVID-19 challanged all types of organizations to reflect on the values of relationships with employees, suppliers and communities (Sheth, 2020).

Resilience

Increased competition, complexity, volatility, and environmental uncertainty are pressing organizations to adapt and change. With this respect, during the recent decade and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, the concept of organizational resilience received much attention and become a true buzzword in the managerial vocabulary. Organizational resilience describes the ability of an organization to anticipate, prepare for, respond and adapt to incremental change and sudden disruptions in order to survive and prosper (Denyer, 2017). Despite the concept's popularity, most literature concludes that a consistent definition and a valid measurement scale of organizational resilience is still lacking (e. g. see Hillmann & Guenther, 2021).

Resilience thus takes different forms as it can be seen as a capability, capacity, characteristic, outcome, process, behaviour, strategy or approach, type of performance or a mix of all these (Hillmann & Guenther, 2021). Key issues in resilience are mostly related to readiness and preparedness, response and adaptation, and recovery or adjustment after the sudden turbulence. It is considered that organizational/institutional resilience develops over time, as organizations often establish business continuity or crisis management plans and train for emergency situations to strengthen their general resilience. Resilience is thus inherent to an organization and is dependent on its resources and capabilities (Hillmann & Guenther, 2021).

The concept of resilience becomes crucial when sudden changes occur. Therefore, when studying resilience, it is often necessary to point out the specific change and phenomenon it relates to (Hillmann & Guenther, 2021). In the case of recent pandemic crisis, for most organizations resilience become a matter of urgency, necessity to survive and continuing functioning after the turbulence caused by the COVID-19. Organizations dealt with COVID-19 crisis in different ways, both defensive and progressive. Several chapters in this volume provide examples of organizational resilience in different national contexts, as a response to the crisis/change.

Multi-stakeholders

Joint efforts from several stakeholders, public and private, are often necessary for resolving challenging targets and reaching prosperity. Multi-stakeholder approach includes cooperation and collaboration among civil society, businesses, government, NGOs and other parties. The importance of multi-stakeholders' approach has been on the rise in the past two decades as many intergovernmental organizations failed to effectively achieve their goals while there was a growing sense that private-sector organizations have the expertise and knowledge that governments lack and depend on (Berman, 2017).

In cases of multi-stakeholder view, actors from business, civil society and governmental or supranational institutions come together in order to find a common approach to an issue that affects them all and that is too complex to be addressed effectively without collaboration. The collaboration between business, civil society and local government was at some cases key to organizational resilience during the COVID-19, as is shown in several chapters in this book.

Human resource management

In cases of change or crisis, one of fundamental roles belongs to human resources (Adikaram et al., 2021). For a couple of months, COVID-19 has changed work practices for most employees around the globe. In addition, some of the core HRM practices such as training and development, recruitment and selection and performance management had taken the backseat compared to practices such as compensation management, employee motivation and engagement or health and safety that were found to be crucial for overcoming the crisis (Adikaram et al., 2021).

Despite severe reduction in operations and financial difficulties that companies were facing due to pandemic, most organizations have tried to avoid the more negative HRM practices that are common during crises, such as cut down on benefits/welfare or layoffs (Adikaram et al., 2021). Job retention as one of the HRM practices, pursued in cooperation with other stakeholders, namely state, proved to have beneficial effect on resilience (Stuart et al., 2021). In fact, HRM practices supported many other activities organizations undertook to overcome the crisis and reach sustainability and resilience. Although COVID-19 has posed extreme demands for managers and HRM practitioners, it has also opened possibilities for long-term implementation of some working practices that gained popularity during the pandemic.

Change management

Changes in the external or the internal environment of organizations require revision of the daily operations. Changes can be incremental or drastic, depending on the situation organizations need to adapt to. When they transform the daily operations to improve quality, cut costs, increase earnings, streamline processes and so on, internal stakeholders, particularly employees, need to accept and implement the change initiatives, large or small (Naslund & Norrman, 2022).

The purpose of the change must also be “relevant, justified, urgent, [have] a clear destination, clear scope and explicit goals”. These aspects need to be communicated to the relevant employees (Naslund & Norrman, 2022, p. 1). If the vision and goals are clear and follow a thorough analysis of a problem, acceptance of change is more likely to occur. Clear commitment and support from company leaders is another prerequisite for the successful implementation of change initiatives (Naslund & Norrman, 2022). In case of major shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, organizational resilience is based on businesses’ ability to adapt to the situation (Neise et al., 2021).

Corporate social responsibility

There are many ways to define the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR), but the European Commission has defined it as “the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society and outlines what an enterprise should do to meet that responsibility” (European Commission 2011, p. 6), and it “concerns actions by companies over and above their legal obligations towards society and the environment" (p. 3). To fully meet CSR, the European Commission reckons that enterprises should have in place a process to integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights, and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy in close collaboration with their stakeholders, with the aim of (p. 6):

- maximising the creation of shared value for their owners/shareholders and for their other stakeholders and society at large;
- identifying, preventing and mitigating their possible adverse impacts.

It is now a legal requirement for certain large companies to report on information relevant to their operations and how they manage their environmental and social affairs (European Commission, n.d.).

Business restructuring

Business restructuring, or restructuring for short, has been defined as the act of reorganizing the legal, ownership, operational, or other structures of a company to make it more profitable and better organized for its present needs (Norley et al., 2008), thus overlapping with concepts such as change management, strategy, and strategy implementation. It entails a complex and long-term process, which often includes changes in the ownership and management structure, business processes, and internal capacities, as well as the introduction of new technologies and investments, and also employee motivation (Trstenjak & Altaras Penda, 2018).

Restructuring can encompass a broad range of transactions, including the ones related to organizational assets (portfolio restructuring), the structure of capital (financial restructuring) or organizational structure (organizational restructuring) (Bowman & Singh, 1993). As such, restructuring is one of those business strategies that can help organizations address current internal and external pressures threatening business longevity. In the case of restructuring public services, three goals drive the process, namely improving performance, sourcing finance, and meeting new legislative requirements (Bakker, 2003).

Public governance

Governance can be defined as "the institutional capacity of public organizations to provide public and other goods demanded by the country citizens or the representatives thereof in an effective, transparent, impartial, and accountable manner, subject to resource constraints" (Katsamunska, 2016, p. 134). However, public governance has changed along the history of public administration as well as regarding aspects such as the role of the State, its scope, the conduct and organization of public administration, relation between politics and public administration, the role of officials, the role of public administration beneficiary, the scope and orientation of administrative law and procedures, and its deficiencies.

Kovac (2015) based on Bevir et al. (2011), Raadschelders (2011), Pollitt et al. (2011), Rose-Ackerman & Lisbeth (2011) and Mathis (2014) classify the different models of public governance according to aspects such as the chronological period, the role of the state, the scope of the state and public administration in the society, the conduct and organization of public administration, the relation of public administration to politics, the role of an official, the role of public administration beneficiary, the scope and orientation of administrative law and procedures, and deficiencies. The model of public governance that rules today is good governance, which implies principles such as participation, transparency, legal certainty, responsiveness, accountability, and efficiency. In this model the role of the state is collaborative, and its focus lays on partnerships for co-decision-making. Its scope is small, but coordinates networks in public interest.

Public-private partnerships

Regarding the rationale behind the government providing the service or transferring it to the private sector, the classic theoretical model of Hart et al. (1997) cited in Del Ponte et al. (2020), aims to identify the conditions, that is when the cost reduction has great effects in the project quality, and when the quality innovation is not relevant, service provision by the government is stable. However, when cost reduction can be controlled by a competitive contract or when the innovation process can improve quality characteristics of the project, privatization is preferable.

Public-private partnerships (PPP) aim to overcome the rationale described by Hart et al. (1997) by benefiting from both the private and public positive aspects in service provision. Nevertheless, the definition of PPP isn´t always clear so a more specific approach can be followed.

Some authors, emphasize exclusively two aspects. First, whether PPPs are voluntary short-term philanthropic partnerships and alliances between the governments (public sector) and industry (private sector) or, second if they are contractual arrangements between the public and private actors aimed at providing public works, goods, and services over a defined period of time, in a partnership that improves delivery efficiencies through innovation, risk sharing, and mobilization of joint resources (Baxter & Casady, 2020).

According to Bandeira de Mello (2008), cited in Del Ponte et al. (2020), he traditional concession contract/model is the legal institute by which the state designed the public service provision to a third party that accepted to provide the service at their own risk and that the public party has the majority control of the contractual clauses. Del Ponte et al. (2020) divide into two modalities the possibilities of contract through public-private partnerships that is sponsored or administrative. In the first one, by receiving a fare collected from the users, the private party can be remunerated, and there is also the possibility of receiving financing from the public sector. A road under the responsibility of a firm (concessionary) via PPP would be an example of this first modality.

In opposition to the sponsored, that is in the administrative type, the private party is the provider of a service (may this be direct or indirect) to the public administration, where a construction and operation of a hospital can be used as an example. The patients (citizens) would be the direct users of the service and the administration would fit in the indirect use and pay for the service (Del Ponte et al., 2020).

Multilevel governance

According to Vallès and Martí (2020) in the centralised state, political power resides in a single centre from which it is projected over the entire territory. Although the central power can delegate powers and distribute resources to municipalities, counties, provinces, departments and regions, these powers can be revoked by the centre by means of a unilateral decision. The resources they control (material, financial, personal) also depend on the will of the political centre, which gives them away or transfers them at its discretion.

Following the aforementioned author, the extreme version of centralisation is called the Jacobin model, namely a radical sector of the French revolutionaries of 1789 who defended state centralisation as a guarantee of equality among citizens. However, many unitary states have moderated the centralism of their origins by seeking formulae for inter-territorial cooperation and decentralisation. And this is the requirement for multilevel governance that is a form of cooperative government between different territorial administrations to deliver coherent policies in specific functional areas. This explains why decentralised states are the ideal terrain for multilevel governance. In this type of territorial distribution of power, there is a political agreement to share - and not just delegate - power. Instead of the principle of vertical hierarchy typical of unitary states, the principle of horizontal coordination between institutions predominates in this model (Vallès & Martí, 2020).

Methodology

The main methodological approach used in this book is based on exploratory case studies for several reasons. First, we considered that given the subnational focus of our investigation and consequently the wide range of experiences, it is crucial to capture the unicity of each country case, enabling us to reveal a richer set of lessons to be learned and best practices in relation with good governance and resilience in times of crisis.

Second, teaching methods based on case studies are considered to be highly effective for classwork (Rebeiz, 2011; Bruke et al., 2013; Naude & Derera, 2014; Bonney, 2015), as they provide both educators and students with an engaging teaching experience, based on discussions and debates, starting from real-life situations.

Third, the importance of empirical evidence cannot be ignored, especially when carrying research about crisis situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which serves as a natural experiment in order to investigate institutional resilience across various types of organizations and countries worldwide (Gherghina, Volintiru & Sigurjonsson, 2022; Raiu & Mina-Raiu, 2022).

The book offers deductive case studies, structured in three parts. First, the theoretical framework is introduced. This is done by describing in a concise, student-oriented manner the main concepts and theories closely related to the practical issues presented in the case studies. Then the case study per se is detailed, followed by several questions and debate topics for classroom discussion. Finally, chapters include recommendations for further readings.

Most country cases use secondary data analysis, making use of statistical data, company records, official documents etc., for instance policy documents, annual reports and/or sustainability reports (e.g., chapters 1 and 2). Some country case studies use individual interviews with experts from public or private organizations, such as the case on the public transport system in Madrid (chapter 3) or the case of the water and sanitation services in Bucharest (chapter 10).

A comparative analysis was employed for drawing up the conclusions of this volume, as comparative research is one of the most attractive areas for studying governance (Profiroiu & Mina, 2013). Four relevant dimensions were used to sort the national cases: keywords, sector of activity (public sector, private sector, public-private partnerships), industry (aviation, transport public services, water utilities, retail, communications, alcohol and tobacco production, and more) and theoretical approaches.

The output of this comparisons were synthetic tables which helped editors draw a series of similarities, as well as discrepancies among cases. On the one hand, similarities enable the identification of several patterns and therefore generalizations, while on the other hand the differences among cases indicate contingencies – aspects that depend on the country context, organization, sector of activity, etc.

Overview of country case studies

Iceland is a small, populated island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, with a relatively large landmass, or 100,250 sq km (CIA, 2022). The total population is around 380 thousand inhabitants, whereof 63% live in the Greater Reykjavík area (Statistics Iceland, 2022). The main economic pillars are tourism, aluminum smelting, and fishing, but since 2010 tourism has been driving the country's economic growth (CIA, 2022). Consequently, there was a deep contraction of the economy during the COVID-19 pandemic (-6,6% in 2020), but it has been recovering significantly as the economy is expected to grow by 4.5% in 2022 (OECD, 2022). The total number of visitors to Iceland was over 2,3 million in 2018, dropping to less than 500 thousand in 2020, growing by 44% in 2021 (Ferðamálastofa, n.d.). These numbers do not include international cruise ship passengers, but the total number of passengers almost reached 190 thousand in 2019, compared to around 1.300 in 2020 (Ferðamálastofa, n.d.). Tourism-related industries are therefore of interest to explore in the Icelandic cases, namely in the context of sales of alcohol and aviation.

The Icelandic chapters deal with aspects of corporate social responsibility (CSR), corporate governance, international reporting standards, and/or change management. Both cases deal with employee-related issues and some form of measuring performance, either utilization of a performance measurement tool based on employees' surveys or by using international sustainability reporting standards, where in this case the emphasis is on the governance and the human resource management aspect of the standards.

The former case (chapter 1) addresses the change initiative carried out by the national airline, Icelandair, which received negative feedback from those it affected, or the cabin crew of the airplanes defined as one of the company's critical groups of stakeholders (Icelandair Group, 2022). It uses a theoretical framework, the 5C framework (Johannsdottir & McInerney, 2018), to explore the success of the change initiative of the new performance measurement tool, where cabin crew must rate their own, as well as their colleagues' motivation, attitude, and appearance after each flight but unless the new tool will be well perceived by the cabin crew the implementation of the tool will not be successful.

The latter case (chapter 2) explores a public company operating the space of a controversial industry by looking at the Icelandic State Alcohol and Tobacco Company, (ÁTVR, commonly called Vínbúðin) and the criticism arising when employees have received occasional gifts from the company, even though similar gifts would be considered trivial in many private companies. The criticism has to do with the nature of the business, namely a public company, even though it is although generating revenue for the national treasury. In this case, both public and governmental officials have called for consistency when it comes to state-owned companies regarding tangible and other benefits periodically offered to their employees (Mbl.is, 2014).

The cases showcase the relevance of various management tools and methods which are suitable for daily operations, human resource-related matters, and performance measurement.

Spain, or the Kingdom of Spain, is a country located in southwester Europe with parts of territory in the Atlantic Ocean and across the Mediterranean Sea. With an area of 505.990 sq. km. Spain is the second largest country in the European Union and, with a population exceeding 47,4 million, the fourth most populous European Union member. Gross Domestic Product is driven by the services sector (tourism and transport among other services) that accounts for 74,2%. Secondly, the industry sector accounts for 23% and agriculture for 2,6% (OECD, 2022).

The Spanish chapters show, like many countries around the world, the effects of the pandemic within the post-New Public Management (NPM) context, which means a pre-existing network involving governments (public) highly engaged with multiple private agents was in the picture when COVID-19 arrived.

However, power and decision-making is in most countries divided among different levels of government, in what is known as multi-level governance which is a form of desirably "cooperative" government between different territorial administrations (Vallès & Martí, 2020). This structure was also part of the scenario when the pandemic erupted.

Spain is a valid example for both public-private partnerships and Multi-Level governance in different areas of policy making, since it´s organized into five levels of governance (municipalities, provinces, 17 autonomous communities, central State and European Union).

In this volume, two Spanish examples are provided regarding transport (chapter 3) and regarding tourism (chapter 4). Both cases belong to the services sector, which is the strongest in terms of accounting for the Gross Domestic Product (OECD, 2022). The case of Madrid transport shows on the one hand, the outputs of the multilevel cooperation of all the public administrations belonging to different territorial levels and on the other hand, and also the public-private partnership results. The case of Benidorm shows a sun and sand tourism destination located in the province of Alicante in Spain by the Mediterranean Sea as a paradigm of resilience in the sector during more than six decades and especially during the pandemic crisis.

Croatia, the youngest EU member state, is a South-Eastern European country occupying area surface of 56.594 km² and with a population of 3,88 million (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Demographic trends indicate that it is a country of a declining and aging population. In January 2023 Croatia is set to join the eurozone. Croatia has a long coastline along the Adriatic Sea (5835 km) which makes it a popular summer vacation destination for many Europeans. Tourism industry contributes to a high share of GDP (20%), higher than any other EU member state.

In 2020 due to the pandemic tourist arrivals decreased by 68% compared to 2019 (Ministry of Tourism, 2021). It is projected that due to COVID-19 in 2020 country's GDP contracted by 8 percent (Worldbank, 2021). In addition to health crisis, Croatia's central region suffered from two strong earthquakes (March and December 2020). Both government and the private sector implemented strong crisis management efforts to mitigate the economic impact of the two crises, as will be shown in the chapters.

Croatian chapters discuss resilience and governance in the private and public sector, as well as possibilities to embed remote working practices as a part of normal working environment post-COVID.

The first Croatian case (chapter 5) examines the peculiarity of remote work, as a possible long-term consequence of the pandemic. The case of a Croatian IT company Combis is used to demonstrate the importance of remote work during and after COVID-19. The case study of the city of Sisak (chapter 6) provides a unique insight in the case when two crises combine, as this town was hit by the health crisis and a devastating earthquake which caused extensive damage to private and public buildings and infrastructure, in addition to all problems caused by the pandemic. The case shows that Government support, and solidarity demonstrated by individuals, associations and companies were necessary to enable relief from the crisis and a faster recovery process of businesses and local community. The case study of Croatian company Pevex (chapter 7) examines organizational life cycles and business recovery after organizational downturn and decline. Specifically, this chapter emphasizes the importance of restructuring as a strategic response to organizational crisis.

Lithuania is the most southerly republic in the Baltic region of Europe. The capital city is Vilnius. Lithuania has been a European member state since 2015. The surface area of the country is around 65.3 thousand square kilometres, and the total population around 2.8 million (European Union, n.d.). In 2020 the main economic sectors were “wholesale and retail trade, transport, accommodation and food services (29.9%), industry (20.5%) and public administration, defence, education, human health and social work activities (16.1%)” (European Union, n.d.). It should be noted that state-owned enterprises (SOEs), “create a significant portion of the gross domestic product, often with a monopoly market position and by providing important public services” (Kloviene & Gimzauskiene, 2016). Economic recession, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, was less that in many other countries, but in 2020 the GDP was projected to drop by 2%, but then to rebound by 2.7% in 2021 (OECD, 2020). The Lithuania’s government has put an emphasis on local public investment, as a part of regional development, “to help mitigate the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic” (OECD, 2022).

The Lithuanian chapters deal with the transition of the innovation ecosystem during 2012-2022 and organisational resilience in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic where a case of a retail company is discussed. The former case (chapter 8) builds on assumptions from the transition theory which underlines that society changes in a rather evolutionary and organic way to a certain development. The latter case (chapter 9) focuses on what factors determine organisational resilience in the case of the pandemic, and dealing with issues, such as why some companies manage to survive in the same situation while others do not.

The former case (chapter 8) discusses the innovation ecosystem as a collaborative network, but approaches this in the context of transition mechanisms that include multistakeholder network, development of sustainable and specialisation program, mobilisation of business, science and execution of projects, monitoring midterm evaluation and improving, as well as societal support.

The case discusses the development of innovation ecosystem in Lithuania, which is rather young, making the transition mechanism an interesting avenue to study. Two examples are used to emphasise the case, namely Deeper which is one of the innovative tech companies in the sonar system market and Thermo Fisher Scientific which is the world’s leader in the life science sector. The chapter provides a framework for transition management for start-up companies within the innovation ecosystem.

The latter case (chapter 9) explores the Maxima Grupė UAB, which is a Lithuanian group of retail chain companies. It is one of the country’s largest taxpayers and the largest employer in the country with around 40,000 employees. In addition to Lithuania, Maxima operates in Latvia, Bulgaria, Estonia, and Poland. The issue the company has been facing during the pandemic is that while the retail market in Lithuania grew by 8.4% in 2021 the market share of Maxima Lithuania had dropped by 1.1%. To address consequences of the pandemic, Maxima launched an e-commerce operation. Given its focus on social sustainability the company incurred significant costs to protect the health of the employees as well as the customers.

These cases showcase the relevance of creating a shared value for the economy as well as various others stakeholder, through innovation and/or flexibility, whether the company operates in technology, science, or retail.

Romania is the sixth largest EU state member, situated in Central Eastern Europe, with a population of 19,4 million. In the 1990s, after the collapse of the totalitarian regime, Romania started its transition towards democracy and market economy. Since 2007, when it joined the EU, Romania has experienced a slow-but-steady rise in the standard of living, as well as many reversals in bringing about reform in all areas of public life, from the economy, education, healthcare system, to the judicial systems (Euobserver, 2022).

Although considerable efforts have been carried out in the last decade for the implementation of NPM reforms, which have shaped public administration and public sector management, Romania is still not part of the Schengen area, nor adopted the single currency (Cuglesan, 2020). However Romania is considered to be a good performer in the IT sector, in terms of high density of IT experts and IT startups, internet speed, IT contribution to the GDP – almost 8%, despite the fact that digitalization, especially in the public sector is still in an early stage.

During COVID-19 crisis face-to-face interaction was severely curtailed in most European countries, which generated a considerable shift to digital services in all sectors (Urs, Spoaller, 2022), but especially in the public services, namely education and healthcare. Moreover, the COVID-19 epidemic has led to a digital transformation of working arragements, pioneered by private companies, but also embraced by public entities (Basuki et al, 2022).

Nevertheless this crisis has shown that participatory mechanisms based on public-private partneship and cooperation are crucial for strenghtening good governance and resilience (Raiu, 2021, Profiroiu & Negoiță, 2022).

The Romanian chapters deal with good governance and institutional resilience in public services (chapter 10) and business environment (chapter 11), taking an insight into the water service provided by a public-private partnership company (Apa Nova București) and two international retail and communications companies present on the Romanian market, Kaufland and Vodafone.

Both cases reveal that although none of these organizations was specifically prepared for a pandemic, their high level of digitalization helped them quickly adapt to the new situation and have a positive and strong impact on the society during these harsh times.

Another peculiarity of the Romanian cases is that none of organizations selected for the case studies was coming from a sector that was severely affected by the pandemic.

However, even these organizations were faced with significant challenges especially in the field of human resources operations and also in terms of providing support for other sectors or persons in need (Vodafone offered significant support for the education sector, Kaufland helped disadvantages social categories and to its own employees, ANB experienced pressure in the process of assuring the continuity of an essential public service at high quality standards).