

**Sensemaking During Crisis: Untangling Uncertainty and the  
Creation of Resilience**

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## **Certificate of Original Authorship**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as part of the collaborative doctoral degree and/or fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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## Abstract

This thesis concerns the responses of a European oil and gas company and its expatriates during the Arab Spring in Libya and Egypt. I analysed 13 interviews with expatriates by using membership categorisation analysis to establish how the organisation managed the events. In doing so, I highlighted how the expatriates used categorisation devices to voice their uncertainty perceptions, sensemaking and resilience to navigate through the crisis.

For each concept, I demonstrated how membership categorisation plays a crucial role as a construction mechanism. People use their category devices as instruments for their sensemaking, uncertainty experience and expression and as resources and capabilities for resilience creation.

I observed how people described their states of uncertainty and constructed them as reflective narratives of a crisis situation. Regarding sensemaking, the category devices function as instruments for sensemaking to simplify the world while the creation of the ‘other’ category device, as a relational pair, helps to redefine oneself in the wake of a crisis.

Last, I demonstrated how participants generated resilience while aligning decision-making with changes occurring in their environment. I cautioned that in the event that resilience is enforced as an ‘entrapment’ of employees, it has the potential to cause in employees adverse cognitive and behavioural consequences towards the organisation.