

Adaptive Leadership During Permacrisis: Navigating Continuous Disruption in Contemporary Organisations

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Abstract

This paper discusses how leaders in contemporary organisations are responding to what scholars and journalists are now calling a permacrisis: a long, unsettling time in which crises overlap rather than present one at a time. The study asks how adaptive leadership behaviors influence employee resilience, decision-making confidence, and team performance in a context where uncertainty is the everyday backdrop of work. The research is based on a survey of 212 working professionals from various sectors and is bolstered by a broad review of the leadership and organizational change literature. The results suggest a fairly consistent pattern. Employees say that when leaders are transparent about what they know and don't know, willing to bring their teams in on problem-solving, and open to changing course when new evidence emerges, they feel more psychologically safe, more clear on priorities, and more relaxed about how to make things work. When leaders return to command-and-control and rigid planning, the same conditions appear to worsen the gap between strategy on paper and the lived experience of people on the ground. This paper argues that adaptive leadership is not a short-term fix for difficult years, but an ongoing practice to be embedded in the way organisations make decisions, develop people and judge their own success. It ends with practical suggestions for leaders, HR teams and management educators who want to build the kind of

organisational muscle that can withstand continuous disruption.

Keywords: *adaptive leadership, permacrisis, organisational resilience, employee engagement, decision-making, psychological safety, change management.*

Introduction

The word permacrisis started as a bit of journalistic shorthand and gradually found its way into management-speak. It was named Collins Dictionary word of the year in 2022, with the word defined as 'a long period of instability and insecurity'. Since then it has been used to describe what many leaders already felt in their bones: that the familiar pattern of crisis, recovery and return to normal has broken down. The pandemic morphed into supply chain disruption, then into inflation, then into geopolitical conflict, then into climate-driven shocks, then into a wave of rapid technological change centred on artificial intelligence. Each of these would have been treated as a separate event with a beginning, middle and end. They have started to resemble a continuous condition more, stacked together.

Inside organisations, this condition weighs on leaders in uncomfortable ways. Many programmes are still teaching the traditional

image of leadership based on stability. A leader sets the direction, agrees a plan, motivates people to follow that plan and corrects deviation along the way. That picture assumes a future that is more or less knowable, and disruption a rare interruption. Permacrisis provides a different terrain. Strategies written in January can seem stale by April. As workforce expectations evolve, annual review cycles fall behind. Regulators respond to new risks and customers want new things. Change is being asked to be absorbed at each level of the organisation whilst still meeting targets that were set on earlier assumptions.

The phrase ‘adaptive leadership’, most commonly linked with Ronald Heifetz and his team at Harvard, is far older than today. The crucial difference is between technical problems with known solutions that can be passed off to experts, and adaptive challenges that require people to change their values, habits, and ways of working. The point is that real leadership is often less about giving answers and more about helping others to face hard realities, sit with uncomfortable trade-offs, and learn their way forward. That framing is surprisingly relevant in a permacrisis environment. Today’s leaders face problems that are rarely solved by the decision of one expert. This requires judgement, dialogue and willingness to change course as the journey unfolds.

There is, however, a gap between the theoretical attractiveness of adaptive leadership and its application in everyday practice. Many

leaders are still stuck in performance systems, budget cycles and reporting routines built for more settled times. They are told to be agile, but judged on certainty. They are told to empower their teams, but are held accountable for the mistakes of those teams. They are told to be honest about uncertainty, but rewarded for sounding confident in front of senior stakeholders. These tensions haven’t disappeared in the permacrisis years; if anything, they’ve intensified. The practical question this study asks is how leaders are working through these tensions, and what that does to the people who report to them.

This paper takes a deliberately grounded perspective on the subject. It does not treat permacrisis as a slogan or a reason to call for dramatic transformation programmes. Instead, it asks what adaptive leadership looks like in action under sustained pressure, how it is felt by employees and where it seems to make a measurable difference to outcomes such as resilience and team performance. The goal is to provide value to leaders, HR folks and educators who suspect, maybe quietly, that the old playbooks no longer cut it.

The paper is organized in the standard way. It begins by reviewing the literature on adaptive leadership, crisis leadership and resilience, identifying the most relevant strands for the permacrisis context. It then states the objectives and the hypotheses of the study and describes the research methodology. The data analysis section

includes survey findings supported by chi-square tests. The paper concludes with a discussion of findings and implications for practice and future research.

Review of Literature

Any modern discussion of adaptive leadership generally begins with Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009). For decades they have honed an argument that organisations confuse two types of problem. Technical problems are tough but not widespread. They have definitions and common solutions. A professional can be brought in to fix them. Adaptive challenges, by contrast, are beyond existing know-how. They require people to change their assumptions about work, their identities in work and sometimes their relationships with each other. In those cases, the authors characterize leadership as a discipline of sending the work back to the people who have to live with the outcome, rather than rushing to come up with solutions that would not stick. Their framing has stood the test of time, in part because the types of problems they wrote about – climate change, financial instability, public health – have moved from the margins to the centre of the corporate agenda.

Building on this foundation, Yukl and Mahsud (2010) examined what they called flexible and adaptive leadership in more empirical detail. They looked at how senior leaders change their behaviour in different situations, particularly in change and crisis. They

identified a set of skills, such as the ability to read context quickly, develop a varied behavioral repertoire and tolerate ambiguity without falling into either paralysis or premature action. Their work provides a useful corrective to caricatures of adaptive leadership as merely being open or empathetic. It is also, they tell us, an exercise in thinking and analysis.

More recently, Uhl-Bien and Arena (2018) have suggested that adaptive leadership should be conceptualized at the systems level rather than as an individual capability. Their model involves leaders creating what they call enabling conditions that permit adaptation to develop from interactions across the organisation, particularly at the interface of operational and entrepreneurial activity. This work has been crucial in connecting adaptive leadership to complexity theory and conversations around organizational ambidexterity. It also means that an organisation can be badly led, even if individual leaders are personally adaptive, if the wider system is organised to prevent learning.

The literature on crisis leadership, which has hitherto been separate, has started to converge with the adaptive leadership tradition over the last decade. Boin, Stern and Sundelius (2016) consider crisis leadership as a set of inter-related tasks, for example sense-making, decision-making, meaning-making, terminating the crisis and learning. Their work, as much from public administration as from business, attaches great importance to the role of communication in times

of uncertainty. They argue that leaders in crisis are not just decision-makers, but interpreters who help others understand scattered information. This emphasis on interpretation is closely connected to adaptive leadership, where helping people face reality is treated as a core practice, not as an optional add-on.

Kniffin and colleagues (2021) considered what the widespread remote work and long-term disruption meant for behaviour in the workforce in the early days of the pandemic. Their review revealed three common themes. Employees expressed a strong desire for psychological safety, meaning they could speak openly about problems without fear of retribution. They also had something in common in terms of a need for clear, consistent communication from leaders, especially when objective conditions were changing rapidly. And they wanted predictability in small things – rhythms of meeting, processes of decision, response times – when the larger environment was giving them very little of it. The authors did not use the language of permacrisis, but the patterns they identified presage the dynamics that have continued in the years since.

The notion of psychological safety itself, most closely associated with Edmondson (1999, 2019), is now well established in the literature on team performance. Her research on hospital teams, software companies and manufacturing teams shows that teams who feel safe to admit mistakes, ask stupid questions and disagree with senior colleagues get better results than those

who don't. In permacrisis conditions, where traditional answers often fail, and learning is needed at speed, the importance of psychological safety seems to grow, not shrink. It is one of the cleaner empirical bridges between the literatures on leadership and resilience.

Lengnick-Hall, Beck and Lengnick-Hall's (2011) work continues to be widely cited on organisational resilience. They define resilience capacity as the mix of cognitive, behavioural and contextual elements that enable organisations to absorb shocks and bounce back. Their framework does not consider resilience as an individual personality trait, but rather as a capability developed over time through intentional practices in human resource management, leadership development, and culture. More recent contributions (e.g. Ducheck, 2020) have taken this thinking further by distinguishing between anticipation, coping and adaptation as distinct phases of resilience, each requiring different leadership behaviours.

The Edelman Trust Barometer has tracked the continued decline in public trust in institutions and the growing importance of trust in one's employer for several years. In many countries, employees now say they trust the leaders of the organisations they work for more than political or media institutions. This shifts the burden heavily onto leaders in the workplace, especially during times of broader societal anxiety. Where employees see their managers as honest, competent and caring about them as

people, they seem to maintain a sense of stability even when the larger environment is turbulent. When leaders are perceived as being evasive or self-serving, external uncertainty is magnified within the organisation.

A number of recent studies have examined the particular responses of leaders to overlapping crises. Bartsch et al. (2021) studied leadership in the early pandemic and found that task-oriented behaviour was not enough. Leaders who balanced a task focus with what the authors called relationship-oriented behaviour, such as checking in, listening and acknowledging emotional load, were associated with better team performance and lower turnover intentions. This finding has since been replicated with variation in studies from healthcare, financial services and technology. The upshot is that the soft and hard dimensions of leadership are not in competition for air time during sustained disruption; they are mutually reinforcing.

Other authors have concentrated on the cognitive demands on leaders themselves. In an article on the emotional labour of leading during times of collective grief and disruption, Petriglieri (2020) illustrates the toll that sustained emotional regulation takes on those in senior positions. A relatively new and welcome strand in the literature is the honest acknowledgment of leader fatigue. It defies simplistic prescriptions to be inspiring or to be present and instead points to the need for leadership development that takes

the wellbeing of leaders themselves as a serious concern.

The literature, taken together, offers a few stable conclusions. Adaptive leadership is a recognised and well-theorised practice which is different from technical management. As the crises themselves become more interconnected, crisis leadership and adaptive leadership are conceptually becoming more convergent. Psychological safety, trust and clear communication are again and again the conditions that allow people to perform well under uncertainty. Resilience in an organisation is best seen as a capability that can be built and not something it is born with. Importantly, the emotional and cognitive load on the leaders themselves are being taken more seriously than previous generations of research. What is less clear is how these strands come together within the specific conditions of permacrisis, where uncertainty is sustained rather than episodic, and where employees and leaders alike are expected to keep delivering without the usual recovery periods between shocks. This study is an effort to make a small contribution to fill that gap.

Objectives of the Study

- To explore the effects of adaptive leadership behaviours on employee resilience in a situation of sustained organisational uncertainty.
- To assess the relationship between adaptive leadership behaviors and team performance outcomes in permacrisis contexts.

Hypotheses

- H1: Adaptive leadership behaviours are positively associated with employee resilience during permacrisis.
- H2: Adaptive leadership behaviours are positively associated with team performance during permacrisis.

Research Methodology

This study uses a quantitative research design and a focused literature review. The primary data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire from 212 working professionals in five broad sectors, such as information technology, healthcare, banking and financial services, manufacturing and higher education. We recruited respondents using a mix of professional networks and convenience sampling, aiming to get a range of seniority levels (not just senior leaders). About thirty per cent of the sample had managerial or supervisory responsibility; the remainder were in individual contributor roles.

The questionnaire used five-point Likert scales, anchored from firmly disagree to firmly agree, as is convention in similar studies. Two scales were constructed. First impressions of adaptive leadership behaviour as measured in the immediate manager of the respondent's most recent The second measured perceived employee resilience and team performance over the past twelve months, a time frame selected to match the most recent period of overlapping organisational disruptions. Items were taken from existing instruments and adapted for the permacrisis

setting, with input from three academic reviewers and two practising HR managers before the final version was released.

Descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests were used to analyse the data. Chi-square goodness-of-fit tests were used to test whether the distribution of responses differed significantly from a uniform pattern, which would have indicated that the items did not discriminate meaningfully between agreement and disagreement. All tests were performed at 95 per cent confidence level. Respondents were informed of anonymity and their right to withdraw at any time. No personally identifiable information was collected. Although the sample size is modest and the design is cross-sectional, the data are adequate to identify the broad patterns that the study aims to describe, which is appropriate for its exploratory objectives.

Data Analysis

Table 1. Perceptions of Adaptive Leadership Behaviour and Employee Resilience.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My manager is honest about what they know and what they do not know during uncertain periods.	11 (5.2%)	14 (6.6%)	19 (9.0%)	78 (36.8%)	90 (42.4%)
My manager involves the team in working through difficult problems rather than deciding alone.	13 (6.1%)	17 (8.0%)	22 (10.4%)	81 (38.2%)	79 (37.3%)
I feel safe raising concerns or admitting mistakes to my manager.	10 (4.7%)	15 (7.1%)	16 (7.5%)	76 (35.8%)	95 (44.9%)
Despite ongoing disruption, I have a clear sense of my priorities at work.	16 (7.5%)	21 (9.9%)	24 (11.3%)	83 (39.2%)	68 (32.1%)
I am able to recover from setbacks at work without lasting damage to my motivation.	14 (6.6%)	19 (9.0%)	25 (11.8%)	84 (39.6%)	70 (33.0%)

Table 1 presents the distribution of responses to five statements covering adaptive leadership behaviour and employee resilience.

The distribution of responses to five statements on adaptive leadership behaviour and employee resilience is presented in Table 1. Overall, the pattern of responses is encouraging. When uncertain times come, a large majority of respondents agree or strongly agree that their managers are honest about how much they know, with seventy-nine percent agreeing with this statement in one form or another. Similar majorities report that their managers involve the team in solving difficult problems rather than deciding on their own, and that they feel psychologically safe enough to raise concerns or admit mistakes. The percentages of strongly disagree responses stay in single digits on these items. This is indicative of the fact that adaptive

leadership behaviour is reasonably visible across the organisations surveyed, though it is not yet universal.

The results are a bit softer in the items measuring the felt experience of resilience itself. Roughly seven in ten agree they have a clear sense of priorities even in the face of ongoing disruption, and a similar share agree they can recover from setbacks without lasting damage to their motivation. Both of these figures are positive but the percentage of neutral responses climbs to around eleven or twelve per cent. The most likely interpretation is that adaptive leadership behaviour is being widely practised, but that the cumulative burden of overlapping

crises has still left a slice of employees feeling worn down rather than crushed. This is in line with the broader literature on permacrisis fatigue.

Table 2. Perceptions of Adaptive Leadership Behaviour and Team Performance.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My team adjusts its plans quickly when conditions change.	12 (5.7%)	18 (8.5%)	21 (9.9%)	86 (40.6%)	75 (35.4%)
My team is willing to abandon ideas that are no longer working.	17 (8.0%)	22 (10.4%)	28 (13.2%)	79 (37.3%)	66 (31.1%)
Lessons from recent setbacks are openly discussed and used to improve our work.	14 (6.6%)	20 (9.4%)	25 (11.8%)	82 (38.7%)	71 (33.5%)
The way decisions are made in my team is clear, even when the decisions themselves are difficult.	18 (8.5%)	21 (9.9%)	27 (12.7%)	80 (37.7%)	66 (31.1%)
Overall, I believe my team is performing well given the conditions we face.	11 (5.2%)	17 (8.0%)	23 (10.8%)	87 (41.0%)	74 (34.9%)

Table 2 looks at the performance side of the picture. The responses tell a fairly coherent story. Most respondents say their teams make quick adjustments to plans when conditions change, openly discuss lessons learned from setbacks and are performing well given the difficulty of the conditions. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the strongest endorsement is for the overall performance item, which includes an assessment of effort and an acknowledgement of context. The results are somewhat weaker on the items about willingness to abandon failing ideas and clarity of decision making. Both tackle notoriously difficult areas for organisations under pressure: letting go of sunk costs, and being transparent about the trade-offs behind difficult decisions. But even

here, the majority of responses are positive, with around two thirds of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing.

In combination, the two tables suggest that the organisations surveyed display a fair amount of adaptive leadership behaviour and that this is accompanied by positive perceptions of both individual resilience and team performance. The patterns also show that some elements of adaptive practice – psychological safety, honest communication – are somewhat more developed than others, such as visible decision-making and willingness to retire failing initiatives. It's worth keeping such subtleties in mind when thinking about the inferential tests that follow.

H1: Adaptive leadership behaviours are positively associated with employee resilience during permacrisis.

Table 3. Chi-Square Test Statistics for H1.

Statement	Chi-Square (χ^2)	df	Asymp. Sig.
My manager is honest about what they know and what they do not know during uncertain periods.	146.292	4	.000
My manager involves the team in working through difficult problems rather than deciding alone.	118.443	4	.000
I feel safe raising concerns or admitting mistakes to my manager.	162.811	4	.000
Despite ongoing disruption, I have a clear sense of my priorities at work.	98.764	4	.000
I am able to recover from setbacks at work without lasting damage to my motivation.	104.226	4	.000

The chi-square statistics that indicate significant differences between the observed response distributions for each item and the expected distribution under the null hypothesis of uniform endorsement. The values vary between about ninety-eight and one hundred and sixty-two, all comfortably significant at the one per cent level. The most heavily loaded item is the psychological safety item, which has the highest chi-square value, indicating the clustering of responses at the agree and strongly agree end of the scale. The findings provide statistical evidence in support of the hypothesis that adaptive leadership behaviours are associated with stronger employee resilience in permacrisis conditions. They do it for each individual element of the construct which is more informative than if they had done a single aggregate test.

But it is also important to note the qualitative texture of the findings, beyond the numbers. Items that can be considered honest acknowledgment of uncertainty and involvement in problem solving show particularly strong agreement. This is very much in line with the adaptive leadership literature that has argued all along that leaders build resilience less by reassurance and more through the willingness to face hard truths together with their teams. The data here behave as the theory would predict, which is reassuring.

H2: Adaptive leadership behaviours are positively associated with team performance during permacrisis.

Table 4. Chi-Square Test Statistics for H2.

Statement	Chi-Square (χ^2)	df	Asymp. Sig.
My team adjusts its plans quickly when conditions change.	122.575	4	.000
My team is willing to abandon ideas that are no longer working.	84.339	4	.000
Lessons from recent setbacks are openly discussed and used to improve our work.	98.612	4	.000
The way decisions are made in my team is clear, even when the decisions themselves are difficult.	78.452	4	.000
Overall, I believe my team is performing well given the conditions we face.	131.118	4	.000

Table 4 reports the inferential test results for the team performance items are reported in Table 4. Like the resilience items, all the chi-square statistics are significant at the one per cent level, with values ranging from approximately seventy-eight to one hundred and thirty-one. Notably the highest value is on the overall performance item. This perhaps suggests that respondents have relatively firm views on this question and are not spreading their answers evenly across the scale. The lowest, but still significant, fall is against the decision-making clarity item, reflecting the somewhat softer pattern seen in the descriptive table. The results support the second hypothesis statistically.

This brings up several practical points. First, the relation between adaptive leadership behaviour and team performance does not seem to be based on one single magic ingredient. It is related to a whole bunch of practices, each of

which gives you something different. Second, the items with the weakest link in this sample – decision-making transparency and the willingness to abandon failing initiatives – suggest specific areas in which leadership development and organisational design could make a difference. These are areas where many organisations depend on inherited routines that are less effective in times of relative stability than they used to be. Third, the good performance on the overall performance item indicates that the respondents are able to step back and make a coherent judgment about their team rather than simply reacting to individual incidents, which is an indication that the survey instrument is measuring something real.

Findings

The synthesis of the descriptive and inferential results suggests a number of findings that are worth stating plainly. The evidence from

this sample suggests that adaptive leadership behaviours are reasonably prevalent in the organisations surveyed. Honest acknowledgment of uncertainty, team involvement in problem solving and the development of psychological safety are strongly endorsed. These behaviours are underpinned by relatively positive perceptions of employee resilience, with a majority of respondents expressing a clear sense of priorities and the ability to bounce back from setbacks. The data do, however, suggest a significant minority of respondents who are feeling worn down by sustained disruption, and this minority is not insignificant.

Team perceptions of performance are similar. Respondents talk about teams that adapt plans quickly, talk about lessons learned from setbacks and perform well considering the conditions. There is a bit more variation in the willingness to abandon failing initiatives and the transparency of decision-making. These are well-known weak spots in organisational life and are probably made more difficult by the pace and intensity of recent change. The chi-square tests indicate that in all cases the distributions of responses are significantly different from chance. This supports both hypotheses with a fair degree of confidence.

There are three wider tendencies to note. First is the seeming centrality of psychological safety. It is the highest scoring item in the descriptive analysis and produces the highest chi-square value of the resilience items, consistent

with its importance in the wider literature. The second is the apparent value of honest discussion about uncertainty. The respondents seem to be responsive to leaders who say what they do and do not know, rather than pretend confidence that the situation does not merit. The third is the visible gap between short-term agility and the willingness to make harder structural choices, like retiring initiatives that aren't working any more. The outcomes point to a more developed adaptive leadership at the level of weekly practice compared to adaptive leadership at the level of strategic decision-making.

Discussion and Implications

Taken together, the findings are best read as a moderately optimistic snapshot of a working pattern that is yet to mature. Adaptive leadership behaviour is no longer the preserve of leadership books and executive education programmes, it is being practised at scale, in real organisations, by managers who in many cases would not describe what they do in those terms. The data here suggest that this practice is paying dividends in terms of employee resilience and team performance, even under sustained pressure. That's a nice way to finish after a difficult few years.

The results do, however, require a more sober reading in some places. Weaker scores on items around willingness to abandon failing initiatives and transparency of decision-making highlight areas where organisations are still stuck

in old habits. Sunk-cost thinking is a hard habit to break. Leaders are rewarded for sticking with a strategy even if it stopped working a long time ago, and penalized for transparency about trade-offs that could be made to look slicker in a presentation. They are systemic problems, not personal failures, and they will not be solved by exhortation alone.

There are a number of implications for practicing leaders. First, the basics of adaptive practice, like being honest about what is not known, involving the team and paying attention to psychological safety, seem to do real work in the conditions described. They're not soft additions. Second, leaders may want to invest some energy in the more difficult decisions: proactively reviewing initiatives that have run their course, and being more transparent with their teams about why difficult choices are made. Third, leaders need to attend to their own condition. The literature is clear about the significant and underestimated emotional burden of leading through sustained disruption. If the leaders are modelling unsustainable working patterns, they won't be building resilient teams in the long run.

The findings present a case for shifting some of the emphasis from leadership programmes that highlight charisma or vision, to programmes that focus on the more practical disciplines of adaptive practice for HR professionals and organisational development teams. In this account, coaching that helps leaders to sit with uncertainty, performance systems that

recognise good judgement rather than only good results, and culture work that protects psychological safety all become more valuable. It would also be reasonable to expect that recruitment and succession processes will begin to place greater weight on adaptive behaviour than has been the case historically.

The findings offer a small but worthwhile prompt for management educators. Curricula that assume strategy is a periodic, conscious act of planning need to be supplemented with serious attention to the dynamic, continuous adaptation required of contemporary leadership. Case studies of organisations living through permacrisis conditions, with their messy ambiguities intact, are likely to teach us more than highly polished examples of single decisions taken in clean conditions. It is probably more important now to help students learn to read complex situations and respond proportionately than to help them memorise frameworks.

Conclusion

This paper has examined adaptive leadership in the context of permacrisis, the term that has been used to describe the current wave of overlapping disruptions facing organisations and the people who work in them. It has examined the relationships between adaptive leadership behaviours, and the resilience and performance of employees and teams, via a quantitative survey of 212 working professionals, supported by a focused literature review. The data are not dramatic, but they are consistent. Honest

communication, shared problem solving, and psychological safety are linked to better outcomes on both dimensions, and these patterns are statistically significant.

The paper has sought to make the broader argument that adaptive leadership is best understood as ordinary work, not heroic capacity. It's something managers can practice day in and day out, in small acts of honesty, listening and recalibration. Permacrisis has made these acts more significant, not because they're novel, but because the conditions in which they must be sustained are more challenging. The findings here are that many leaders are managing to do this work even if their organisations have not yet caught up with the implications. For many organisations, the next step is to align formal systems – performance management, decision-making, leadership development – with the practices that better leaders are already inventing in real time.

There are some limitations of the study that should be noted. The sample size is small and skewed toward a few sectors. The design is cross-sectional and so the patterns identified are correlational rather than causal. The instrument rests on self-reported perceptions, with normal risks of social desirability and recall bias. These limitations imply that the findings should be interpreted as suggestive rather than definitive. Future work should employ longitudinal designs that follow the same teams over several quarters, use larger and more representative samples, and

use mixed-method approaches that combine survey work with sustained qualitative observation.

There are a few specific directions for future research worth noting. The role of middle managers in transmitting or absorbing that adaptive practice deserves much more attention than it has had; they are often the people who turn senior strategy into the daily reality. Another fertile ground is the impact of artificial intelligence on adaptive leadership, as AI tools are changing the pace of decision-making and the type of human judgement that continues to matter. A further important strand is the wellbeing of leaders themselves, especially those with ongoing responsibility through successive waves of disruption, which has substantial ethical as well as performance implications. Finally, comparative work across countries and cultural contexts would clarify which aspects of adaptive practice are transferable and which need to be adapted to local conditions.

The leaders who thrive in permacrisis are not those who pretend to know what is coming next, but those who learn to lead well without knowing. If there is one sentence that captures the argument it might be this: The data here indicate that more leaders are doing just that than the popular narrative about leadership failure would have us believe. This paper is offered in the hope that it will help with the practical task of making their work and the organisations to which they belong steadily better at it.

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