

# **Strategic Agility in a Complex World**

## **Building the Agile University**

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# Adaptive Challenges that HE Faces

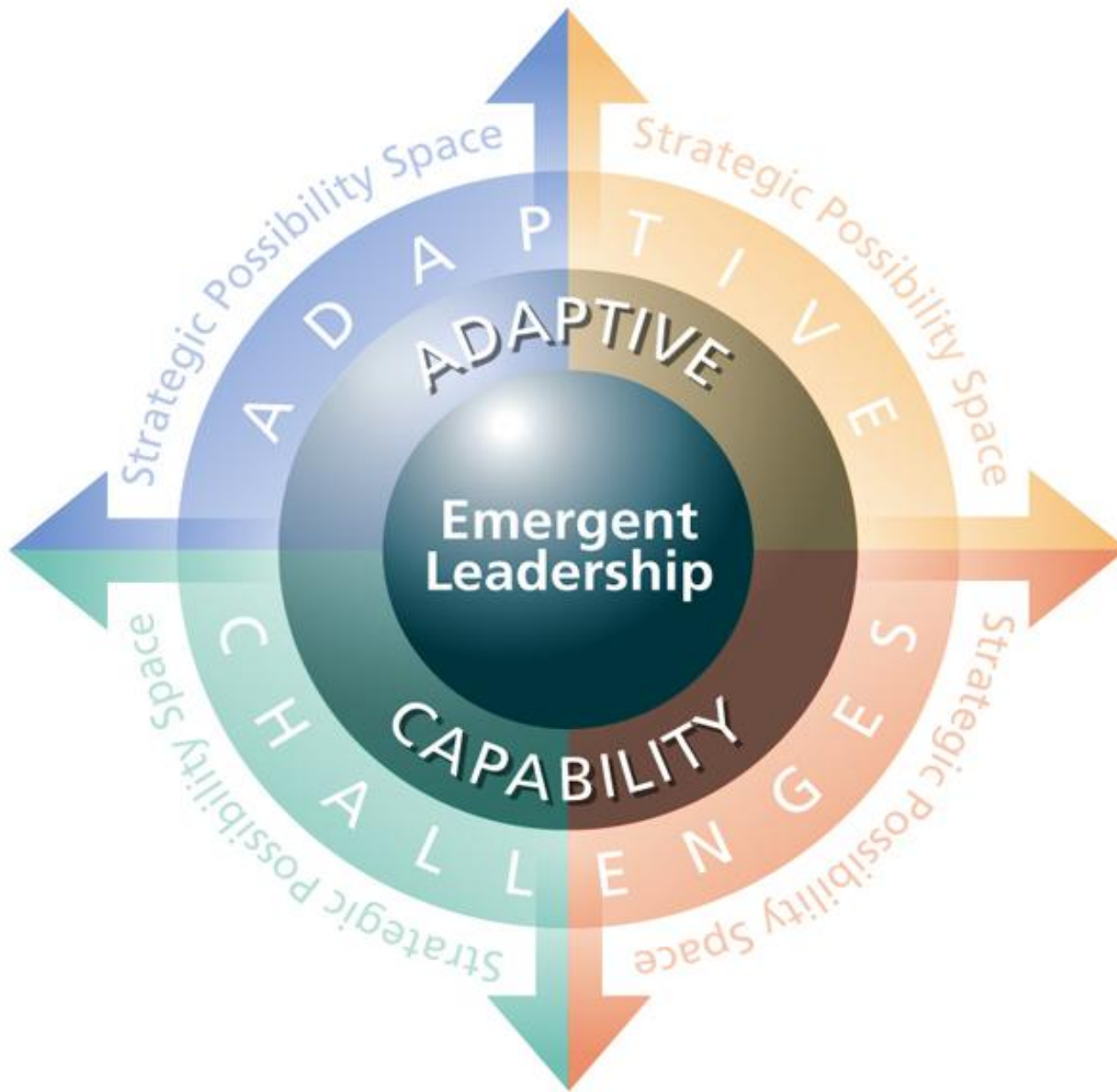
- Post credit crunch public sector retrenchment
- Changes in funding and policy direction(more with less)
- Demographic Shifts
- Intensification of global and local competition (including the prospect of private universities and increased competition for international students)
- Students as customers?
- REF & Impact
- The impact of technology on teaching & learning



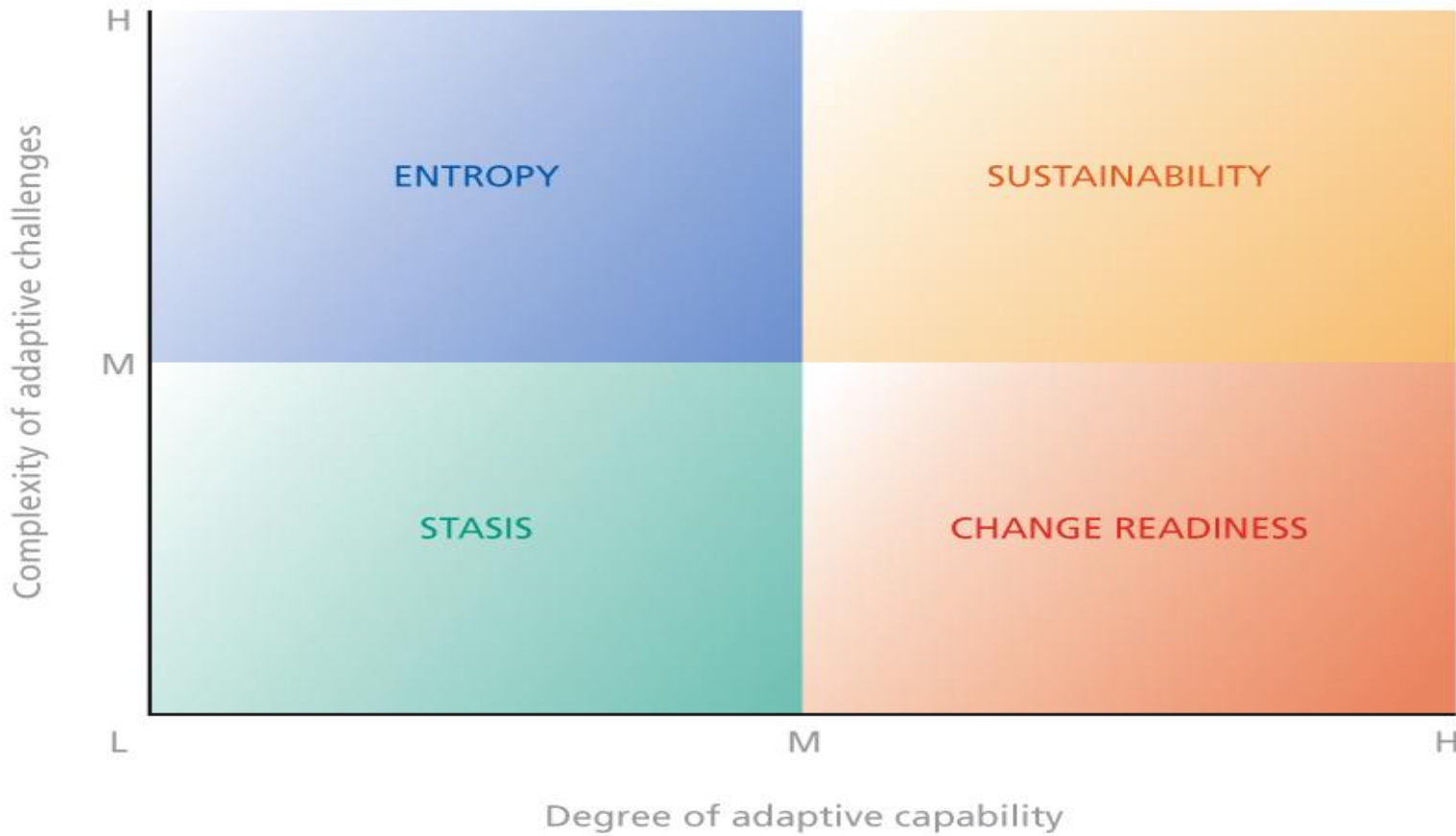
# Dilemmas and Tensions

- Building a corporate identity and approach (one university) whilst honouring diversity and autonomy
- The academic- managerial 'divide'
- Motivation to be leaders or managers?
- Planned Succession?
- Dealing with underperformance





# Fit with the Environment

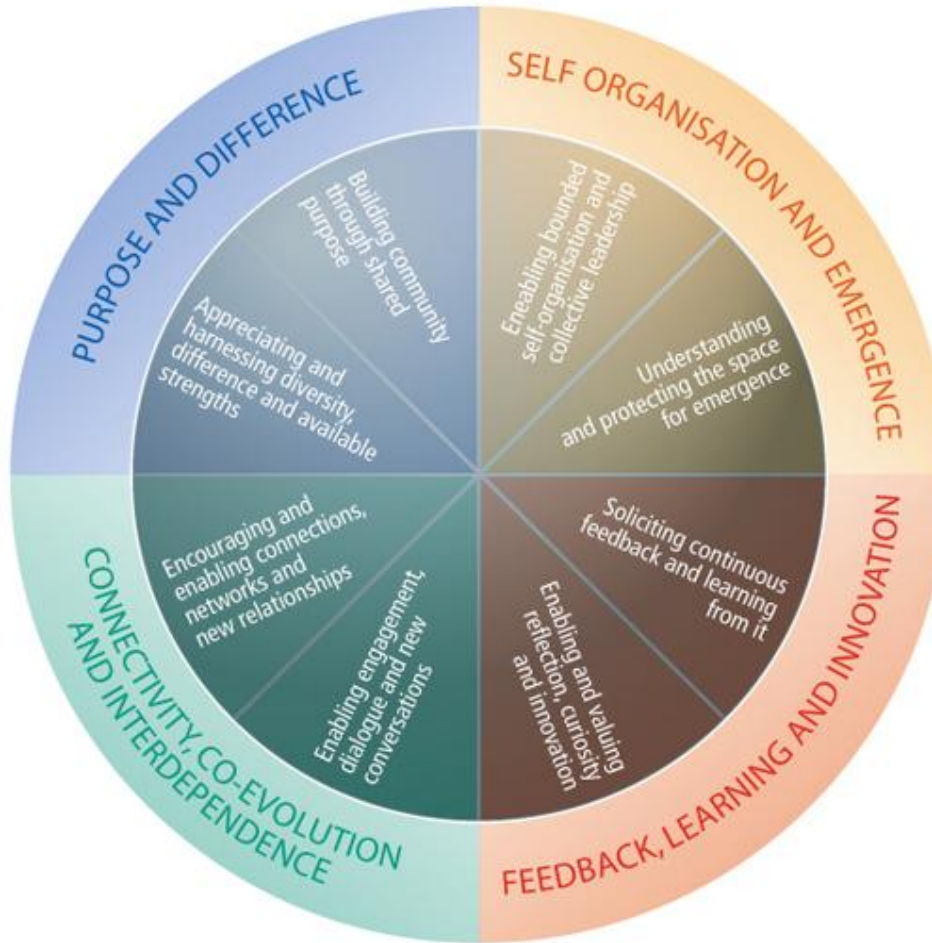


# The 4 Constructs of Adaptive Capability



# The Focus for Emergent Leadership

## 4 Constructs & 8 Elements of Adaptive Capability



# HE Case Study 1

## Creating a Dialogue about Strategy

### Context:

University merging 3 previously separate Departments into a new School. Cultural and operational differences between each of the merging entities. Six months in, 'fires' igniting all over the organisation and management team (not yet a team) swamped by fire fighting whilst trying to build the new organisation. Little perceived ownership of the new organisation or commitment to building it.





# Solution

- To use the development of the new School's strategic plan to engage with the 'whole system' in a grand act of co-creation.
- New School Executive provided the boundaries and desired outcomes.
- A Design Team appointed to co-create the process and approach with Elementa.
- A series of dialogue based large group interventions involving all staff.
- A separate event for customers (incl students) and other stakeholders.



# Tangible Outcomes

- The new strategic plan document published on schedule
- Strategy monitoring process established
- Much clearer definition and understanding of strategic and operational priorities



# Intangible Outcomes

- A sense of an emergent community
- A growing sense of what we have in common, not what makes us different
- Increasing conversations about future possibilities
- New networks and relationships established across the whole organisation that cut through traditional boundaries
- A much clearer collective understanding of the external environment and the internal resources/capability to respond to this
- A sense of being respected, valued and listened to
- An increased desire to 'make this work'



# HE Case Study 2

## Developing Strategic (Emergent) Leadership

### Context:

- A research intensive 'top ten' university. From a position of strength decided to invest in its managerial community (academic and non-academic) by way of developing an improved collective capability to act flexibly and nimbly in response to a fast changing world.
- This university was clear that teaching & learning, research & knowledge transfer (the academic project) represented the core 'business' but wanted to build a greater sense of 'one team' in response to an increasingly turbulent environment.



# Solution

- Co-creation of a Strategic Leadership Development programme between university senior management, university's HR team and consultants.
- Modular approach which included Strategic Improvement Idea Projects (ROI), Inputs/provocations from key internal and external speakers and a continuing focus on the 'real world' adaptive challenges that the institution and its leaders were facing.



# Solution

## Modules focused on:

1. The Strategic & Leadership Context
  2. Understanding Self
  3. Building High Performance Teams
  4. Ideas Into Action (grounding innovation)
- In addition there was a two hour (lunchtime) programme induction event and a concluding evaluation/celebration event
  - Development did not push 'one right way' to leadership



# Tangible Outcomes

- 3 *Strategic Improvement Ideas* were developed by the group and presented to a group of senior managers and other stakeholders. The group received feedback on each idea and subsequently each of the three have been endorsed by the Senior Management Group.
- Demand for places on future programmes runs ahead of supply
- The university won a national award for its leadership and management development provision, of which this programme was a key part.



# Intangible Outcomes

- Central Service Heads and Senior Academics collaborating and connecting in new more productive ways
- Significant reduction in 'them and us' between Senior Management Group, HOD's and Heads of Central Services
- Emergence of a strong leadership community across the university which continues to connect formally and informally
- Fewer problems getting stuck between 'boundaries' and greater collaboration to resolve these problems
- Reported increase in individual confidence in being a leader





# Case Study Sense Making

**What reflections/questions do you have?**



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# How Adaptive is your University?



# Table Group Activity

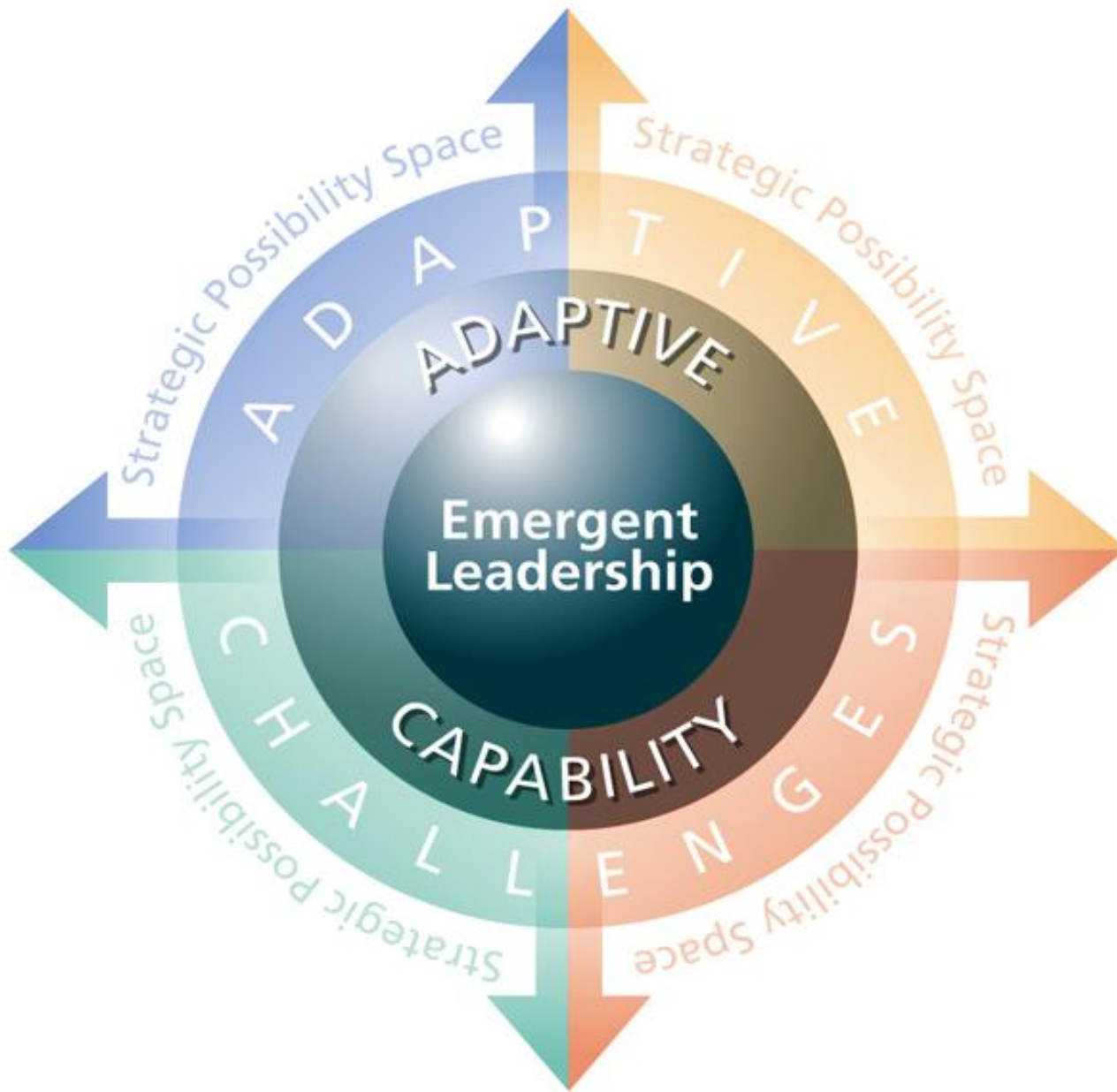
- Each individual to complete and self score the Adaptive Capability Index for their particular institution
- Use the interpretation sheet to see whether your institution is a dinosaur, crab or dolphin.
- Make visible to your table colleagues (using badge provided??) which of the three metaphors is most resonant of your institution.
- Each table participant can then briefly talk through why this metaphor is/is not 'accurate' and what they think their institution might need to do less or more of in the future if it is to become more agile and adaptive. (2mins each)



# Table Group Activity

- Table as a whole can then explore/clarify the role of HR in HE, in building greater Adaptive Capability in their individual institutions (Continue doing/stop doing/start doing).
- Each table make very brief report back in plenary on future role of HR in HE in building greater Adaptive Capability







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