

Liminal ambidexterity: operating between executional simplicity and adaptive complexity in transitional environments

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Annotation. This conceptual paper develops the notion of liminal ambidexterity to explain how organizations remain effective when their established routines continue to support performance but cease to orient them toward future advantage. Using concepts such as ambidexterity, liminality, dynamic capabilities, resilience, and management control, the paper argues that transitional environments require firms to maintain executional simplicity in the operational core while creating sufficient adaptive complexity at the edge. The framework recognizes three indexed domains: the Simplicity Discipline Index (SDI), the Complexity Capability Index (CCI), and the Complexity Load Index (CLI). In addition, translational governance is introduced as a mechanism that converts ambiguous signals into a limited set of executable commitments. The paper contributes a quadrant model, a capability-load fit logic, a refined definition of translational governance, illustrative empirical anchors, and a measurement architecture for future empirical testing.

Keywords: ambidexterity; liminality; organizational complexity; dynamic capabilities; management control.

JEL classification: D23; L22; M10; M19.

Introduction

An increasing number of organizations now operate in periods in which the existing order continues to generate revenue but no longer provides clear guidance on the sources of future advantage.

These are liminal periods: between stability and disruption, between established operating models and emerging possibilities, and between present functionality and future uncertainty. In such settings, firms face a dual requirement: they must maintain productivity, quality, cash flow, and growth, while simultaneously scanning for weak signals, experimenting with alternatives, and adapting to the non-linear shifts in technology, regulation, geopolitics, demand, and stakeholder expectations.

The literature on ambidexterity provides the vocabulary for this challenge. Since March (1991) distinguished between exploration and exploitation, and Tushman and O'Reilly's arguments developed the concept of the ambidextrous organization, research has established that a firm's long-run performance depends on its ability to combine alignment and adaptation rather than privileging one over the other. However, a recent review shows that ambidexterity becomes conceptually diffuse in VUCA environments. It is no longer simply a matter of how much exploration can be allowed against

exploitation but also how the organisation can remain internally simple enough to operate while becoming sufficiently complex to absorb external turbulence.

Recent studies provide crucial insights into this puzzle. Efforts to achieve ambidexterity in VUCA environments include agility, experimentation, restructuring, and knowledge integration. Research on liminal space suggests that organizations can sustain exploration through paradoxical framing and unstable but bounded interfaces between senior and middle management. Studies of agility and dynamic capabilities stress the need for sensing, learning, seizing, and reconfiguring under turbulence, while resilience and management-control research shows that outward-looking, interactive, and qualitative control systems are often required when external complexity intensifies. However, these streams have not yet been integrated into a single organization-level model that explains how operational simplicity and adaptive complexity can coexist and be measured.

This paper proposes such a model. We introduce the concept of liminal ambidexterity and define it as the organizational capacity to preserve executional simplicity in the operating core while developing enough adaptive complexity to match environmental turbulence and translate ambiguity into a small number of executable commitments. The paper makes four contributions. First, it reconceptualizes ambidexterity for liminal periods as a simple-core, adaptive-edge, and translational-governance problem. Second, it separates complexity capability from complexity load to enable fit-based theorizing rather than treating environmental turbulence as mere background context. Third, it presents translational governance as the meso-level mechanism that turns adaptive variety into selective organizational commitments. Fourth, it proposes a measurement framework and empirical agenda that can turn the model into a measurable research programme.

The remainder of the paper reviews literature relevant to the problem at hand, outlines the conceptual method, presents the model and propositions, provides a measurement architecture to allow for empirical testing and concludes with theoretical and managerial implications.

1. Literature Review

1.1 From exploration-exploitation to ambidexterity in VUCA environments

Classical ambidexterity research has established the need for organizations to both exploit and explore. Exploration involves variation, experimentation, and discovery, whereas exploitation involves refinement, efficiency, and implementation (March, 1991). It was later argued that enduring firms require systems and lead structures that support both evolutionary and revolutionary firms (Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996). Reviews of this research area have identified structural, contextual, sequential, and leadership-based antecedents of ambidexterity (Raisch and Birkinshaw, 2008). Moreover, meta-analytic research reveals a generally positive but contingent relationship between ambidexterity and performance (Junni *et al.*, 2013).

Recent studies suggest that achieving organizational ambidexterity in VUCA environments poses a conceptual challenge.

According to Fernández-Pérez de la Lastra and Sánchez-Gardey (2024), the literature remains fragmented in defining, labelling, developing, and implementing ambidexterity under VUCA conditions. A variety of organizational responses, including agile working in response to volatility, managing knowledge and information in response to uncertainty, restructuring in response to complexity, and experimenting in response to ambiguity, are called for by the different dimensions of VUCA according to their review. This highlights the fact that ambidexterity in turbulent environments cannot be understood as a single

exploration-versus-exploitation continuum. Therefore, a more distinct theory is required to answer the key question what forms of organization can occur within these in-between spaces created by transition. This is where the liminal lens comes into play.

Recent empirical studies support the need for differentiated responses to turbulence. A study by Atanassova *et al.* (2025) shows that organizational learning and strategic agility matter differently for B2B and B2C firms. Thus, firms do not simply need "more agility" in the abstract. They require context-sensitive combinations of learning, interpretation, and coordination. This reinforces the current argument that ambidexterity in transitional contexts should be theorized as a patterned organizational response rather than a single balance variable.

1.2 Liminal Space and Bounded Openness

Liminality offers a distinctive analytical lens. Essentially, the term liminality refers to a state of being "in-between", in which old roles and structures are unsettled whereas new forms have not yet been fully established (Turner, 1969). According to the concept of liminality, there are periods when boundaries, constraints, and structures become unstable.

This perspective is particularly helpful for strategy and transformation research because organizations seldom move from one stable state to another. Instead, organizations spend considerable time in provisional arrangements, often "in play" with multiple possible futures.

Putra, Pandza, and Khanagha (2024), provide one of the most recent insights relevant for the paper. By examining hierarchical interfaces in the exploration of digital opportunities, the top management teams can create liminal space through paradoxical framing. This enables broad exploration while maintaining boundaries to preserve strategic coherence. Middle managers then operate within this grey zone, combining symbolic and substantive actions that mask the split between convergent and divergent exploration. Flexibility need not be unbounded during liminal phases, but openness must be bounded. They need interfaces through which complexity can be accessed without disintegrating the coherence of the operating core. The final challenge shifts attention to agility, dynamic capabilities, and resilience: how to sustain such bounded openness as an organizational capability rather than as a leadership move that is episodic in nature.

1.3 Agility, Dynamic Capabilities, Resilience, and Management Control

This logic aligns with the recent research on agility and dynamic capabilities. Nguyen *et al.* (2025), in a review of 249 empirical studies, find a relatively strong and consistent positive relationship between agility and organizational performance, while also noting substantial heterogeneity in definitions, contextual contingencies, and research designs. Asghar, Kanbach, and Kraus (2026) extend this line of research by reconceptualizing organizational agility as a multidimensional bundle of interrelated dynamic capabilities, including both macro-agility (for example strategic and partnering agility) and micro-agility (for example operational, innovation, and workforce agility). Their work challenges the treatment of agility as a single trait and instead supports a layered architecture of adaptive capabilities.

Dynamic-capabilities scholars have also recently returned the environment to the centre of the analysis. Cristofaro, Helfat, and Teece (2025) argue that dynamic capabilities should be studied in relation to the environment they adapt to or shape, distinguishing between adaptation and shaping as well as between discrete and continuous change. Schilke and Helfat (2025) similarly emphasize that empirical progress requires construct clarity, focused dimensions, time lags between capabilities and outcomes, and multimethod designs that can capture contextual nuance. These arguments are particularly relevant

here because the present paper distinguishes the organization's capacity to handle complexity from the amount of complexity imposed by the environment.

A recent review reinforces this view. Brock and Hitt (2024) analyse the development of dynamic capabilities in international firms and suggest that capabilities research would benefit from clearer categorisation, more contextual specifications, and stronger connections between types of capabilities and environmental demands. The conclusions they have reached are consistent with the present paper's distinction between internal complexity capability and externally imposed complexity load.

This distinction is reinforced by resilience literature. According to Duchek (2020), organizational resilience is a capability that anticipates, copes, and adapts. Liang and Li (2024) indicate that post-disruption operational adaptations can enhance firm growth under strategic restructuring. Reed (2025) indicates that turbulence is characterised not just by intensity but also by duration, which is a useful observation. A temporary rise in volatility and a long period of volatility create different organizational challenges. Any useful model of liminal organizing therefore needs to treat environmental load as multidimensional, including duration as well as degree. However, adaptive capacity alone does not explain how signals are transformed into coordinated organizational commitments; that raises questions of governance and control.

Management-control research offers an essential governance solution. When faced with growing external complexity, organizations cannot solely rely on traditional internally focused control systems (Dávila, Derchi, Oyon, and Schnegg, 2024). According to their case study, the system that was used relied more heavily on qualitative and external information and became a platform for discussion on the strategic and tactical implications of environmental change. Weber, Pedell, and Rötzel (2024) similarly emphasize that management control systems that adopt a resilience orientation can facilitate organizational resilience by linking management controls to resilience capabilities. According to Badu and Micheli (2025), performance measurement systems are often related to exploitation and discipline, but there is also potential for them to support exploration if structured and used in a different way.

The management-control research also lends support to moving beyond a purely diagnostic logic. Pavlov and Micheli (2023) note that performance management in dynamic environments must become more interpretive and complexity-aware rather than merely more data-intensive.

Liminal ambidexterity is directly relevant to this insight because translational governance provides forums and measures to filter, interpret and prioritize, as opposed to only reporting back variance post hoc.

Combined, these studies suggest that organizations require both diagnostic discipline and interactive interpretation, echoing Simons' (1995) distinction between diagnostic and interactive uses of control. Nevertheless, the literature lacks an integrative model that can answer the three questions simultaneously: what should remain simple; what must become more complex; and how should the two be linked in periods of uncertainty and anticipation. Liminal ambidexterity is thus proposed as a partial solution to bridge this gap.

2. Methodology and Analysis

2.1 Research Design

The current paper is theory-building in nature. The goal is not to estimate causal effects directly, but rather to specify constructs, clarify boundaries, and derive propositions that may be empirically

examined later. Consequently, the paper employs an integrative review logic, in which core contributions on ambidexterity and liminality are combined with recent literature on agility, dynamic capabilities, resilience and management control. The organization or business unit is the unit of analysis since the central question concerns how firms retain dependable execution while adapting under transitional circumstances.

2.2 Analytical Procedure

The analysis was conducted in four steps. Initially, the literature was analysed to address the following questions: which mechanisms protect executional simplicity, which mechanisms increase adaptive variety, and which mechanisms transmit ambiguous signals into collective commitments. Theoretically distinct dimensions were retained if they could potentially be observed empirically. As a result of this step, the SDI that captures the internal operating discipline, the CCI that reflects the internal adaptive variety, and the CLI that represents the external burden and the meso-level conversion mechanism tagged as translational governance were separated. The retained dimensions were placed in a quadrant model to make the state logic explicit. The model was next translated into propositions and a measurement architecture to support future field testing.

2.3 Boundary Conditions and Analytical Choices

The framework is relevant to organizations whose operating core is still functional, but which are facing a discontinuous or prolonged change in their environment. Hence, it is particularly relevant for mature firms, business units, and public or hybrid organizations operating in advanced manufacturing, logistics, health care, energy, technology-enabled services or other business services. The model is not well suited for pure start-ups that lack a core that has proven stable and crisis situations where the operational viability has already collapsed.

Two options are important for this analysis. First, the CLI is devised as a construct in its own right rather than as generic background context. Subsequent investigations can assess capability-load fit in detail. Second, translational governance is separated from CCI because the ability to detect variety is not the same as the ability to convert this variety into selective accountable action. By treating governance as something apart from sensing, interpreting, prioritizing, and committing, these elements are not bundled together under one broad capability.

3. Results

3.1 The Liminal Ambidexterity Model

Liminal ambidexterity is defined in this paper as the organizational capacity to maintain executional simplicity at the operational core while generating sufficient adaptive complexity to match environmental turbulence and translate ambiguity into a limited number of executable commitments. At the heart of the thesis lies a simple design principle: simplify the repeatable; complexify the uncertain; and translate ambiguity into a limited set of concrete commitments. The model has, analytically, three indexed domains – SDI, CCI, CLI – and a fourth construct, translational governance, which transforms adaptive variety and environmental signals into selective organisational action.

The model employs Ashby's matching logic (1956): variety is a necessary condition for receiving variety, but must not be injected randomly into every process, every role, and every forum. When complexity is permitted to diffuse everywhere, the organisation risks losing reliability, role clarity and economic discipline. When complexity is suppressed everywhere, the organization becomes brittle and cannot

read the environment or reposition in time. Determining where simplicity should reign and where the capacity for complexity must develop is therefore key to liminal ambidexterity.

3.2 Construct Domains

3.2.1 Simplicity Discipline Index (SDI)

The first construct is the Simplicity Discipline Index (SDI). The SDI measures the extent to which an organization can reduce internal noise to operate efficiently and consistently. Rather than encouraging superficial simplification, it reveals whether strategic priorities, decision rights and core processes are sufficiently clear to facilitate a reliable implementation process within the operational core. According to the proposed framework, the SDI encompasses strategic clarity and portfolio focus, decision-right clarity, process reliability, productivity, and growth conversion. A high SDI indicates that employees can clearly identify priorities, decision ownership is visible, key processes are reliable, and economic activity converts into margin and cash with relatively little friction. A low SDI leads to the proliferation of initiatives, role ambiguity, rework, unstable throughput, and weak conversion from effort into performance.

The SDI serves a stabilizing function, as liminal phases require organizations to respond to too many signals simultaneously. It protects the core from overload. As such, the SDI is best governed through diagnostic controls, operating reviews and tightly constrained performance metrics.

3.2.2 Complexity Capability Index (CCI)

The Complexity Capability Index (CCI) is the second construct. The CCI measures the organisation's capacity to observe, interpret, test and respond to environmental complexity. It involves environmental sensing, learning velocity, experimentation quality, resource reconfiguration, cross-boundary coordination and resilience. A high CCI indicates that an organization can process diverse signals, update decisions rapidly, conduct bounded experiments, reallocate financial and human resources across priorities, coordinate interdependent work, and recover from shocks without becoming strategically paralyzed.

The CCI differs from generic innovation or change orientation. It is insufficient for a firm to conduct numerous pilot projects or adopt the language of agility. Instead, the organization must demonstrate the type of adaptive variety that enables it to absorb a range of possible futures without destabilizing the operating core. Translational governance is discussed separately (in Section 4.2.4) because it governs the transformation of complexity capability into selective action rather than a general capacity for response.

3.2.3 Complexity Load Index (CLI)

The third construct is the Complexity Load Index (CLI). The CLI does not have internal capability. It derives from environmental demands. It takes into account the magnitude and duration of the uncertainty, technological and regulatory interdependency, plurality of stakeholders, ambiguous causality, and total external dependencies. Consequently, a company may therefore perform well on the SDI yet remain under-capacitated, if the complexity load imposed by its environment exceeds its adaptive capacity.

The model's key distinction is between capability and load. Most research on ambidexterity takes environmental turbulence as context but does not operationalize it in a sufficiently distinct manner to

test organizational fit. This framework enables further investigation into whether organizations maintain adequate adaptive variety compared to the complexity confronted, as the CCI is starkly differentiated from the CLI.

3.2.4 Translational Governance

The model features a construct called translational governance. It refers to the use of certain routines, forums and leadership interfaces to transform external complexity into a small number of organizational commitments capable of execution. This entails a range of activities such as interactive reviews of strategies, forums for risk and scenarios, portfolio governance, a routine for escalation across functions, and the use of performance measures as a catalyst for discussions rather than merely a tool of compliance. The liminality of translation governance is managed in a way that it keeps the edge open enough to sense and make sense of change, whilst protecting the core from fracturing.

This mechanism also clarifies that liminal ambidexterity is not the same as simply receiving a high score for efficiency and flexibility. If there is no translation, a high complexity capability can devolve into adaptive chaos; if there is insufficient openness, high simplicity can harden into brittle efficiency.

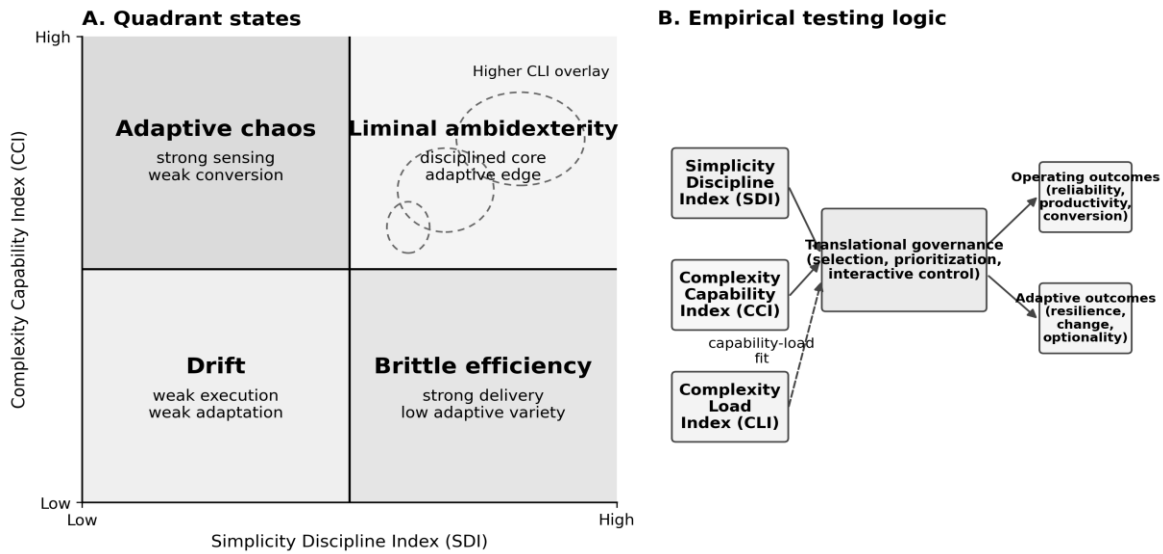
As such, the translational governance mechanism transforms complexity into action, while safeguarding the coherence of what is implemented in practice. Consequently, it is treated here as its own construct, rather than a residual subdimension of the CCI.

Translation governance begins with the receipt of signals. This process proceeds through cross-functional interpretation and the determination of priorities, or through the decision to freeze the process in order to halt or reject inappropriate signals or frozen priorities. Translation governance concludes with the prioritization of the signal once the owners have identified the issue. Moreover, the status of the issue is assigned to a metric, resource allocation, or bounded experiment. Essentially, this is not merely a discussion platform. The continuous transformation process filters out noise, prevents the core from being overwhelmed by interventions, and ensures that adaptive diversity is translated into actionable commitments.

3.3 Figure 1 and Table 1: State Logic and Explanatory Interpretation

As summarized in *Figure 1* and *Table 1*, the model structure and quadrant logic are as follows. Panel A depicts the four organizational states on the horizontal axis of the SDI, and the vertical axis of the CCI. As the CLI is an overlay condition, it is not plotted into a separate axis. The same position in the quadrant may be more or less viable depending on the magnitude and duration of the environmental load. Panel B displays the structure of empirical testing. Translational governance links the SDI, the CCI, and the CLI with operational and adaptive outcomes. A simple fit heuristic can be computed as the ratio of the CCI to the CLI for managerial use. However, for academic testing, the fit ought to be modelled without collapsing the two constructs into a raw difference score.

Figure 1 should be read through twice. Panel A provides an illustration of the state logic. The shift to the right indicates greater strategic clarity, prioritization, process reliability, and economic conversion. The upward trajectory points to a greater breadth of sensing, speed of learning, quality of experimentation, reconfiguration capacity, and resilience. Being in the upper-right quadrant does not mean that an entire organization has become equally simple and equally complex. In other words, the operating core protects simplicity while adaptive variety is cultivated at the edge and through integrative interfaces.



Source: developed by the authors from the integration of Ashby (1956), Putra *et al.* (2024), Dávila *et al.* (2024), and Reed (2025).

Figure 1. Four-Construct Liminal Ambidexterity Model and Empirical Testing Logic

Panel B explains the logic of empirical testing and the role of translational governance. The first stage of interpretive forums occurs by filtering noise, comparing alternatives, assigning responsibility, translating selected insights into a limited set of commitments. The essence of translational governance is not generic leadership but a conversion mechanism. It has indicated which signals are amplified, which signals are ignored, and which signals are encoded into action to link external complexity, adaptive capability, and operational discipline.

Table 1. Organizational states in the liminal ambidexterity quadrant

State	SDI	CCI	Empirical signature	Primary risk
Drift	Low	Low	Weak execution, fragmented priorities, slow decisions, weak adaptation.	Operational and strategic erosion
Adaptive chaos	Low	High	High scanning and experimentation, limited prioritization and scaling.	Overextension and incoherence
Brittle efficiency	High	Low	Strong delivery, lean execution, stable metrics, weak response to discontinuity.	Breakdown under disruption
Liminal ambidexterity	High	High	Disciplined core, adaptive edge, selective reallocation, strong signal translation.	Most robust state under uncertainty

Source: CLI conditions the viability of each state. For example, brittle efficiency may remain effective under low complexity load, but it becomes vulnerable when turbulence intensifies or persists.

Table 1 translates the logic of the quadrants into organizational signatures. Drift is indicative of limited discipline and capability. The efficient cause of adaptive chaos happens at the periphery without operating coherence. The brittle efficiency archetype exhibits strong delivery at short cycles but limited robustness against extended turbulence. The liminal ambidexterity shows disciplined execution with selective adaptation. Depending on their state labels, organizations can transition between states in response to changes in the complexity load or shifts in the strength of governance routines.

3.4 Propositions

Based on the foregoing conceptual development, the following propositions are advanced. Propositions 1 and 2 address the main effects of the SDI and CCI; Proposition 3 addresses capability-load fit; Propositions 4 and 5 specify the two pathological quadrant states; Proposition 6 tests the moderating role of translational governance; and Proposition 7 states the full liminal ambidexterity condition.

Proposition 1. A higher SDI will be positively associated with short-cycle operating outcomes, including process reliability, productivity, and growth conversion.

Proposition 2. A higher CCI will be positively associated with adaptive outcomes, including resilience, strategic change, optionality, and medium-term growth.

Proposition 3. The relationship between the CCI and performance will depend on the CLI such that sustained performance is strongest when the CCI matches or modestly exceeds the CLI.

Proposition 4. Organizations with a high SDI and a low CCI will exhibit brittle efficiency: relatively strong short-term operating performance under a low CLI, but lower robustness as environmental turbulence becomes more intense or prolonged.

Proposition 5. Organizations with a high CCI and a low SDI will exhibit adaptive chaos: comparatively high rates of sensing and experimentation but weaker coherence, slower conversion of initiatives into scaled outcomes, and lower economic returns.

Proposition 6. Translational governance will positively moderate the effect of the CCI on organizational outcomes by increasing the conversion of external signals into actionable commitments while protecting the SDI from adaptive overload.

Proposition 7. Organizations characterized by a high SDI, a high CCI, strong translational governance, and a CCI level that matches or modestly exceeds the CLI will display the highest level of sustained performance over time.

3.5 Measurement Architecture and Empirical Testing Logic

Because this paper is conceptual, the empirical agenda is framed as a sequenced research programme rather than a concluded test. The idea is to progress from conceptual clarity to measurement validity and subsequently to theory testing. The proposal below has been developed to enhance academic rigor and managerial usability.

Table 2 defines how each dimension is to be operationalized and identifies representative literature anchors. The studies referenced provide the main theoretical sources for deriving or inferring other dimensions and indicators. Nevertheless, these are not considered direct borrowings of a scale in every instance.

Table 2. Proposed measurement architecture by construct

Construct	Dimension	Illustrative indicators	Primary data sources	Cadence
SDI	Strategic clarity and portfolio focus (Simons, 1995; Badu and Micheli, 2025)	% employees correctly naming top priorities; % budget tied to priorities; number of active initiatives per priority	Pulse survey; strategy office; budget data	Quarterly
SDI	Decision-right clarity and process reliability (Simons, 1995; Dávila et al., 2024)	Named owner for critical decisions; escalation time; OTIF/SLA attainment; defect or rework rate	Governance logs; workflow tools; ERP or quality systems	Monthly / quarterly
SDI	Productivity and growth conversion (Junni et al., 2013; Badu and Micheli, 2025)	Revenue or value added per FTE; throughput per labour hour; order-to-cash time; cash conversion	Finance; HRIS; ERP	Quarterly
CCI	Environmental sensing (Cristofaro et al., 2025; Brock and Hitt, 2024)	Diversity of external signal sources; frequency of market, regulatory, and technology reviews; weak-signal capture rate	Strategy; risk; market intelligence; compliance	Quarterly
CCI	Learning and experimentation (Nguyen et al., 2025; Atanassova et al., 2025)	Signal-to-decision time; incident-to-policy update time; pilots with clear hypotheses; scale-up ratio	PMO; innovation portfolio; incident logs	Quarterly
CCI	Resource reconfiguration (Cristofaro et al., 2025; Schilke and Helfat, 2025)	% budget reallocated mid-cycle; time to redeploy talent; internal mobility into priority initiatives	Finance; HRIS	Quarterly
CCI	Cross-boundary coordination and resilience (Putra et al., 2024; Duchek, 2020; Liang and Li, 2024)	Share of cross-functional initiatives; interdependency-resolution time; time to recover critical services; scenario readiness	PMO; business continuity; procurement	Quarterly / event-driven
TG	Interactive interpretation and commitment translation (Putra et al., 2024; Dávila et al., 2024; Pavlov and Micheli, 2023)	% signals translated into portfolio or resource changes; post-pivot coherence score; frequency of interactive strategy, risk, and scenario forums	Strategy and risk forums; budget logs; pulse survey	Quarterly
CLI	Volatility and uncertainty (Fernández-Pérez de la Lastra and Sánchez-Gardey, 2024; Atanassova et al., 2025)	Demand variance; forecast error; forecast-revision frequency; input-price volatility	FP&A; sales data; external market data	Monthly / quarterly
CLI	Interdependence, ambiguity, and duration (Reed, 2025; Dávila et al., 2024; Cristofaro et al., 2025)	Critical external dependencies; jurisdiction count; regulatory touchpoints; duration of turbulence episode	Procurement; compliance; strategy and risk logs	Quarterly

Source: Representative citations identify the literature streams from which each dimension was derived. The indicators are proposed operationalizations for future empirical work, not a direct reproduction of any single published scale.

The Phase 1 should be focused on construct refinements and content validation. A comparative qualitative study involving sectors exposed to different forms of turbulence may sharpen the boundaries of constructs and item pools. It would be particularly useful to carry out semi-structured interviews with

the top managers, middle managers, operations leaders, innovation managers, risk leaders and controllers since the model includes execution, adaptation and governance. The objective at this stage is to check whether the defined SDI, CCI, CLI and translational governance dimensions are visible and distinguishable in practice.

Phase 2 should develop and pilot a multisource measurement instrument. Some indicators are best captured perceptually through managerial survey items (for example perceived strategic clarity or the interactive use of strategy forums), whereas others should come from archival or operational records (for example cycle-time variance, defect rates, budget reallocation, or recovery time after disruption). For this reason, the constructs are best modelled as higher-order composites assembled from multiple dimensions rather than as narrow reflective latent variables.

Phase 3 should test the theory in a time-lagged field design at the business-unit or firm level. A suitable sample would include organizations from sectors such as advanced manufacturing, technology-enabled services, logistics, health care, energy, or business-to-business services, where complexity load varies but can be measured. A practical design would collect T1 data on the SDI, the CCI, the CLI, and translational governance; T2 data on resilience and strategic-change indicators approximately six months later; and T3 data on operating and growth outcomes approximately twelve months later. This sequence is consistent with recent guidance in dynamic-capabilities research emphasizing time lags and multimethod triangulation.

A proposed measurement architecture is presented in *Table 2*. In order to become useful for management, a particular indicator may be normalised to a 0-100 scale (using internal historical percentiles or industry averages). For example, the normalisation approach for a defect rate or a forecast error is a reverse code (as smart higher is better), unlike the time to recover where smart lower is better. The scores of these dimensions can all be averaged into composite or construct-level scores. Equal weighting is a reasonable starting point for its first application, to be further refined by expert judgement or empirical calibration.

A number of complementary techniques are suitable for academic analysis. The coherence of survey-based subdimensions can first be assessed with exploratory and confirmatory analyses. In the case of multiple respondents rating the same business unit, inter-rater agreement statistics can be used. Additionally, latent profile analysis or theoretically constrained cluster analysis can assist in exploring whether the four proposed states emerge. Variable-centred models can be employed to test the propositions applying panel regression or structural equation models using a time separation of variables.

The suitability of the CCI for the CLI warrants special attention. A simple fit gap can be calculated as CCI minus CLI and used as a good managerial heuristic, but raw difference scores obscure the separate effects of capability and load. As per the congruence literature, the subsequent studies should refrain from assuming the CCI and the CLI as interchangeable variables and theorize about their joint effects through polynomial regression and response-surface analysis (Edwards & Parry, 1993). Through this approach the researchers will be able to test whether performance peaks when capability matches or moderately exceeds load and whether over-capacity and under-capacity effects are asymmetric. The response surface can indicate whether the misfit is broadly symmetric about the fit line, or whether under-capacity is more damaging than over-capacity, creating an asymmetric performance ridge rather than a balanced saddle.

A further benefit of the model is that it allows for mixed methods even after the quantitative phase. Comparative follow up case studies can be carried out over time to examine how organizations move between states and which governance routines help them sustain a simple core while also expanding adaptive capacity. This is especially important; since liminal periods are inherently transient, state transitions may matter as much as any cross-sectional score.

3.6 Illustrative Empirical Anchors

The framework also aligns with recent findings reported in the literature. According to the research of Putra, Pandza and Khanagha (2024), top managers can create bounded liminal spaces that encourage exploration within boundaries of strategy. This closely illustrates translational governance: the corporation does not eliminate ambiguity; it organizes and contains it.

Researchers Dávila et al. (2024) and Pavlov and Micheli (2023) indicate that when external complexity increases, performance-management systems are shown to be useful only if they are used interactively and interpretively rather than just diagnostically. These studies suggest that governance routines are necessary to transform signals into prioritized commitments without dissolving operating discipline.

Liang and Li (2024) along with Reed (2025) shed more light on the fit logic. Resilience can foster change and growth, but the severity of the situation is also characterized by its depth and length. When combined, these findings help to justify the explicit separation between the CCI and the CLI and provide an explanation of the significance of capability-load fit over time.

4. Discussion

The proposed framework makes four theoretical contributions. First, it reconceptualizes ambidexterity for transitional context as being about a simple core, adaptive edge, and translational governance. Furthermore, this concept is not a balance that blurs the distinction between exploration and evaluation. Second, it distinguishes complexity capacity from complexity load enabling the theorizing and testing of fit rather than assuming that further adaptation is always better. Third, it clarifies translational governance that helps in the meso-level conversion mechanism. In this way, liminal signals are transformed into selective organizational explanations, and this process is carried out without disrupting the system's fundamental functioning. Fourth, it provides a measurement architecture and an empirical agenda that translate the model's abstract constructs into observable indicators and testable relationships.

The fourth contribution also engages with current debates about measurement. Most existing literature treats agility, resilience, and dynamic capabilities as broad desirable properties with heterogeneous operationalizations. This paper provides a pathway from abstractions toward indicators by specifying the dimensions of SDI, CCI, CLI, and translational governance. Most importantly, this also implies that not every indicator should be governed in the same way. The indicators of the SDI are largely diagnostic and target oriented. On the other hand, the CCI, the CLI, and translational-governance indicators often require more interactive, interpretive, and scenario-linked use.

For managers, the practical implication is clear in statement but demanding in execution: avoid making the whole organization equally simple or equally complex but make the operating core repeatable and create flexible ability at the boundary and through integrative forums. Subsequently, invest in translation governance so that complexity becomes selective action rather than organizational noise. A company that has strong KPIs, but no peripheral vision is vulnerable to brittle efficiency. An organization with

numerous signals and experiments but weak order in actions is at risk of adaptive chaos. Achieving liminal ambidexterity is not a question of compromise, but of differentiation and translation.

For managers, this framework outlines a four-step diagnostic process. First, measure the CLI; don't just discuss turbulence in a figurative sense. To enhance SDI security, we will reduce the number of priorities, clarify responsibilities, and restructure the system to eliminate the endless chaos of initiatives.

For managers, the framework outlines a four-stage diagnostic process. First, measure the CLI, not merely discuss turbulence in a figurative sense. Second, to enhance SDI security, reduce the number of priorities, clarify responsibilities, and restructure the system to eliminate the endless flow of initiatives. Third, use sensing routines, bounded experiments, and rapid reallocation mechanisms selectively to invest in the CCI. Fourth, establish translational governance through ongoing, systematic cross-functional forums that culminate with a few concrete commitments, explicit resource shifts, and follow-up metrics. The aim is not to maximize complexity everywhere, but to embed it where it enhances adaptation and to signal it before it overwhelms the core.

However, the framework has its flaws. The framework that has been created is a conceptual model, and the proposed indices are yet to be validated. Industry conditions, ownership structures and the size of the organization may affect the content and weighting of indicators. Moreover, the current paper treats the organization or the business unit as the principal level of analysis, even though many relevant mechanisms operate at team and leadership-interface levels. Considering this, future researchers should examine multi-level versions of the model and test whether liminal ambidexterity can be cultivated differently in different organizations.

Conclusions

In this paper, the notion of liminal ambidexterity has been introduced to examine organizational effectiveness under uncertainty, anticipation, and transition. The paper argues that in liminal conditions, firms must maintain their ability to balance simplicity and operational complexity while remaining aligned with environmental demands. The proposed model identifies three categories: simplicity discipline, complexity capability, and complexity load. It also introduces translational governance as a meso-level mechanism that links these elements to action.

The quadrant that has been generated classifies organizational states into four: drift, brittle efficiency, adaptive chaos, and liminal ambidexterity. It also provides a framework for diagnosis and testing an organization empirically. Thus, the contribution of the paper is to provide both an alternative definition and a more precise framework for analysing how organizations can establish order without losing their "emergence" characteristic, or how they can maintain their viability without losing their "adaptability."

Taken together, the framework clarifies how liminal ambidexterity can be diagnosed, operationalized, and investigated across different transitional environments.

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RIBINIS AMBIDEKSTRIŠKUMAS: VEIKIMAS TARP VYKDYMO PAPRASTUMO IR ADAPTYVAUS SUDĖTINGUMO PEREINAMOSIOSE APLINKOSE

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Santrauka. Straipsnyje analizuojama, kaip organizacijos gali išlaikyti gyvybingumą pereinamaisiais laikotarpiais, kai nusistovėjęs veiklos modelis tebėra veiksmingas koordinuojant veiklą ir generuojant pajamas, tačiau nebesuteikia pakankamo pagrindo būsimam konkurenciniam pranašumui kurti. Teigiama, kad pagrindinis iššūkis kyla ne tik siekiant suderinti naujų galimybių paiešką ir esamų išteklių panaudojimą, bet ir išlaikyti veiklos paprastumą kasdienėse operacijose, sykiu ugdant pakankamą adaptyvųjį sudėtingumą, leidžiantį prisitaikyti prie technologinių, reguliacinių, paklausos bei suinteresuotųjų šalių lūkesčių pokyčių. Siekiant išspręsti šią problemą integruoti ambidekstrijos, liminalumo, judrumo, dinaminių gebėjimų, atsparumo ir valdymo kontrolės tyrimai. Siūloma keturių dalių sistema, kuri apima paprastumo disciplinos indeksą (SDI), sudėtingumo gebėjimų indeksą (CCI), sudėtingumo apkrovos indeksą (CLI) ir transliacinį valdymą. Išskiriami keturi organizacijų tipai: dreifuojančios organizacijos, adaptyviai chaotiškos organizacijos, trapų efektyvumą išlaikančios organizacijos ir organizacijos, pasiekusios ribinį ambidekstriškumą. Taip pat pateikiami teoriniai teiginiai, iliustratyvūs empiriniai pagrindai ir matavimo sistema, skirta būsimoms atvejo analizėms bei laiko dimensiją apimantiems empiriniams tyrimams. Pagrindinė išvada yra ta, kad organizacijos neturėtų vienodai paskirstyti sudėtingumo visose veiklos srityse. Vietoj to jos turėtų aiškiai nustatyti, kur turi vyrėti paprastumas, kur būtina puoselėti adaptyvią įvairovę ir kaip aplinkos signalus paversti tikslingais veiksmais.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: ambideksteriškumas; ribotumas; organizacinis sudėtingumas; dinamiški gebėjimai; valdymo kontrolė.