

Introduction to Future-Fit Leadership

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Keys for
Future-Fit
Leadership
Academy

Introduction

In this paper, we explore the foundational concepts and terminology needed to understand Future-Fit Leadership, and why this transformational journey is imperative for leaders not only to understand, but also to embody through their own leadership development towards becoming Future-Fit.

We begin by exploring the concepts of 'polycrisis' and 'metacrisis' and how our perspective on these conditions helps us recognise the need to address underlying problems in our collective worldview as well as fixing symptoms. This invites an exploration of a worldview shift from **Mechanistic Materialism (MM)** to the expanded worldview of **Quantum Complexity (QC)** is realised through an inner-journey towards **Embodying Future-Fitness** at the level of Self. It is this journey that enables us to move from coping amid the polycrisis to thriving amid the metacrisis.

This growth journey is explored through the lens of adult development psychology, specifically through the process of **vertical development**, in which we expand our ego-stage development and level of consciousness through an upward stretch in our ways of being-and-knowing towards Future-Fitness.

"Future-Fit Leadership draws on insights from living systems and seeks life-affirming futures - working towards harmony with the evolutionary dynamics of nature to enable our future generations, and all life on early, to thrive."

Giles Hutchins, author



The Polycrisis

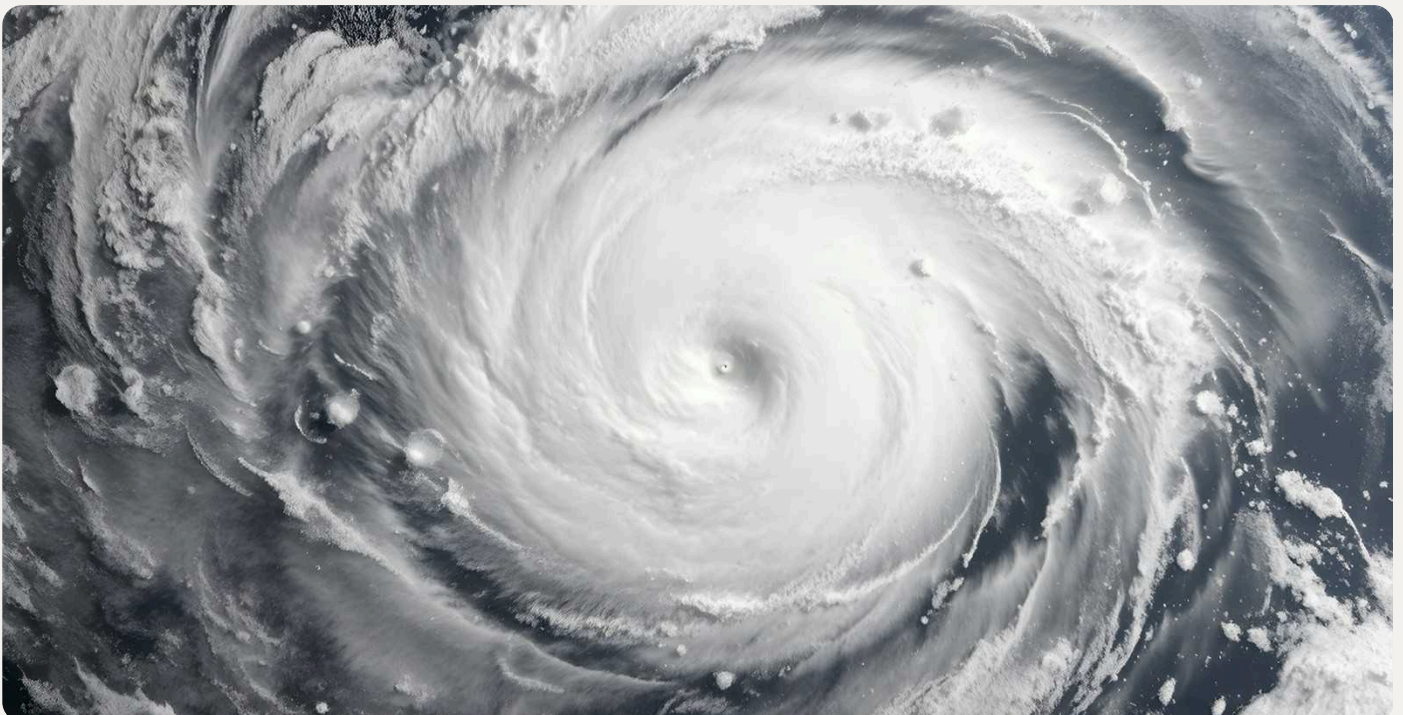
The Greek 'poly' means many and 'crisis' (from the Greek 'krisis') means a state of suspension between two worlds that breeds uncertainty and opportunity.

Our present **polycrisis** consists of a whole host of crises in their own right: climate change, natural disasters, pandemics, wars, mass migrations, water scarcity, cyber-attacks, socially corrosive levels of inequality, refugee crises, nitrogen and phosphorus crises, accelerating biodiversity demise, collapsing insect pollination, rampant rainforest destruction, widespread waterway pollution, ocean acidification, geopolitical volatility, personal and national debt crises, loss of trust in institutions, crisis of meaning, social contract erosion, obesity epidemic, mental health crisis, childhood and teenager anxiety crisis, rife social media addiction, impending workforce displacement crisis due to AI/Quantum Computing, exponential increase in technospheric surveillance, rising misinformation, and the list goes on. These interrelated crises amplify each other forming a wicked entanglement with dangerous tipping points looming large.

When we look through a lens of the **polycrisis perspective** we see change and tensions as things to fix and resolve through a **control-manage** leadership action-logic. We try and fix problems by treating symptoms at the surface level while overlooking deeper root causes. We apply systems-thinking to comprehend the relational nature of the interwoven crises but this is done through a materialistic lens i.e. empirical-physical outer-nature is prioritized and psychical inner-nature is deprioritized (suppressed even).

"The polycrisis we are experiencing across the planet is an anthropological crisis. It's a crisis of humanity failing to become Humanity."

Edgar Morin, philosopher



The Metacrisis

Such a charged time of change, tension, danger and opportunity dares us to peer beyond the constraints of yesterday. This is where the nascent term **metacrisis** enters the scene. Applying the Greek 'meta' meaning beyond or transcend-and-include to convey how the interwoven multifaceted nature of the polycrisis becomes a catalytic opportunity to move beyond yesterday's mindset and see with new eyes.

With a **metacrisis perspective** we see change and tensions as crucibles for creativity and emergence that we **sense-respond** to in order to learn, flourish and serve.

Systems-thinking is a tool within a deeper repertoire of holistic being-and-knowing that senses root problems beyond symptoms. We start to see through the **illusion of separation** and realize mind-matter, inner-outer, human-nature are false dualisms. This deeper comprehension of life reorientates our sense of humanity and our story of progress. Regenerative futures become not only possible, but the only viable futures. We see beyond the polycrisis perspective of an ever-diminishing endgame and bring forth a depth of hopefulness and wisdom inherent in our deeper humanity.



Mechanistic Materialism

The dominant worldview that drives much of how we approach life and has led to our current polycrisis is shaped by two M's: **Mechanistic Materialism**.

The first 'M' is for **mechanistic** thinking which is a more left-hemispheric mode of attention: it drills down into detail. We pull things out of their lived context, draw hard lines around them, and then define, categorize, and manipulate the world around us. There is nothing inherently wrong with this. It helps us understand life, and it is an important part of what makes us human. The difficulty arises when this mode becomes resistant to change, somewhat fear-based, and inclined to dominate. When that happens, it crowds out other ways of knowing and tries to take over. It also encourages us to see things as machines: linear, binary and predictable.

The second 'M' is **materialism**. This worldview emerged through the scientific revolution a few hundred years ago. Prior to that, across much of human history, many cultures held a deep sense of animistic consciousness: a sense of depth to life, and of sentience throughout nature. With materialist thinking, matter is separated from mind, and outer 'things' that can be measured are prioritised over inner subjective experiences. Space becomes emptiness, and matter becomes all that 'counts'. This creates a lens of separateness through which we view the world as separate 'things' bouncing around in a world devoid of any meaning or animating consciousness.

Materialism also shapes neo-Darwinian interpretations of evolution: evolution as selfish ascendancy, with separate species struggling for survival in a dog-eat-dog world.

Add the two M's together and you have today's dominant worldview of **Mechanistic Materialism (MM)**. MM permits all sorts of violations against life in the name of 'progress' – from plastics choking our oceans, to millions upon millions of animals chained in factory-farm hell-holes, to child labor sweat-shops, to clear-cut chaining of pristine rainforests.

The lens of separateness that lies at the heart of MM is both its greatest asset and downfall. On the one hand, the objectifying lens of separateness has brought great strides in material progress, industry and healthcare, on the other hand, it degrades and de-animates our inner and outer worlds, leading to an exploitative tendency that undermines the very fabric of human civilization and the more-than-human world.

We are not suggesting to 'throw out the baby with the bathwater' and lose the increased capacities we have gained from MM. Importantly this shift into the expanded worldview of **Quantum Complexity (QC)** is a **transcend and include**: a developmental shift that retains the self-agency, liberal morality, and self-responsibility that MM has enabled, while expanding into a deeper way of making meaning no longer constrained by the MM's limitations and flaws.



Quantum Complexity

By creating a shift in our own hearts and minds, we can up-stretch our consciousness beyond MM and its lens of separateness. In its place, we can cultivate a quality of consciousness that is more attuned to life, which we call **Quantum Complexity (QC)**.

QC draws on developments in quantum theory and complexity science over the past few decades, bringing those insights into leadership, organizational development, socioeconomics, and systems change. QC is also timeless and can be found throughout the ancient wisdom traditions the world over and is quite simply attuning us to work the way nature works.

The QC worldview is a profound shift from the MM worldview, it doesn't happen overnight. It involves a significant death-rebirth journey at a level of Self, and within our systems: organizations, collective systems of education, socio-economic, leadership and governance.

In moving into QC we bring forth a deeper being-and-knowing and activate ancient wisdom inherent in us. Put simply, QC draws upon modernity's MM and premodern ways, while working with the latest scientific findings and empirical evidence available to us.

Perhaps THE key aspect of this shift into QC is a dawning realization that consciousness is not a byproduct of neural activity in the brain but is actually pervasive throughout life, even in the emptiness of space. This is a significant shift for the MM lens of separateness to try and comprehend.

Quantum physics has smashed open the clear-cut foundations of MM's reductive rationalistic science, and there is now a significant groundswell of robust scientific thinking that acknowledges consciousness as imbued in all things. Nothing, it would seem, is separate from anything else. Nature (including human nature) is a diversity-within-unity.

The transcendent unmanifest energetic 'inner' field of consciousness (mind) and the manifest immanent 'outer' physical forms (matter) are two sides of the same coin.

Nature is not an ensemble of separate things. It is animated by a primordial energetic field that in-forms all energy forms, including non-matter energy forms, such as sound and electromagnetism (which includes the light spectrum). This emanation of energy from inner into outer works through harmonics and we have the ability to attune with this animating principle - this life-force - that is beyond the world of form and matter.

MM Mechanistic Materialism	QC Quantum Complexity
Linear, binary, cause-effect sequence	Nonlinear, relational, rhythmic flow
Outer fixing	Inner-outer developmental inquiry
Outcomes & destinations	Learning journeys
Data-acquisition for head-certainty	Receptive pattern-sensing with warm & cold data
Rational-analytic logic	Rational-intuitive-emotional-somatic knowing
Strive, achieve, seek, solve	Surrender, presence, listen, dance with
Managing others' impressions	Self-and-systemic awareness
Control over nature	Attune with nature
Reactive to external change	Responsive to inner-outer emergence
Disparate events	Systemic interdependence
Resist tension	Hold tension
Conflict resolution	Tension transmutation
Cope amid complexity	Thrive amid complexity
Left-hemispheric yang dominance	Left-right yin-yang coherence
Dog-eat-dog competition	Collaboration & competition
Power over	Power with
Short-termist, Chronos	Multiple time horizons, Chronos-Kairos
Egoic-persona	Ego-soul dynamic
Anthropocentric	Life-centric
Control-manage	Sense-respond
Parent-child	Adult-adult
Excessive doing	Being & doing
Self-as-separate	Self-as-participatory
Organization-as-machine	Organization-as-living-system
Capitalist-consumerism	Regenerative Business & Economics
Machine-mentality	Living Systems Awareness
Achiever	Regenerator
'Philosophy of hell'	'Philosophy of life'

Future-Fitness

Future-Fitness is a process of becoming, an inner growth journey that expands and shifts our worldview from MM into QC. It offers us the ability to move from **coping amid the polycrisis** into **thiving amid the metacrisis**.

We move from endless to-do lists and problem-fixing in an attempt to 'save the world', towards a thriving purposefulness, that integrates doing and being in a way that feels genuinely 'in service to life' while enabling us to work in life-affirming ways in-tune with how living-systems work, i.e. 'regenerative'.

This is what Einstein referred to when he said:

"We cannot solve problems from the same level of consciousness that created them."

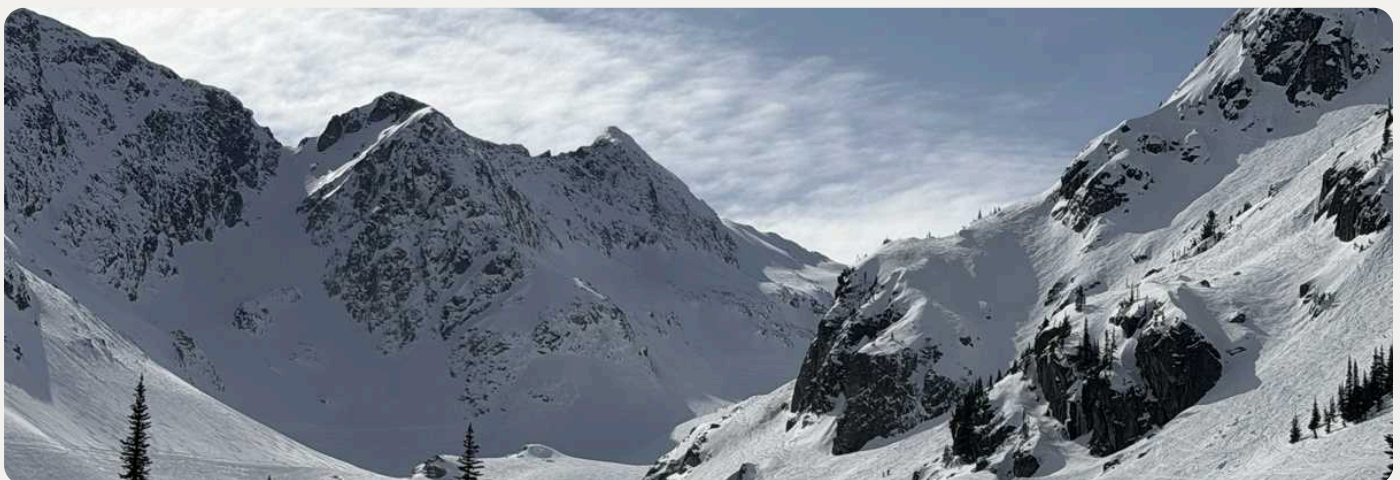
Albert Einstein, physicist

Future-Fit Leadership shifts us from a **machine-mentality** rooted in MM, a reductive, linear, control-orientated, rational-analytic mode of awareness that seeks to manage and control change, towards **Living Systems Awareness** rooted in QC, a relational, emergent, flowing, intuitive, empathic and embodied awareness that learns to dance with change.

The transformation towards Future-Fitness involves an inner death-rebirth process, an embodied multi-year journey that reorientates our psyche while morphing our meaning-making from a narrow-mindedness to a holistic and embodied **being-and-knowing**. The psychoanalyst Carl Jung called this **individuation**, a journey toward deeper authenticity, wholeness and right-relation with self-other-world.

This growth journey is also known as vertical development. It draws on adult psychology and leadership development research into how a person's ego-stage development, or level of consciousness, influences what they notice, become aware of, and therefore pay attention to, prioritise and act on. This research suggests that a leader's effectiveness in leading systems change amid rising complexity increases as they move into a more advanced stage of meaning-making. In other words, vertical development expands our capacity to become a **Future-Fit Leader**.

To understand vertical development, it helps to compare it with horizontal development. Horizontal development focuses on 'what to know' by building new skills and capabilities within the same stage of meaning-making. It is the kind of learning most of us experience at school, university and through on-the-job training.



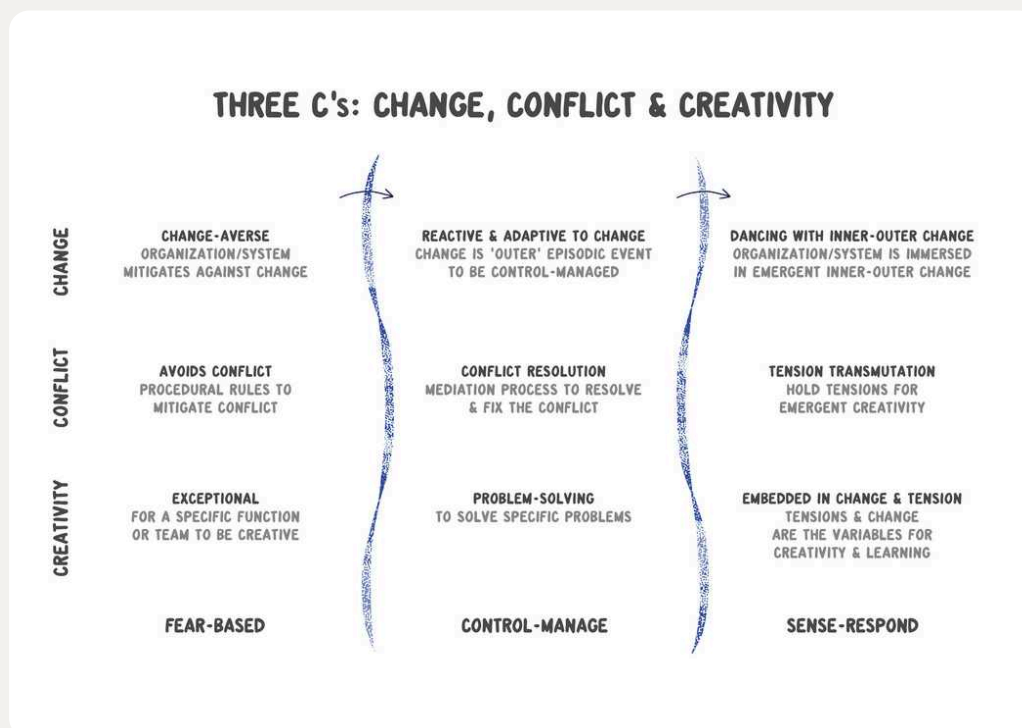
By contrast, vertical development transforms 'how we know' by stretching us into a new developmental stage of meaning-making, or level of consciousness, which significantly shapes how we function in work and life. It is not only about the tools and skills of what we need to do, but also how we engage with complexity and guide a corresponding stretch in our organisations and stakeholder systems towards Future-Fitness.

As we grow vertically through the various ego stages, we retain the capacities developed at each stage, while also transcending and including them in the next. Through this developmental growth, we undergo a significant transformation in how we work with change, conflict and creativity.

Change is no longer something to react to or manage. It becomes a participatory dance through which we continually sense, adapt and co-create in response to changing internal and external conditions.

Conflict is no longer something to avoid or merely resolve. It becomes a source of generative tension and transformation, capable of surfacing patterns from which something genuinely new can emerge.

Creativity is no longer confined to a designated function or a method for solving problems. It becomes a purposeful expression of the individual in how they sense, relate and participate in life.



Self & System

Looming ecological tipping points tell us that humanity's opportunity to halt and reverse the destruction we have unleashed on Mother Earth is slipping beyond our control. Awareness of this reality is fuelling a growing sense of urgency in our efforts to fix and problem-solve our way through the polycrisis.

Our Achiever minds are in overdrive, driving relentless action to 'save the world' and make it a better place. Our purpose and sense of achievement often become attached to creating change 'out there' in the systems, organisations and socioeconomic structures within which we work. As a result, in the face of urgency, we have often deprioritised Self, lacking the capacity to see that transformation must begin 'in here'.

The real danger of this epochal moment is that, in our panic to fix and solve, we convince ourselves there is simply no time for 'inner work' and so bring the same level of consciousness to our solutions that created the problems in the first place. Yet this step of shifting our consciousness is the very step that enables us to approach the problems differently and thrive amid rising complexity. Anything less risks leaving us subsumed by status quo anxiety and unable to bring about the worldview shift required for life-affirming futures.

Our capacity to embody Future-Fitness is inherently linked to our ability to move beyond the duality of **Self** and **System**, of me and we, without collapsing into either pole. How we show up at the level of Self has a powerful ripple effect across the systems in which we operate.

"The greatest breakthroughs of the 21st Century will not occur because of technology. They will occur because of an expanding concept of what it means to be human."

John Naisbett, business futurist



In Summary

The Keys for Future-Fit Leadership Academy formed in response to a critical need: to support and equip change leaders with new ways of being and knowing so they can thrive amid rising complexity.

It is crystal clear that what has brought humanity to this point will not support us into the future. We must use the myriad intersecting crises of our time as a catalyst for a shift in leadership consciousness, an upward stretch in our meaning-making towards **Embodying Future-Fitness**.

This shift moves us from the dominant worldview of **Mechanistic Materialism (MM)** to the more expansive worldview of **Quantum Complexity (QC)**, a way of being attuned to life on Earth.

Although these terms and concepts may feel new, or even complex, it is important to remember that on the other side of complexity lies a beautiful simplicity. The shift into a QC worldview does involve a significant death-rebirth process. Yet it is also an empowering, liberating and courageous journey, one that allows us to become more fully human by reconnecting with ourselves, each other and the world. Put simply, it allows us to fall in love with life.

"And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom."

Anaïs Nin, writer



About the Authors

If you would like to explore the themes explored in this Paper in more detail, then you can tune-in to the Keys for Future-Fit Leadership podcast found [here](#), and feel free to contact the authors Hayley Morris and Giles Hutchins [here](#) for further conversation.



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Thirty years of professional advisory & leadership experience, formerly Director of Business Transformation & Head of Practice with KPMG, and Global Director of Sustainability Solutions for multinational Atos (150,000 employees across 42 countries), last 14 yrs as Executive Coach, thought leader and advisor on future-fit leadership. Author of 7 critically acclaimed leadership books and several leadership papers. His coaching work has been called 'life changing'. Find out more about his coaching [here](#). His Leading by Nature podcast can be found [here](#), which interviews a selection of his coaching clients.



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[Hayley Morris](#) is an Australian philanthropist, impact investor and social entrepreneur, with 20 years' experience across business, philanthropy, investing and systems change. She has co-founded Sustainable Table, Climate Zero, The Regenerative Leader, and farm-to-table restaurant Barragunda Dining. She leads her family's philanthropy and impact investments through the Morris Family Foundation, is a Director of her family office, The Morris Group, and is a certified leadership coach in vertical development, working with change leaders across the impact sector.



Keys for Future-Fit Leadership Academy

Co-founded by Hayley Morris and Giles Hutchins, this leadership academy is dedicated to facilitating a developmental up-stretch toward life-affirming Future-Fitness for purpose-based leaders, philanthropists, impact investors and systems-change practitioners, see www.kffla.co