

Antifragile Principles in Enterprise Architectures

Llanos Cuenca¹^a, Andrés Boza¹^b and Alix Vargas²^c

¹Research Center on Production Management and Engineering. Universitat Politècnica de València, Camino de Vera s/n, Valencia, Spain

²School of Physics, Engineering and Computer Science. University of Hertfordshire. Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL10 9AB, U.K.

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Abstract: Organizations increasingly operate in dynamic and uncertain environments characterized by rapid technological change and frequent disruptions. Traditional Enterprise Architecture (EA) approaches primarily focus on alignment, optimization, and stability, which may limit their effectiveness when organizations face unpredictable stressors. The ability of organizations to benefit from stress and disorder is called antifragility. This research explores how EA can evolve to better support organizations in such contexts by integrating antifragile principles. The study proposes an enhanced EA model that incorporates antifragile architectural principles aligned with the conditions of emergence: connectivity, diversity, rate of information flow, lack of inhibitors, good boundaries, intentionality, and anticipation. Architectural principles act as governance mechanisms that guide architectural design and decision-making. By defining antifragile architectural principles, organizations can incorporate key elements to address stressors such as technological disruption, market volatility, and organizational change. To illustrate the applicability of the proposed approach, the model is represented using the ArchiMate modelling language and demonstrated through a running example. The modelling highlights how antifragile principles can be embedded within architectural elements and relationships, providing a structured way to represent and analyse how enterprise architectures can adapt and evolve in response to disruptions.

1 INTRODUCTION

Globalization, market turbulences, disruptions, and technological advances all combine to produce effects that are difficult to mitigate, impossible to predict, and hard to detect (O'Reilly, 2019). Many businesses fight to adapt quickly enough to new technologies to be competitive. However, this adaptation requires significant effort to identify and deploy the most suitable technological solutions across the different areas and processes within the companies. The rapidly changing economic and global environment necessitates that companies evolve to respond effectively to continuous, evolving changes (Vargas, et al., 2016). Organizational systems must be able to manage the complex, externalized interdependencies that accompany offshoring, outsourcing, and other supply chain

management strategies (Sheffi, 2004). Increasing turbulence can overwhelm an organization unless it develops greater adaptive capacity, including agility and resilience (McCann et al., 2009). Industrial organizations require models and frameworks that integrate resilience into operational and strategic management (Goepp et al., 2024). This capability enables companies to gain a competitive edge by responding effectively to market volatility and uncertainties, closely linking agility to resilience.

Resilience in business is the ability to return to a desired state after a major disturbance, which may differ from the original state (Andrés and Poler, 2013; Mutasa et al., 2011; Raquel and Raúl, 2011). It encompasses inherent resilience, the capacity to function under normal circumstances, and customizable resilience, the capacity to function in crisis situations. True resilience involves continuous innovation based on a thorough analysis of strengths,

^a <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3589-4182>

^b <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5429-0416>

^c <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7877-4730>

weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Ponomarov and Holcomb, 2009, Bux et al., 2025). Traditional resilience approaches focus on recovering from disruptions and restoring system stability, but they rarely enable organizations to improve their capabilities through disruption (Emkani et al., 2026).

In this context, the concept of antifragility, coined by Nassim Nicholas Taleb, offers a compelling theoretical lens for rethinking how societies engage with risk and uncertainty (Taleb 2012). While traditional frameworks, such as robustness, aim to resist shocks, and resilience focuses on recovering from them, antifragility goes a step further; it evolves and improves because of them (Geiß & Hertel, 2025). Antifragility (Botjes et al., 2021), refers to systems that improve in response to stressors, unlike fragile systems that deteriorate or robust systems that merely withstand stressors.

Antifragile systems adapt and learn from disturbances, adjusting to new realities, surpassing resilience by aiming for continuous improvement and sustainability (Ramezani and Camarinha-Matos, 2020; Sagala and Öri, 2024, Sindakis et al., 2025, Wang et al., 2026).

The evolution from agility to antifragility begins with organizations developing agile capabilities that enable them to respond quickly and effectively to unforeseen disruptions. Agility contributes to resilience by allowing organizations to recover from disturbances and maintain core functions under challenging conditions. Over time, through continuous learning and adaptation derived from these experiences, organizations can progress toward antifragility, where disruptions are not only absorbed but also become opportunities to refine architectural decisions, strengthen organizational capabilities, and enhance the system's adaptive capacity.

This progression becomes increasingly relevant as organizations face growing technological complexity and seek to generate value through the strategic alignment between business and IT (Cuenca et al., 2014).

Enterprise Architecture (EA) provides concepts, models, and tools that help organizations integrate strategic objectives, business processes, and information technologies. By aligning business and IT, EA supports improved organizational performance, communication, and system integration, ultimately enabling organizations to generate greater business value and competitive advantage (Vargas et al., 2016).

However, applying conventional EA approaches can become increasingly challenging in organizations characterized by large scale, rapid change, or high

complexity. In such environments, dynamics play a crucial role in business–IT alignment (BITA), as organizations must continuously adapt to uncertainty and intense competition (Jia et al., 2018). This raises the question of whether alternative forms of EA could be developed to better support organizations that may be considered “unmanageable” from the perspective of traditional EA approaches (Gladden, 2019).

In these contexts, organizations require not only agility to respond to change and resilience to maintain continuity, but also antifragility, the capability to learn, adapt, and improve when facing disruptions. Most research in this field has focused on conceptualizing antifragility, with no comprehensive model available to assess organizational antifragility (Khoshsepehr and Alineajad, 2025).

This leads to the following research question: How can antifragile principles be systematically integrated into Enterprise Architectures?

To address this research question, this paper proposes incorporating antifragility principles into The Open Group Architectural Framework (TOGAF), specifically in the Architecture Development Method (ADM).

To do this, the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 introduces the background. Section 3 outlines the research method and proposes antifragility principles to consider when adapting EA in Complex Adaptive Systems. Section 4 provides an illustrative operationalization example; Section 5 provides a summary of the findings and discussions. Finally, Sections 6 and 7 outline conclusions and future research directions.

2 BACKGROUND

Companies need to be seen as a Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) that can adapt and take advantage of adversity. As cited on (Edson, 2012), CAS are diverse, interconnected systems that exhibit: Self-organization (the purposeful internal evolution of the system), Hierarchy (certainty is created through structures that bring order and meaning), Emergence (coherent and integrated dynamic of innovation), and Learning (the planned application of experience to future events).

Conditions of emergence are identified by Moroni and Cozzolino (2019) and Seel (2003) as:

- Connectivity: Establishing connections, especially across boundaries, is crucial for preparing an organization for change.
- Diversity: Essential for facilitating emergent change.

- **Rate of Information Flow:** A vigorous and richer flow of information is necessary for systems operating far from equilibrium.
- **Lack of Inhibitors:** Optimal levels of anxiety are needed; too much or too little can inhibit emergence.
- **Good Boundaries:** Effective boundaries, such as deadlines, clear goals, and size prescriptions, create a well-defined space for emergence to occur.
- **Intentionality:** Encouraging specific outcomes through deliberate actions.
- **Anticipation:** Involves expectant waiting and sensitivity to the unfolding moment.

Enterprise Architectures were originally designed to stabilize, standardize, and optimize organizations. However, modern enterprises operate as CAS, characterized by volatility, nonlinearity, feedback loops, interdependence, and emergent behavior. In such environments, architectures optimized for control and predictability become fragile. To remain competitive, organizations must shift from merely managing complexity to benefiting from it, advancing toward antifragility.

According to Ivas (2023), although later versions have been upgraded with the gradual introduction of the "start with the business" approach, the foundation of most Enterprise Architecture Frameworks remains systems and technology, with a focus on controlling enterprise IT. According to McDowall (2019) this approach is not well-suited for the enterprise architecture in modern, agile organizations and the main reason why traditional frameworks do not deliver practical value (Kotusev, 2021).

Complex Adaptive Systems are defined by diversity, interconnectedness, self-organization, emergence, and continuous learning (Ahl & Allen, 1996; Holland, 1992; Gunderson & Holling, 2002; Edson, 2012). Yet traditional EA frameworks (CIMOSA, ARIS, PERA, TOGAF, GERAM) assume predictable requirements, rely on linear planning cycles, favour top-down governance, and emphasize stability and standardization. These assumptions apply to complex systems, but CAS are adaptive, meaning that small changes can have disproportionate impacts; system behaviour emerges from decentralized interactions; patterns evolve nonlinearly; and uncertainty is intrinsic and not fully specifiable in advance. Therefore, EA built for predictability is inherently misaligned with the adaptive dynamics of CAS.

TOGAF incorporates the Business Continuity principle; however, this principle is necessary but insufficient, as continuity only ensures survival, not

adaptation, evolution, or improvement under stress. In modern environments, continuity is too narrow, too reactive, and too static to address the challenges organizations face.

Antifragile systems learn from errors and stressors, adapt in real time, benefit from randomness and disruptions, and turn shocks into competitive advantages. Traditional EA, however, is designed to restore the desired state, minimize variance and deviations, reduce redundancy and slack, and maintain the organization's alignment with predefined plans. This architectural paradigm conflicts with antifragility, which requires evolutionary adaptation and the ability to capitalize on unexpected conditions. EA currently supports recovery, not improvement through disruption.

3 PROPOSAL OF ANTIFRAGILITY PRINCIPLES IN ENTERPRISE ARCHITECTURES

3.1 Research Approach

This research adopts a qualitative and exploratory approach to analyse how Enterprise Architecture can incorporate antifragile principles to enhance organizational adaptability in uncertain environments. The study combines a structured literature review with conceptual architectural modelling to examine the limitations of traditional EA frameworks and to develop an extended architectural approach aligned with antifragility. TOGAF is used as the baseline framework, and antifragile principles are integrated into its Architecture Development Method (ADM) to support adaptive decision-making under conditions of uncertainty. The proposed framework is illustrated through an operational scenario that demonstrates how these principles can guide architectural decisions in complex and dynamic environments. Through this approach, the study aims to provide a structured methodology for organizations seeking to transition from rigid architectures to adaptive and self-reinforcing EA frameworks.

3.2 Proposal

As mentioned above, to address potential environmental problems, it is essential to anticipate them and understand the various actions required in uncertain situations. The traditional view of EA does

not incorporate these aspects; it models the current state (as-is) and the future state (to-be), and defines the roadmap under specific, known conditions.

EA principles are fundamental propositions that guide the description, construction, and evaluation of EAs. One of the preliminary steps in an EA is to identify and establish Architecture Principles. Principles are general rules and guidelines, intended to be enduring and seldom amended, that inform and support an organization's approach to fulfilling its mission (van Bommel et al., 2006).

The principles' catalogue describes what a "good" solution should look like. It is used to evaluate and agree on outcomes for architectural decision points. In this line, principles are also used as tools to support

change initiatives. TOGAF and other architecture frameworks do not incorporate principles for business complexity, so it is necessary to adopt principles for antifragile organizations.

According to the literature review, Table 1 shows the antifragile principles identified, classified according to the conditions of emergence defined by Moroni and Cozzolino (2019) and Seel (2003): connectivity, diversity, rate of information flow, lack of inhibitors, good boundaries, intentionality, and anticipation. While learning is not one of the conditions of emergence, it is included as an emergent capability resulting from their interaction, enabling systems to adapt, evolve, and transform disruptions into opportunities for improvement.

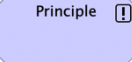
Table 1: Antifragile principles classification according to conditions of emergence.

Antifragile principles (Adobor & Kudonoo, 2025; Ahl & Allen, 1996; Argyris, 1999; Ashby, 1991; Bennet & Bennet, 2004; Corning, 2002; Derbyshire & Wright, 2014; Goldstein, 2010; Grassi et al., 2024; Gunderson & Holling, 2002; Holland, 1992; Mintzberg & Westley, 1992; Pech & Oakley, 2005; Russo & Ciancarini, 2016, 2017; Tseitlin, 2013; Vrchota et al., 2020)	
Type	Considering the new features that can arise when an upper-level entity restrains its components in new combinations that are not expected when viewing these components alone.
	Diversity Changing scenarios where unexpected events (Black Swans) are the real paradigm shifting entities.
	Good boundaries Building antifragile projects around motivated, skilled and open-minded people. Give them the environment and support they need and trust them to get the job done.
Anticipation Building a non-linear, proactive, and self-adaptive system with continuous attention to technical excellence, reality and redundancy. Controlling the dispersion of outcomes in 'worst-case scenarios and boost the emergence, including the productive and qualities interaction between entities, that have not been previously observed and have not previously existed in a complex system.	Intentionality Promoting a context aware environment. The stakeholders should be able to maintain a system indefinitely. A blameless culture is fostered.
Anticipation, Intentionality Antifragile architectures emerge from self-organizing, context aware teams.	Lack of inhibitors Leading the antifragile organizations. All stakeholders, and the broader environment, lead the antifragile organization.
Anticipation, Learning Promoting hormesis (increasing the organisation's adaptation to the changing environment, making it fitter and better able to survive) and Self-Organization, dynamically stable periodical reproduction process of the self-organised, self-sustained whole.	Learning Promoting the learning environment to generate and to transform the organization over time as circumstances and opportunities change. Understand each failure as an opportunity to learn and learn from errors. Reflects about the context situation, on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjusts its behaviour accordingly.
Connectivity Promoting the development and operation in the same system. The DevOps movement. Building on honest, open and transparent communication.	Rate of Information Flow Recognizing conditions of emergence. Increasing continuous exposure to faults and automatic fixing as the primary measure.

Thus, we propose extending the EA framework to include these antifragile principles.

In TOGAF, antifragile principles can be modelled according Archimate notation. Table 2 includes the Archimate element used, and Figure 1 shows the Antifragile principles modelled with Archimate notation proposed.

Table 2: Archimate notation.

Archimate element used	Rationale
 A goal represents a high-level statement of intent, direction, or desired end state for an organization and its stakeholders	Represents the desired end state of enhanced adaptative performance. Improve agility and resilience.
 A principle represents a qualitative statement of intent that should be met by the architecture	Anti-fragile principles capture normative architectural guidelines shaping design decisions

The upper level represents the strategic objective “Improve agility and resilience,” which is modelled as a Goal within the Motivation layer of ArchiMate. This element captures the desired organizational state: enhanced adaptive capacity in the face of uncertainty and environmental volatility. It does not represent a capability itself, but rather a strategic objective guiding architectural design decisions.

At the core of the model, Anti-fragile principles function as a Principle, or alternatively as a conceptual Grouping structuring the set of related principles. From this central node, structural relationships connect to the individual principles, indicating that antifragility is not a single attribute but a structured system of interrelated architectural principles. The connected elements represent the operational dimensions of antifragility, namely Anticipation, Intentionality, Learning, Connectivity, Lack of Inhibitors, Rate of Information Flow, Diversity, and Good Boundaries, each contributing to the realization of the overarching strategic goal.

These principles can be allocated into the Preliminary Phase of TOGAF ADM (Table 3).

It is important to note that the proposal is generic enough to be incorporated into other EAs.

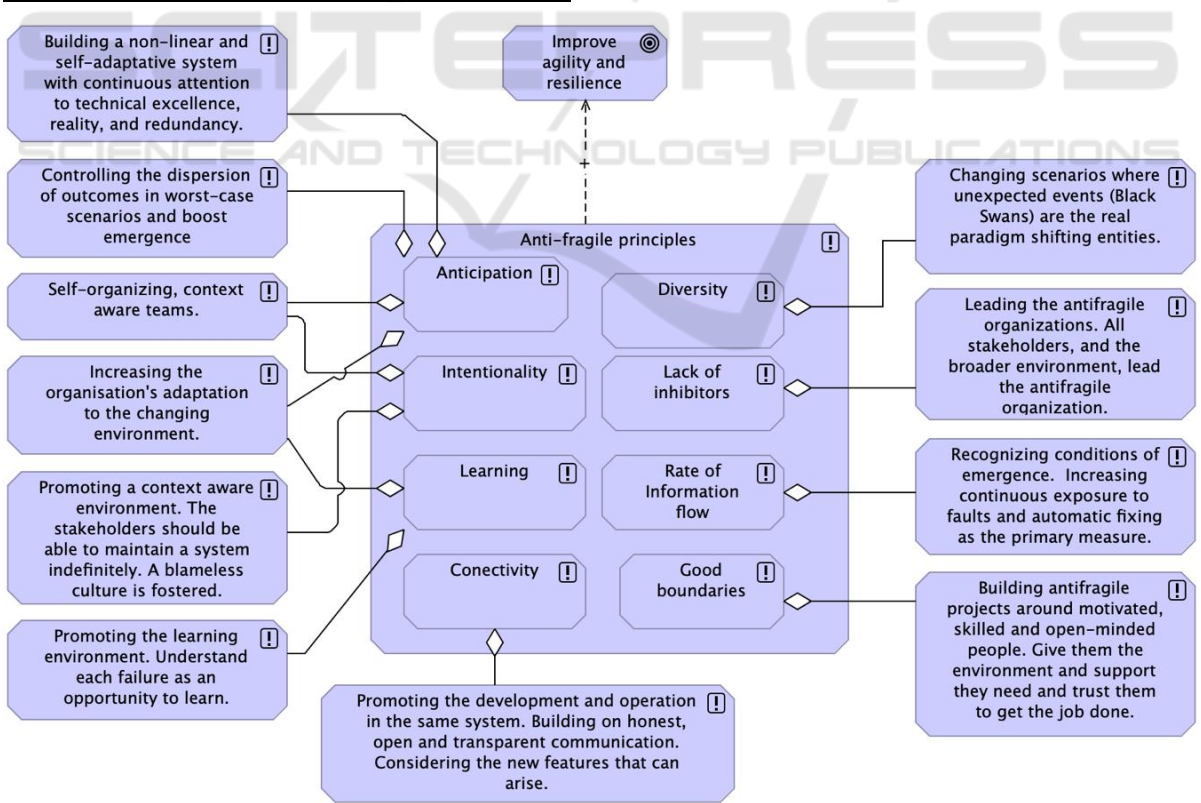


Figure 1: Antifragile principles modeled with Archimate notation.

Table 3: Antifragile principles in TOGAF.

Extended TOGAF principles
Business principles (Open Group) (primacy of principles, maximize benefit, information management is everybody's business, business continuity - reliability, common use applications, service orientation, compliance with law, IT responsibility, IP protection)
Data principles (Open Group) (Data is an asset, Data is shared, Data is accessible, Data trustee, Common vocabulary and data definitions, Data Security)
Application principles (Open Group) (Technology independence, easy-of use)
Technology principles (Open Group) (Requirements-Base-Change, Responsive change management, Control technical diversity, Interoperability)
Antifragile principles (proposal) <i>(Detailed in Table 1)</i>

A mapping among other frameworks and TOGAF ADM can be done. For example, the Identification and Concept phases in GERAM Framework map to Framework & Principles and Architecture Vision in TOGAF ADM. This is the initiation phase in the development of EA, where the organization (and the architect) attempts to understand the stakeholders' high-level requirements and establish the principles that will guide development in later phases. The Requirements phase in GERAM maps to the Business Architecture phase in ADM. In this phase, the organization elaborates on its business strategies, goals & objectives, and specifies the business processes to be supported by the enterprise to fulfil its business goals. The life-cycle phases in EA and modelling follow a sequential process, beginning with business strategy formulation. This formulation is done in the identification and conceptualization phases. (Cuenca et al., 2011b).

4 OPERATIONAL EXAMPLE

As a running example that illustrates how the antifragile principles would be applied within a concrete TOGAF-based architecture scenario, we consider a financial services organization undergoing digital transformation while operating under volatile regulatory and market conditions.

In this example, the focus has been on 3 principles (intentionality, learning, and good boundaries).

Intentionality is reflected in governance mechanisms that explicitly prioritize adaptability in response to regulatory changes, cybersecurity threats, and market fluctuations. For instance, cross-functional teams responsible for digital banking platforms, risk management, and compliance monitoring are empowered to make context-aware decisions supported by real-time monitoring dashboards and regulatory intelligence systems. This governance approach encourages decentralized decision-making and fosters a blameless culture in which operational incidents, such as payment system disruptions or anomalies in fraud detection, are treated as opportunities to improve system resilience and regulatory responsiveness.

The effectiveness of this principle can be assessed through indicators such as governance cycle time, which reflects the speed of decision-making processes, and the number of autonomous teams, which indicates the degree of decentralization within the organization.

Learning is embedded through structured feedback mechanisms that transform operational events, such as fraud alerts, service outages, or compliance incidents, into architectural knowledge. Post-incident reviews, regulatory audit findings, and performance monitoring of financial transaction systems feed continuous improvements in architectural design, risk management processes, and digital service delivery. Over time, this learning process strengthens the organization's capability to adapt to regulatory changes and market volatility while maintaining operational stability and compliance.

The effectiveness of this principle can be assessed through indicators such as the frequency of post-incident reviews, which reflects the organization's commitment to learning, and the time from disruption to architectural update, which measures the speed at which learning is translated into concrete improvements.

Good boundaries are established by clearly defining responsibility domains between teams responsible for core banking services, regulatory compliance, and digital customer channels. These boundaries enable autonomous teams to implement regulatory updates, risk mitigation measures, or service improvements within their scope while maintaining alignment with enterprise-wide governance and compliance requirements. Such boundaries reduce decision latency and allow rapid responses to market events or regulatory directives without requiring large-scale architectural redesign.

Indicators such as escalation frequency provide insight into the clarity of responsibility domains, while decision latency reflects the efficiency of decision-making processes across organizational units.

When regulatory changes or market shocks occur, empowered, context-aware teams operate within clearly defined responsibility boundaries, enabling rapid, informed decision-making without requiring centralized intervention or large-scale redesign.

Because failures are treated as learning opportunities and adaptation is structurally embedded in governance practices, each disruption becomes a catalyst for improvement rather than merely a threat to stability. Over successive disturbances, the organization strengthens its adaptive capacity, refines its decision processes, and enhances its collective capability to respond effectively to emerging conditions.

5 DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The proposal incorporates antifragile principles to harness uncertainty, enhance decision-making, and strengthen strategic preparedness. By embedding modularity, redundancy, and decentralized decision-making, Enterprise Architecture can evolve dynamically rather than merely resist disruptions. This aligns with the research question by positioning EA not as a static blueprint but as an adaptive, self-transforming system. Unlike traditional EA approaches that prioritize stability and standardization, the proposed antifragile framework introduces architectural mechanisms that intentionally expose systems to controlled variability and learning. This represents a conceptual shift from architectures designed to minimise change toward architectures capable of evolving through disruption. By embedding antifragile principles within the TOGAF ADM, the architecture becomes a governance mechanism that continuously adapts organizational capabilities rather than merely preserving existing structures.

These antifragile mechanisms enable organizations to restructure, reconfigure, and continually improve under stress, transforming disruptions into sources of learning and competitive advantage. Instead of merely mitigating risks or restoring prior states, the antifragile-oriented EA actively leverages volatility to enhance the enterprise's resilience. This demonstrates that antifragile principles do not simply protect the organization from adverse events; they enhance its

capacity to capitalize on uncertainty, validate strategic choices in real time, and evolve more rapidly than competitors constrained by traditional, stability-oriented architectures.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This paper makes three main contributions. First, it conceptualizes antifragility within Enterprise Architecture by linking antifragile principles with the conditions of emergence derived from complexity theory. Second, it proposes a structured integration of these principles within the TOGAF Architecture Development Method (ADM). Third, it illustrates the operationalization of the proposed framework through an architectural scenario that demonstrates how antifragile mechanisms can support adaptive decision-making in turbulent environments.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of adopting an antifragile perspective in Enterprise Architecture by leveraging established frameworks such as TOGAF. In doing so, EA can better support organizations in dealing with uncertainty, technological change, and increasing business complexity. By enabling decision-makers to model and analyze problems under conditions of uncertainty, EA becomes a key instrument for improving decision-making, strengthening business–IT alignment, and supporting organizations in adapting more effectively to dynamic environments.

6.1 Implications for Theory and Research

The proposal to define antifragile architectural principles enhances theoretical frameworks by introducing concepts that enable organizations to thrive in uncertain environments. This adds depth to existing architectural theories by integrating resilience, agility, and antifragility. This research can guide future studies in understanding the elements that most significantly impact the robustness of enterprise systems and their readiness for antifragility.

6.2 Implications in Enterprises

By implementing antifragile principles, enterprises can develop systems that not only withstand stress but also benefit from it, embodying the concept of antifragility. This leads to the creation of more resilient and adaptable business processes and IT architectures.

The use of ArchiMate facilitates clear communication and understanding of EA among stakeholders. This common language can enhance collaboration and alignment within the organization, resulting in more informed decision-making and effective implementation. Integrating antifragile principles and uncertainty scenarios into the TOGAF framework enables enterprises to adopt a structured approach for enhancing the flexibility and adaptability of their architecture. This integration enables the development of robust architectures that can quickly adapt to changing business environments.

By following the proposed approach, enterprises can achieve greater resilience, enabling them not only to recover from adverse events but also to leverage these events as opportunities for growth and improvement. This capability is crucial for achieving long-term sustainability and maintaining a competitive advantage.

7 FUTURE RESEARCH LINES

Future work is conducting longitudinal studies to observe the long-term impact of implementing the principles on organizational resilience and performance. Such studies will help understand how these principles affect the organization over time and provide data on their effectiveness across various scenarios. The development of quantitative indicators and evaluation frameworks could support the systematic measurement of antifragility in enterprise architectures, allowing organizations to assess how architectural decisions contribute to adaptive capacity and long-term resilience.

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