

Agenda

1. Introductions

2. Warm Up

3. Systems Thinking Orientation

4. Activity: The Fruit Tree – Mapping the Living System

5. Break

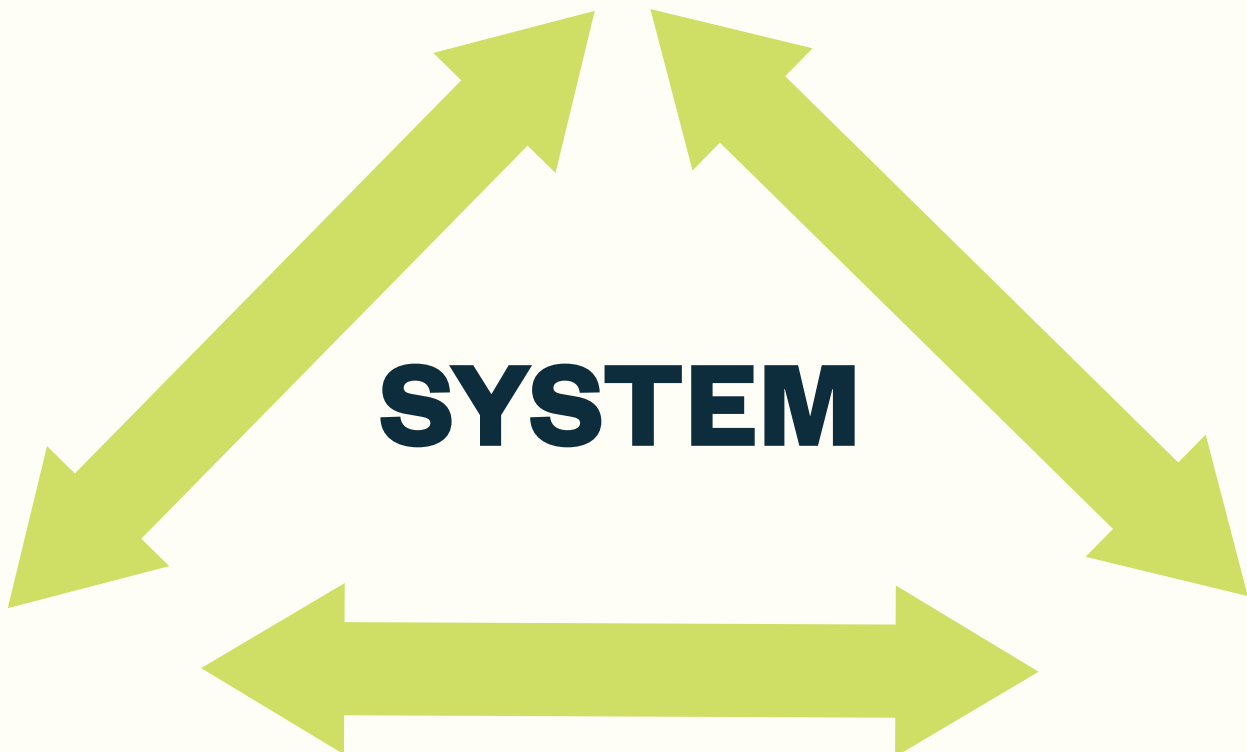
6. Activity: The Three Horizons – Envisioning the Future

What's a “System”

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A collection of entities interacting together

SYSTEM



That are perceived by someone

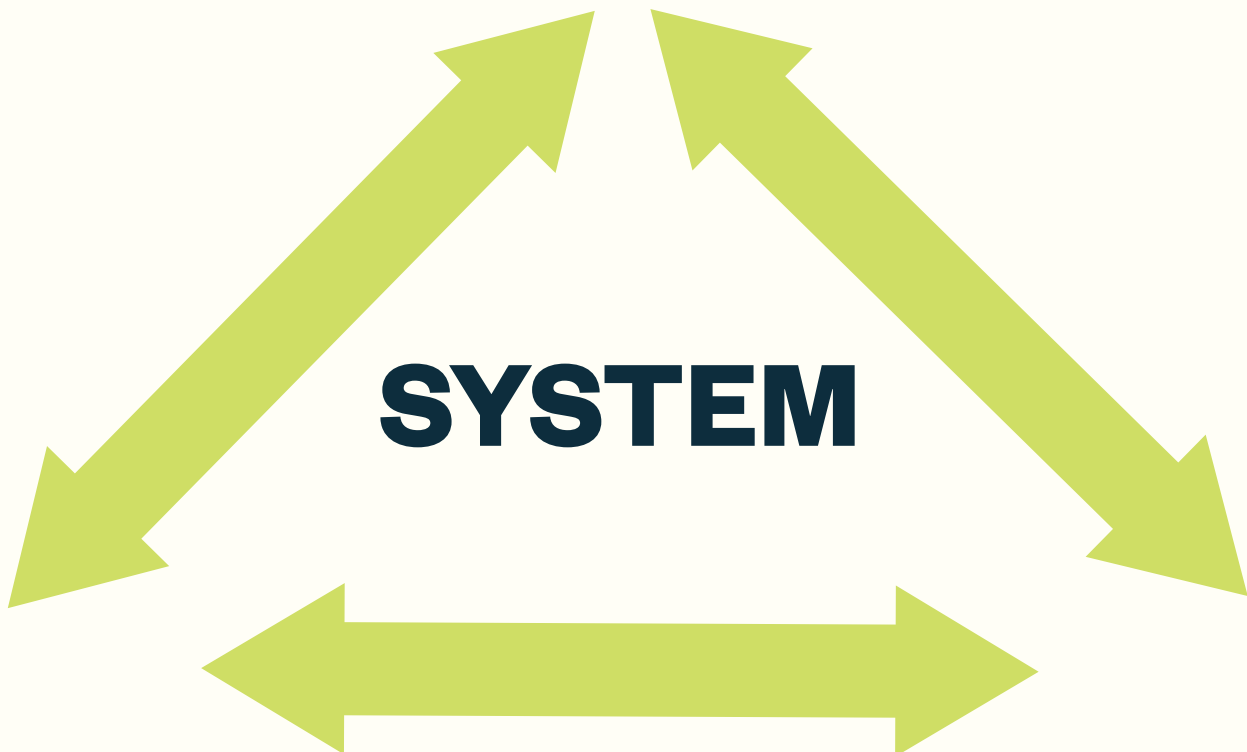
To achieve something

What's a “System”

INTER-RELATIONSHIPS

A collection of entities interacting together

SYSTEM



That are perceived by someone

PERSPECTIVES

To achieve something

BOUNDARIES

What's Systemic Design?

Understanding INTER-RELATIONSHIPS

What's the reality we're dealing with?



Engaging with PERSPECTIVES

How do people interpret reality?

Deciding on BOUNDARIES

What is desirable & feasible?

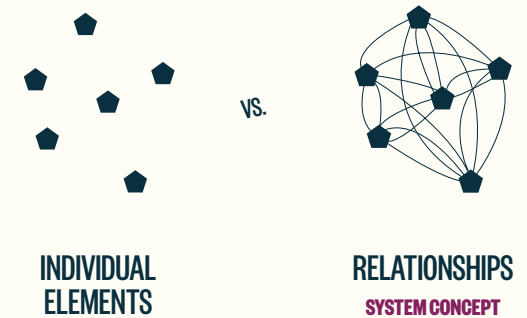
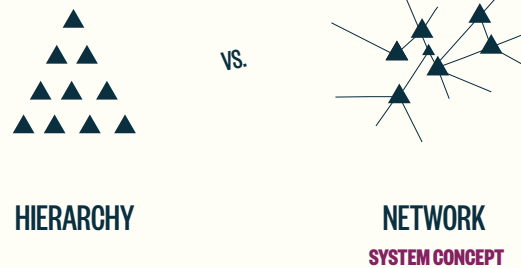
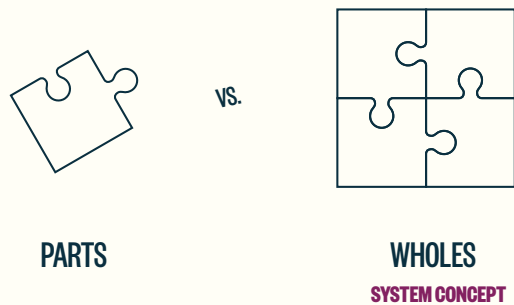
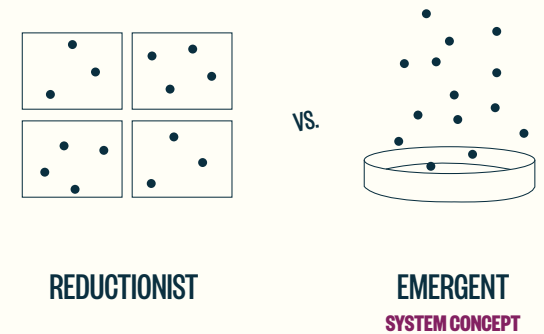
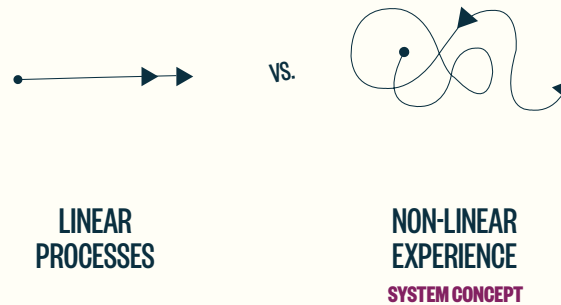
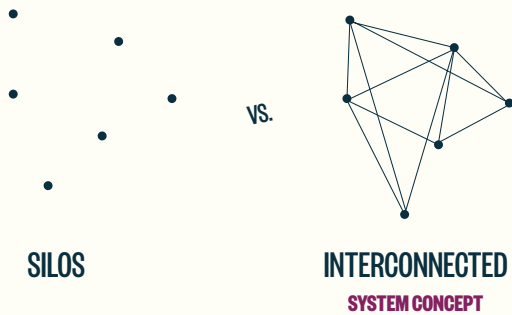
A Different Way to Think

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Symptoms are visible and obvious.

System causes are difficult to see – but more powerful.

The Tree Model: Seeing Living Systems

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The Tree Model: Seeing Living Systems

What you see (the fruit) is just the surface

- Events — what we notice or experience — are like the fruit of a tree
- They're the visible outcomes of deeper structures and patterns

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Patterns and behaviours grow from deeper structures

- Just as fruit grows from branches, recurring trends and habits emerge from underlying systems — policies, processes, relationships, and rules

The Tree Model: Seeing Living Systems

Systems protect themselves

- Like bark or skin, boundaries exist to preserve stability – policies, cultures, or norms that protect the system from external change
- These boundaries are both necessary and limiting

The Tree Model: Seeing Living Systems

Systems scale – from trees to orchards to ecosystems

- A single system (one tree) connects with many others to form a system of systems (the orchard)
- Interactions between trees – shared soil, pollination, and competition for light – mirror how economic, social, and political systems interconnect

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Not all “fruit” is seen the same way

- One person’s apple might be another’s lemon – what’s “good” or “bad” often depends on perspective and values

The Tree Model: Seeing Living Systems

“As above, so below”

- **Patterns repeat across levels** (fractal): what you see in a neighbourhood often mirrors city-, regional-, and national-level dynamics — same structure, different scale
- **Influence runs both ways:** roots shape fruit and recurring fruits (events/patterns) can reshape branches, trunk, and even roots via feedback (e.g., repeated small-business closures shift lending policies and community risk beliefs)
- **Changes at any level propagate:** a new bylaw (branch) can shift behaviours (fruit) and, over time, nudge mental models (roots); likewise, a paradigm shift (roots) can reorganize institutions (trunk) and practices (branches)

The Tree Model: Seeing Living Systems

Systems have direction and purpose

- Like plants that turn toward sunlight, every system grows toward what it values — its goals, whether intended or not
- **The purpose of a system is what it does.** This means we understand a system not by what it says it wants to do, but by observing what it actually produces — its consistent patterns and outcomes

The Tree Model: Seeing Living Systems

Changing the tree

- Working “within” the system means pruning or treating the fruit (tackling events)
- Working “on” the system means digging at the roots – changing the mental models and systems that shape everything else
- Systemic Design helps us move from managing symptoms to cultivating lasting systemic health

We Are All Intuitive Systems Thinkers

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- Events come to fruition
- Reap what you sow
- Actions bear fruit
- Can't see the forest for the trees
- Looking for root causes

Activity: Mapping The Living System

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Community Economic Development in Canada

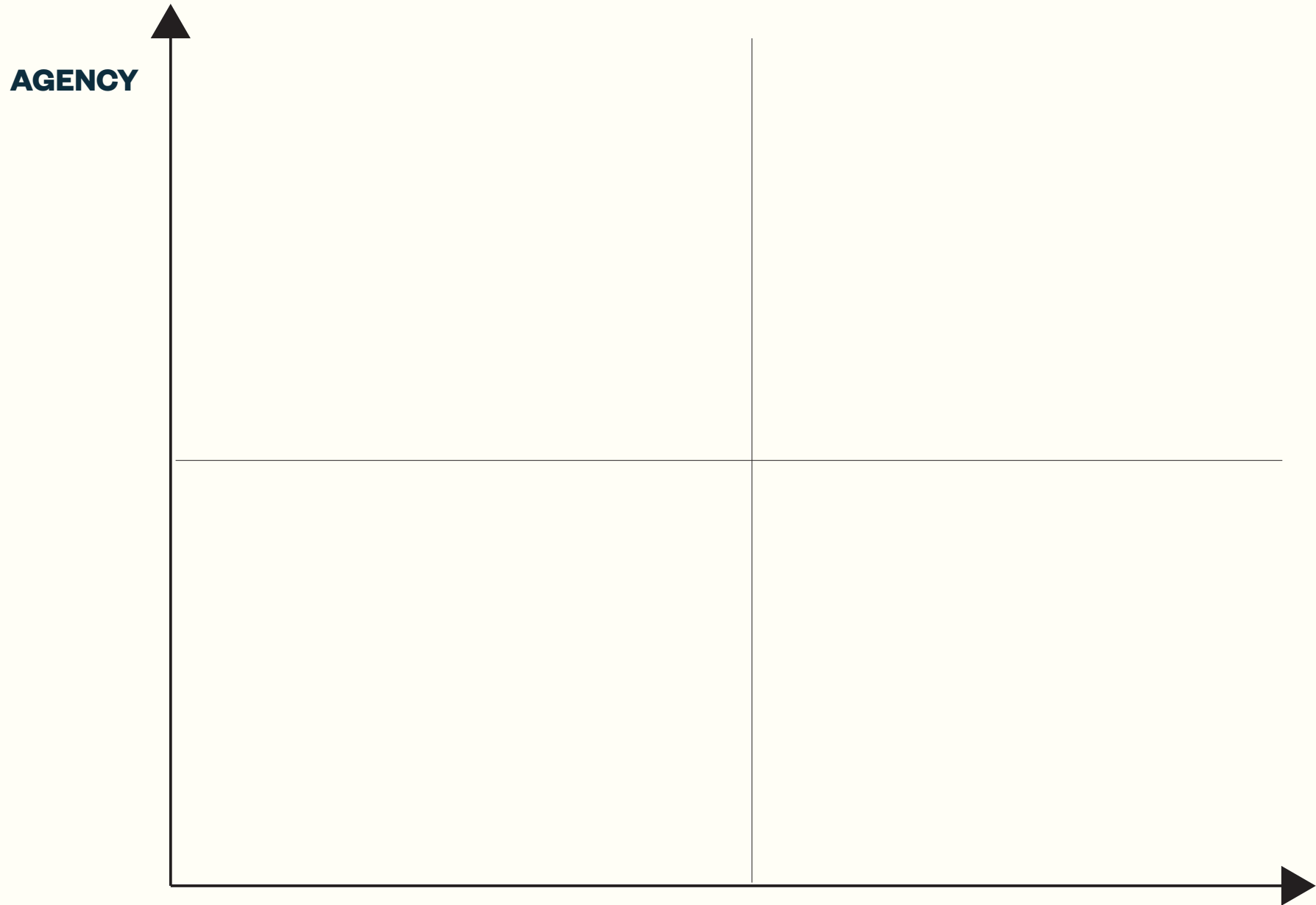
Break

Introducing The Three Horizons

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- The future is unknown but we act every day as if we know what the future is. We turn up every day expecting the buses to run, sometimes they are on time, sometimes they are late, and in most situations, they are always there when we expect them to be.
- So, any approaches with working with the future need to include both stances:
 1. That it is unknown
 2. Nonetheless we are going to act on it

Introducing The Three Horizons



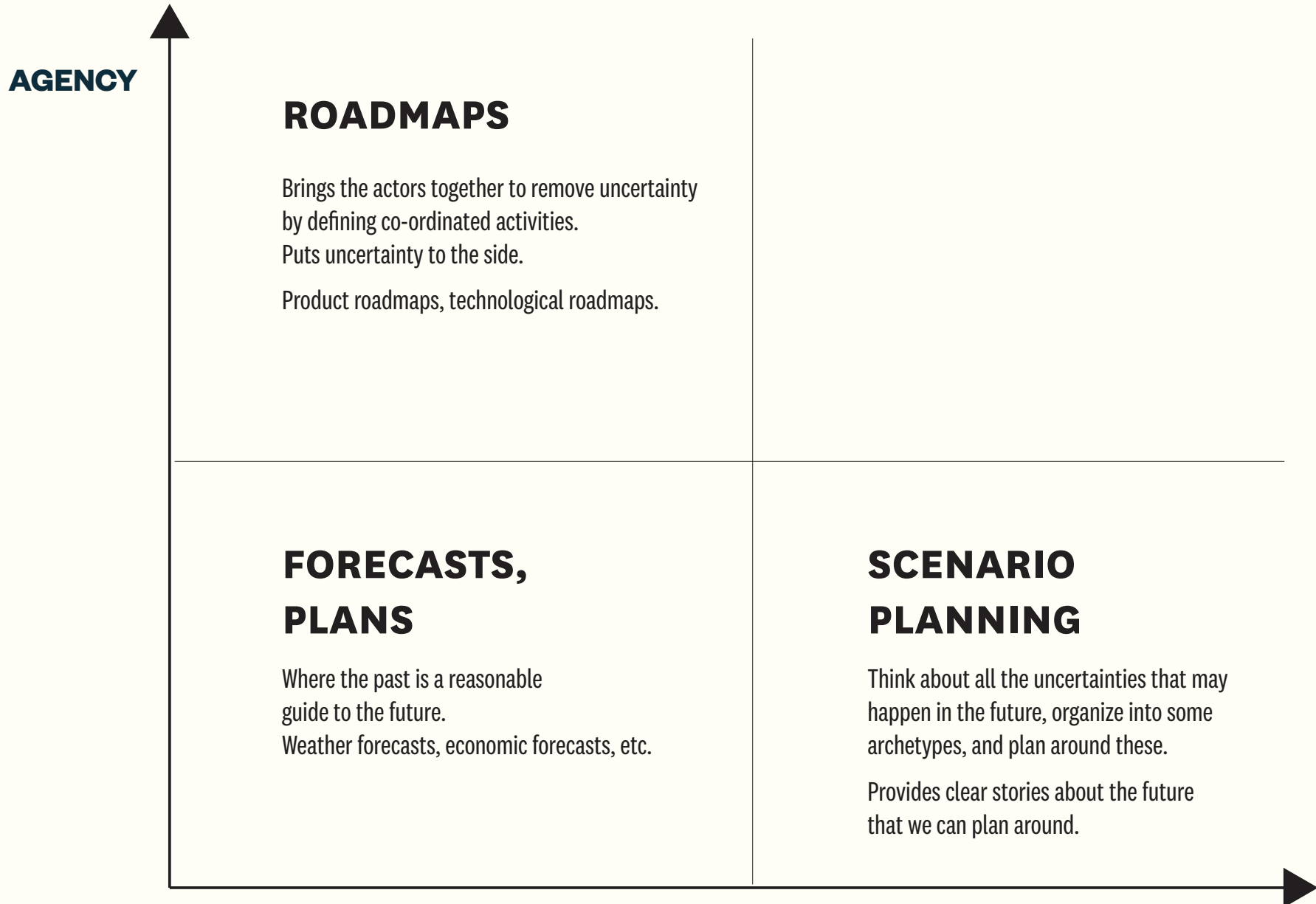
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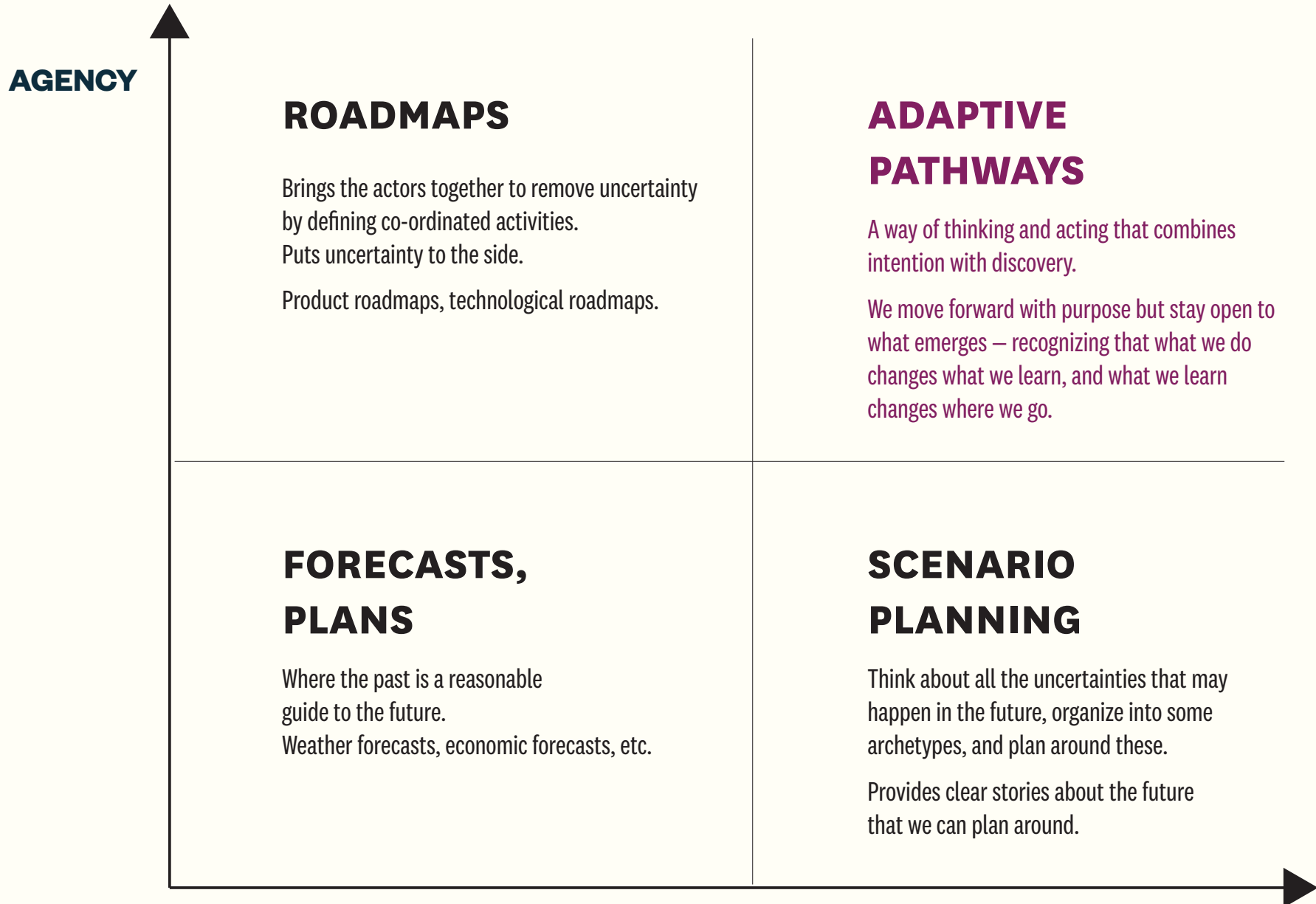
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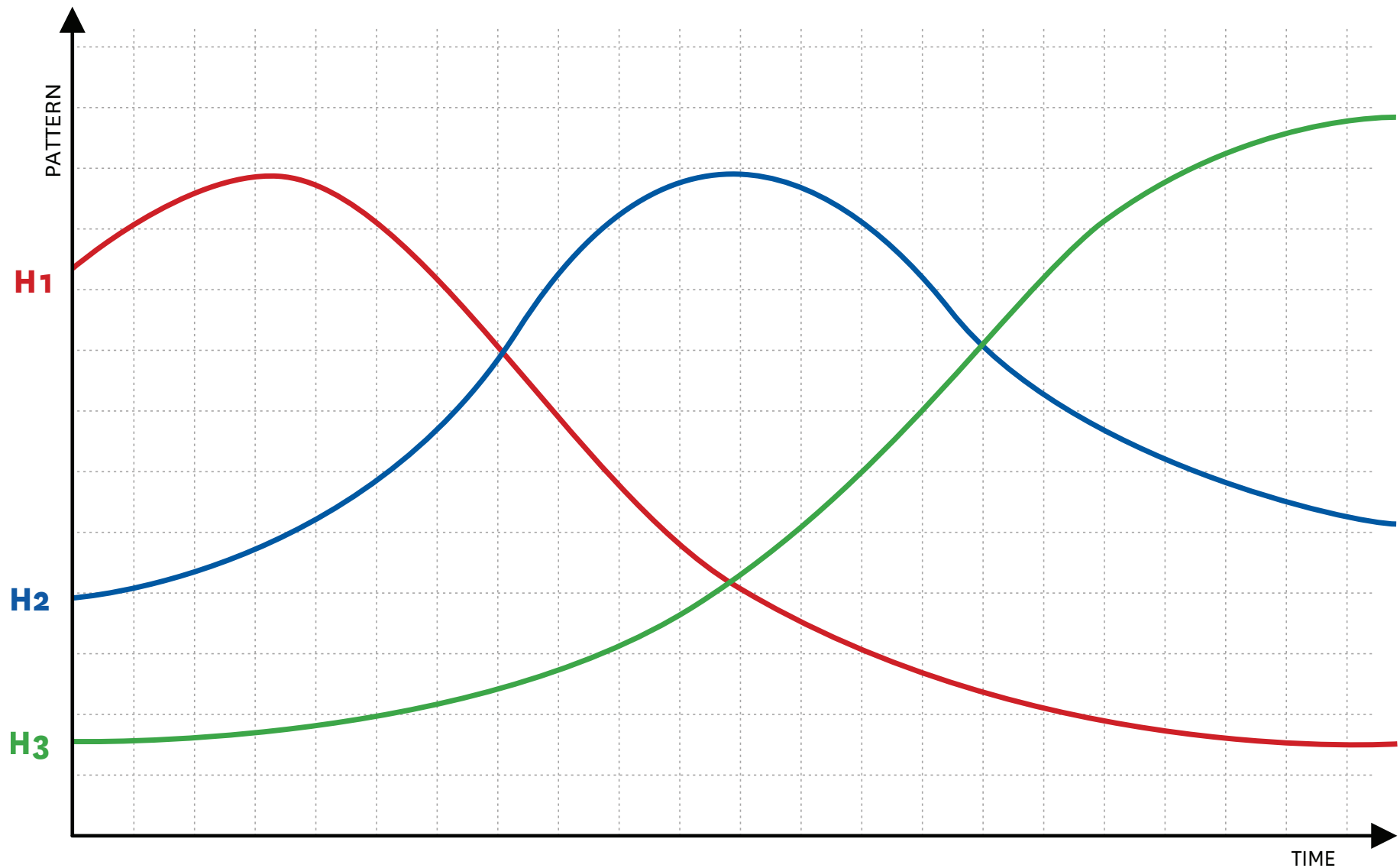
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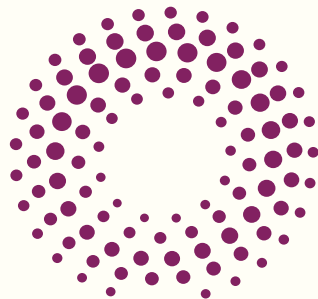


The Three Horizons



The Axis

Time and change of pattern form the two axes to the model.



PATTERN

What is the dominant pattern of organisation



TIME

How far out into the future are we looking

Time Horizons

There are three time periods included in the model.

