

Class 12: Time, Temporality and Organizing in Times of Crisis

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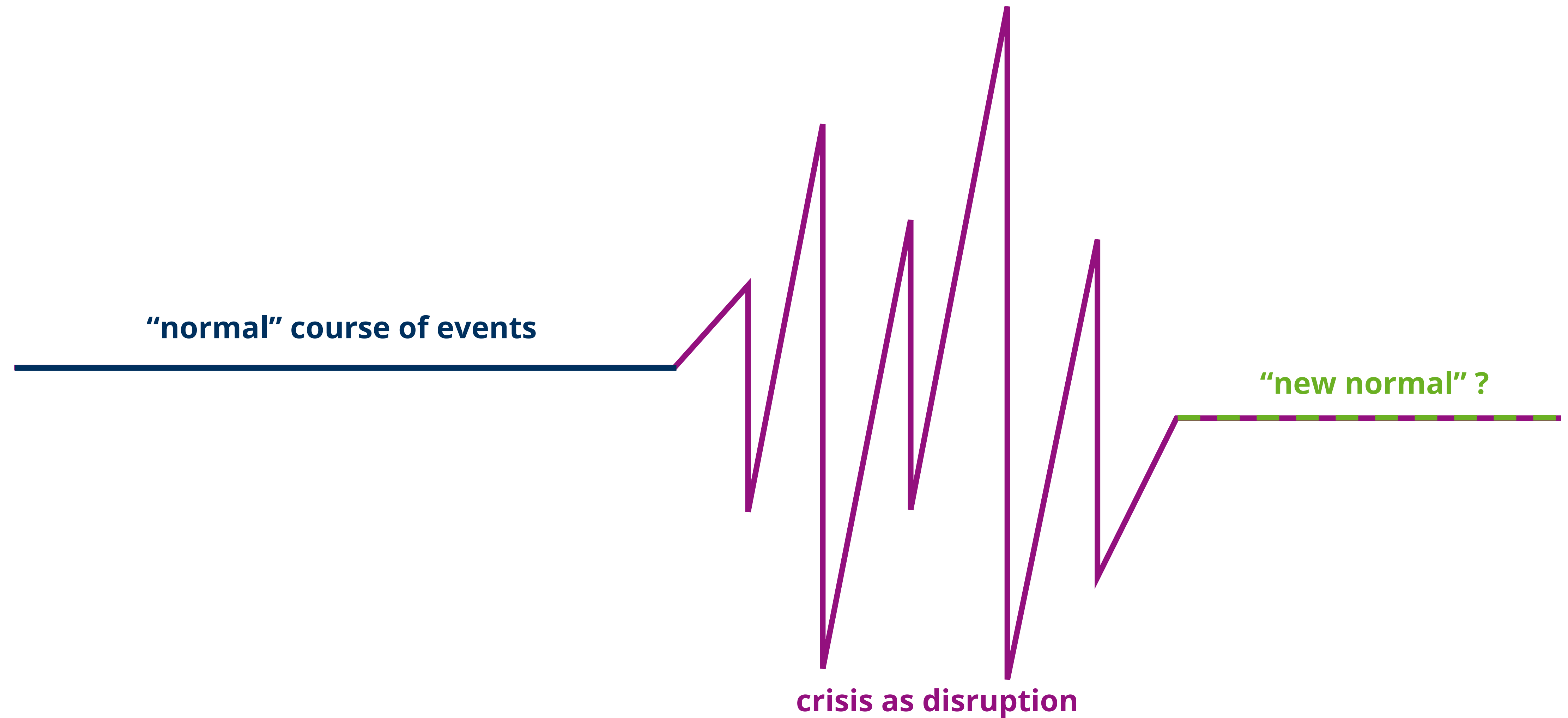
Learning objectives

Being able to reflect upon the **temporal dimensions of organizing in times of crisis** as well as how a temporal lens can illuminate the Ukraine crisis

How to get there:

- Develop an understanding of **crisis as a temporal concept**
- Apply **three temporal lenses—structure, resource, and process**—to understand organizational responses to crisis situations
- Critically examine the **dominance of short-term horizons and fast-pace orientations** in (Western) organizations and institutions

Crisis as a temporal concept



Crises expose the complex fabric of time

Photo by Adam Nieścioruk on Unsplash



"Flattening the curve" as a strategy to **slow down** the spread of the virus

Accelerated development and distribution of vaccines & digitalization

Kunisch et al., 2021; Antenas, 2021



Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

Economic **short-termism** and discounting the future

Translating **distant future goals** into **present-day** activity

Slawinski & Bansal, 2015; Hernes & Schultz, 2020



Photo by Gayatri Malhotra on Unsplash

Russian expectations for a **fast-paced "blitzkrieg"** cast down by Ukrainian resistance

Unclear **time horizon**: temporary conflict or perpetual war?

Wars and armed conflicts expose the political nature of time



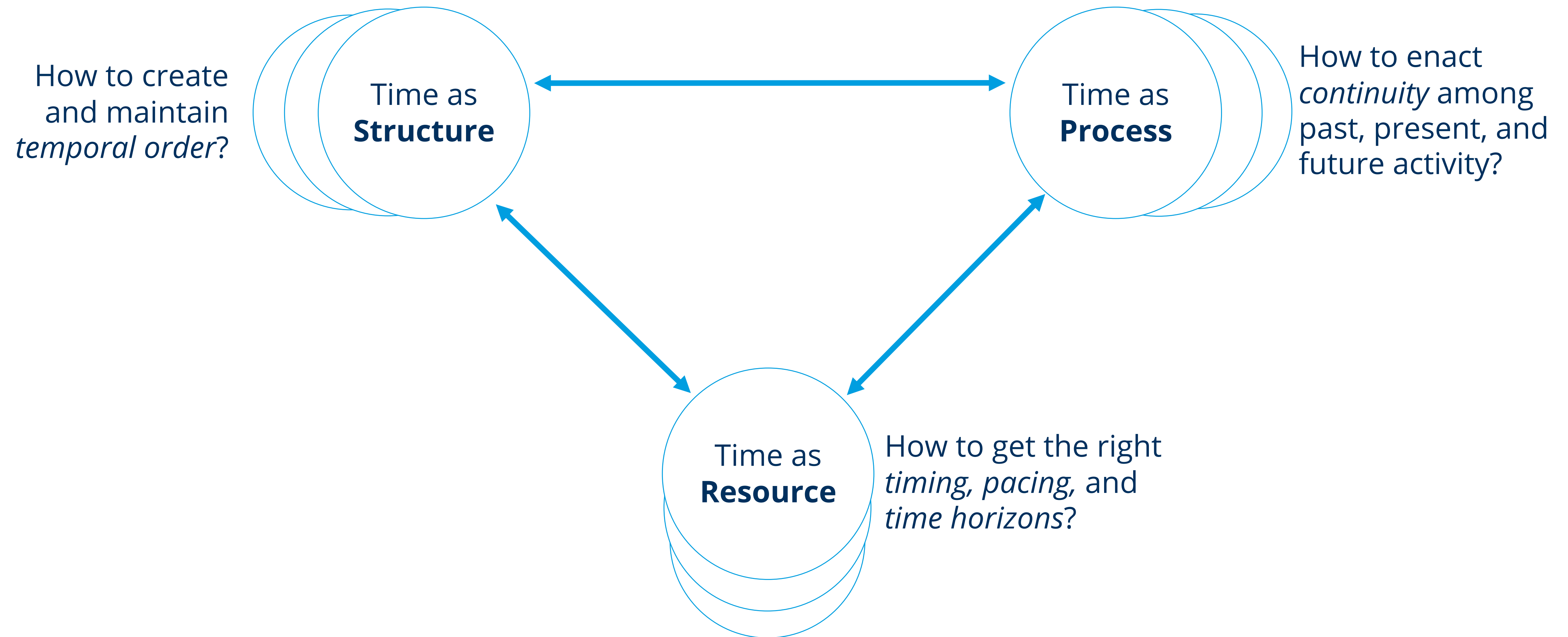
Temporal work



individual, collective or organizational effort to **influence, sustain** or **redirect** the temporal assumptions or patterns that shape strategic [and organizational] action.

(Bansal et al., 2022: 7)

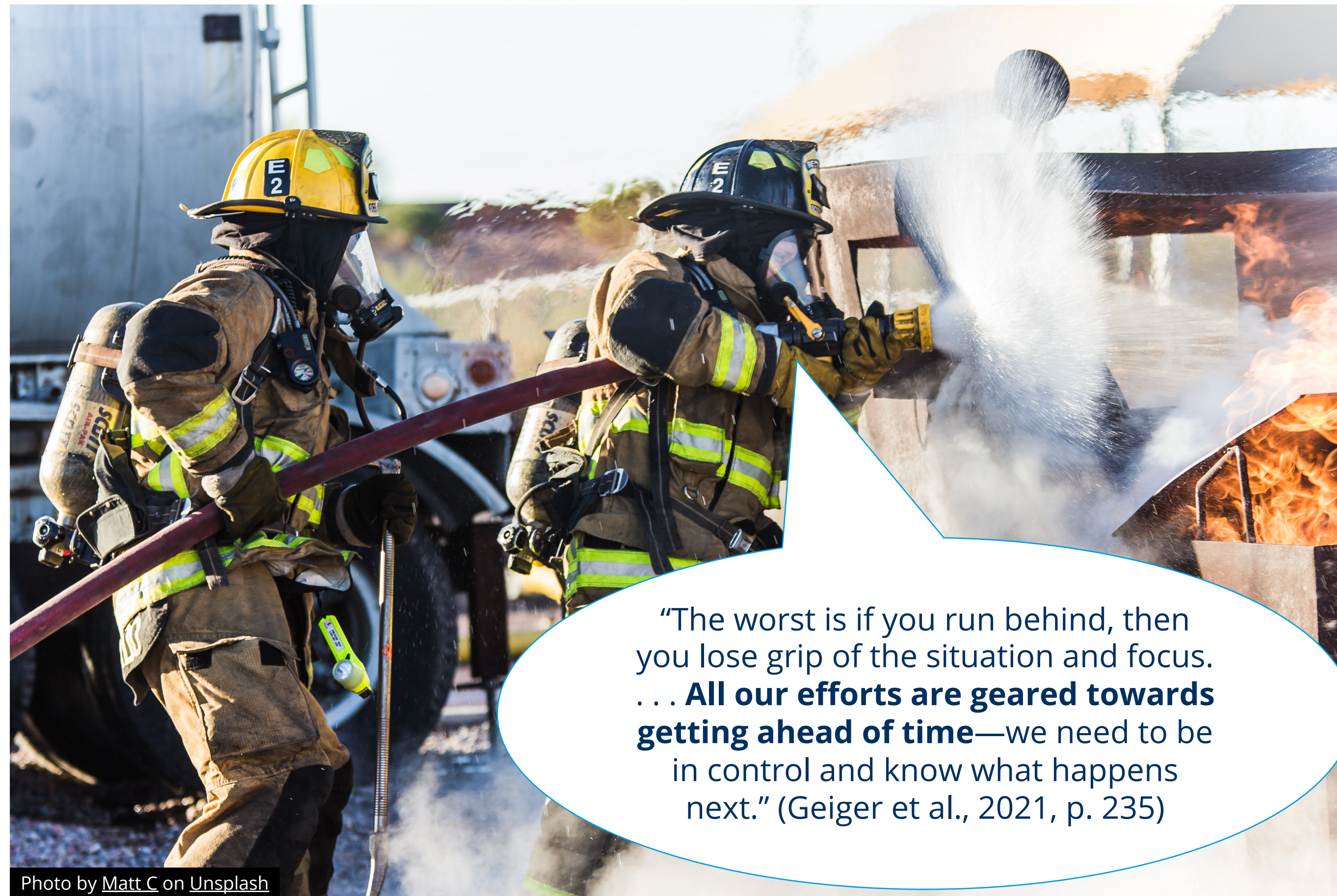
Manifestations of time in organizing



Source: Blagoev et al., 2022

Time as structure

Temporally uncoupling from unfolding crisis situations



"The worst is if you run behind, then you lose grip of the situation and focus. . . . **All our efforts are geared towards getting ahead of time**—we need to be in control and know what happens next." (Geiger et al., 2021, p. 235)

Temporal uncertainty

Temporal uncoupling

Temporal autonomy

"Getting ahead of time"

Maintaining a temporal order in crisis situations

Source: Geiger et al., 2021; Blagoev & Schreyögg, 2019

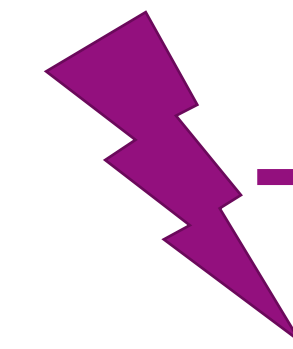
Time as process

Continuity patterning in times of crisis



Photo by [Carol Colman](#) on [Pixabay](#)

Source: Feldman et al., 2022



~~Routine activity~~ *Major disruption*

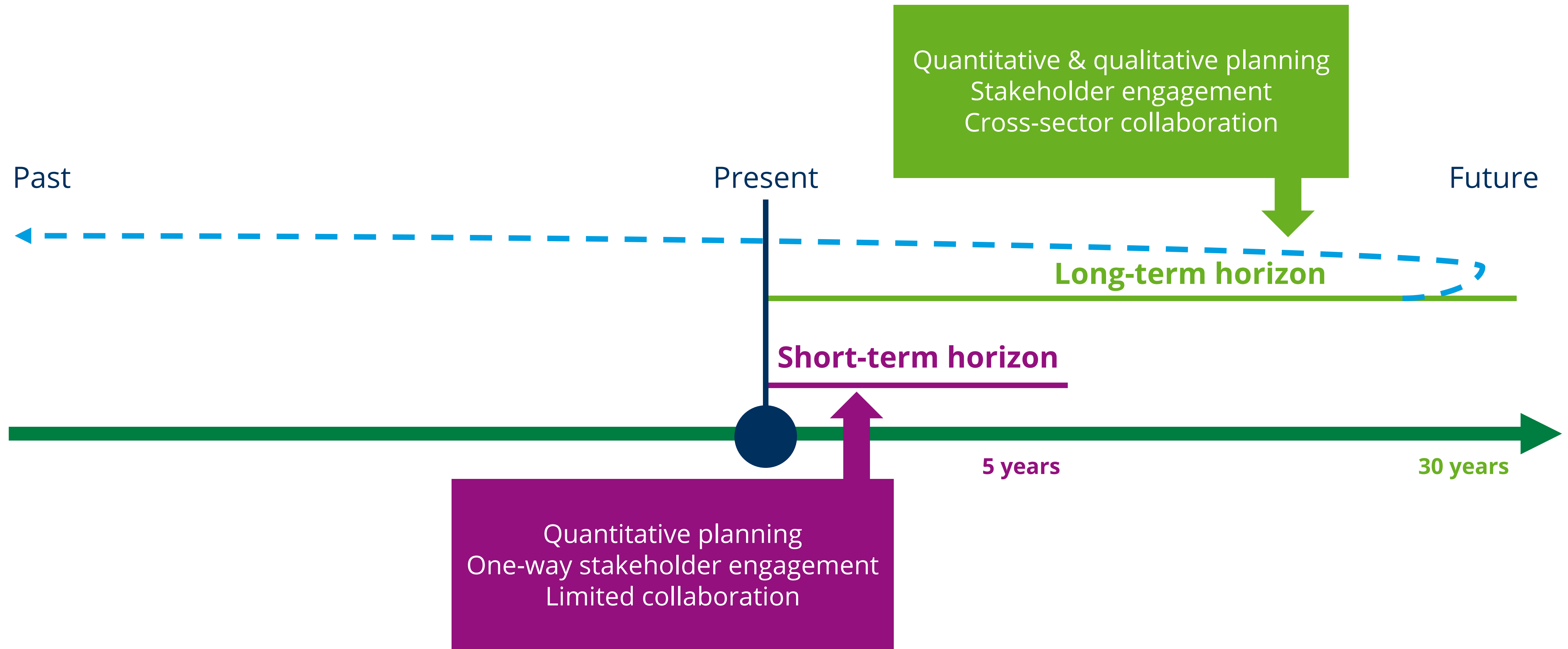
(1) Taking actions through
provisional adjusting

(2) Connecting actions
into (new) **paths** into the future

(3) Paths form (new) **patterns**

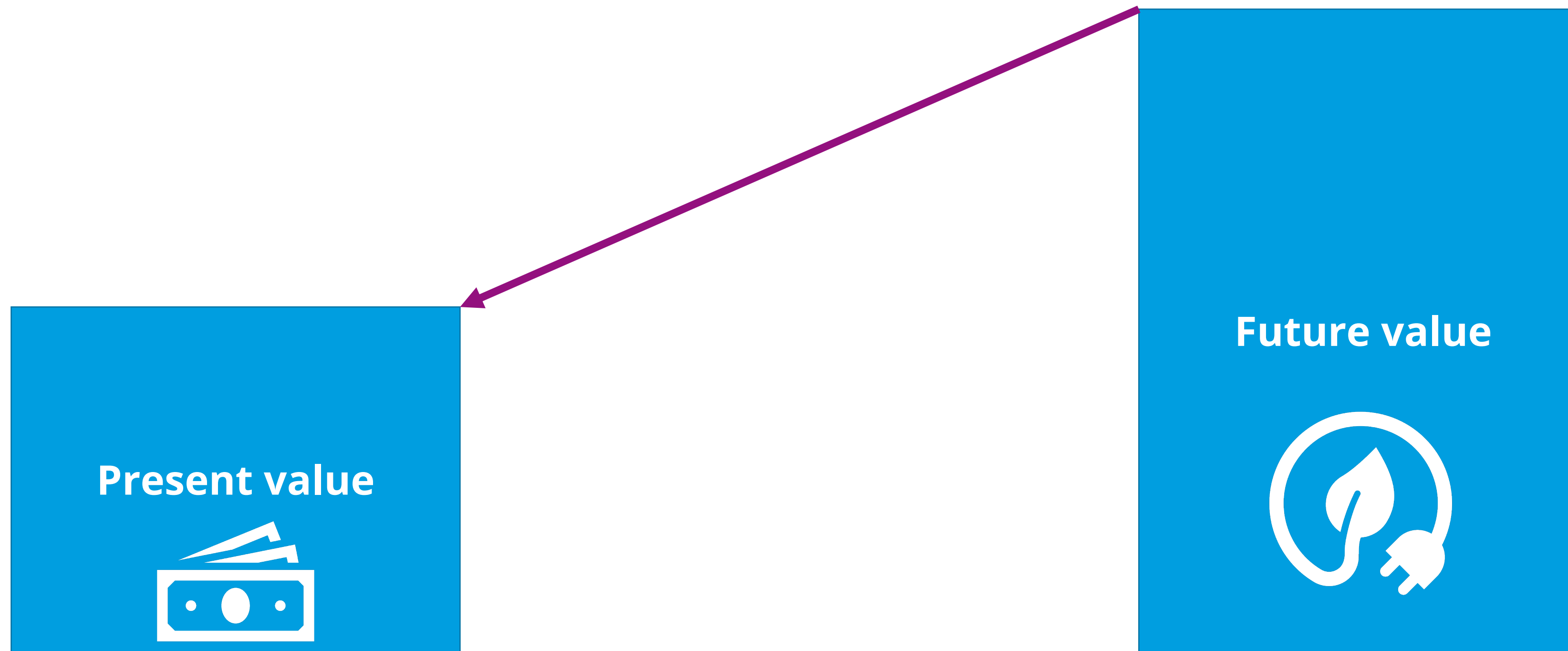
Time as resource

Time horizons and the climate crisis



Sources: Slawinski & Bansal, 2015; Bansal et al., 2018; Schultz & Hernes, 2013; Hernes & Schultz, 2020

Discounting the future



Time-as-resource in warfare

Wars as timing contests

Western “wartime paradigm”

=

Optimization for speed and short-term win

+

War as anticipatory risk management

Sources: Hom, 2018; Schmitt, 2020

War scenarios following Putin's failed 'blitzkrieg'

Over a month into the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine we have learned that the Kremlin's plans and their implementation differs vastly. What are some of the scenarios the West should prepare for and what options are still available?

April 4, 2022 - Andrii Dligach Valerii Pekar -  Articles and Commentary, UkraineAtWar



March 5th, 2022: Ukrainian soldier stands on the check point to the city Irpin near Kyiv during the evacuation of local people under the shelling of the Russian troops. Volodymyr Kutsenko / Shutterstock

Source: <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2022/04/04/war-scenarios-following-putins-failed-blitzkrieg/>

Takeaways and outlook

Organizing in times of crisis depends on the skillful performance of **temporal work**

Temporal work can target:

- **Time-as-structure** to (re-)create a temporal order amidst temporal uncertainty
- **Time-as-process** to enact a sense of continuity amidst disruption
- **Time-as-resource** to leverage multiple time-horizons and regimes of timing and pacing

Wars and armed conflicts represent a specific type of crisis: **“timing contests”**

Faster is not always better

Assignment:

How could we explain the failure of Putin’s “blitzkrieg” in Ukraine from the perspective of war as a “timing contest”? In your response, think especially about what you have learned about temporal uncoupling, continuity patterning, and time horizons and how these could help you understand how Ukraine managed to “slow down” the pace of the war. Support your argument with specific examples.

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