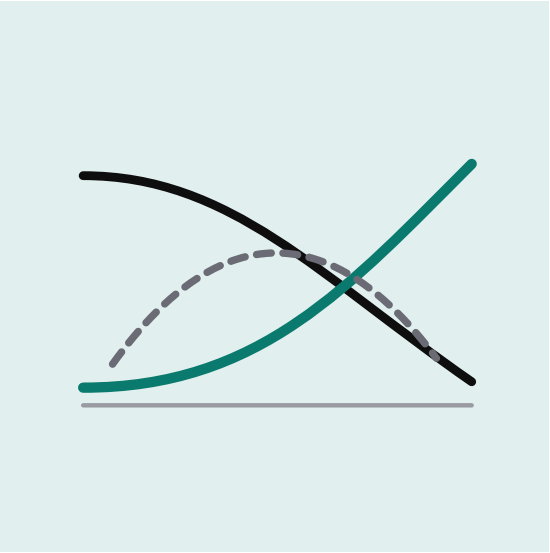
Method

# Three horizons

A framework for thinking about long-term change with three horizons that coexist: the current system, the future that is starting to appear, and the transitional innovations between them.



In Spanish

*Tres horizontes*

Origin

Sharpe, Hodgson et al.; reference article: Sharpe et al. (2016)

Output

A shared map of what is declining, what is emerging and the innovations that lead from one to the other

## What it's for

Helps a group with different views talk about the future in an orderly way and tell apart changes that improve the usual from those that open a new path.

## Key elements

### First horizon

The system that dominates today and is losing its fit with new conditions.

### Second horizon

Transitional innovations; some help reach the third, others end up absorbed by the first.

### Third horizon

What is emerging at the margins and could replace it in the long run.

## How it's done

1 

**Describe the present** and what is no longer working.

2 

**Look for signs of the future** that already exist at the margins.

3 

**Discuss the innovations** that can lead from one to the other.

## Applications in design

### When to use it

In strategy or futures workshops, when a group needs to agree on where to change.

### Avoid

Confusing it with another "three horizons" model from business consulting, which is about a company's growth, not the transformation of a system.

### Don't fall for it

Don't discard the first horizon: while the new arrives, what exists today has to keep working.

## Connections

**Builds on**

- Futures studies

**Used by**

- Design futures
- Transition design
- Systemic design

**Related to**

- Backcasting
- Horizon scanning

## Authors and works

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2016 | **B. Sharpe, A. Hodgson, G. Leicester, A. Lyon and I. Fazey** | They presented it as a dialogue practice for transformation and linked a mindset to each horizon: the manager's, the entrepreneur's and the visionary's. |

### Sources

**Original sources**


- Sharpe, B., Hodgson, A., Leicester, G., Lyon, A., & Fazey, I. (2016). Three horizons: A pathways practice for transformation. Ecology and Society, 21(2), 47. View source (https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-08388-210247)


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