BASICS OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Filip De Wolf, FBCI
Director Strategic Services
Ascure NV

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The Fire of Mann-Gulch

1949

Story of a race

that could (not) be won

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Scream, Edvard Munch 1893

The foot and mouth epidemic hits farmers nationwide.
"I work in crisis management - I'm a farmer"

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Crisis

Definition

- A crisis is a state, commencing when an important purpose can not be achieved (any more) by known and rehearsed routines of acting.

- „Crisis“ is distinguished from “problem” by prime importance of the objective and imminence of threat.

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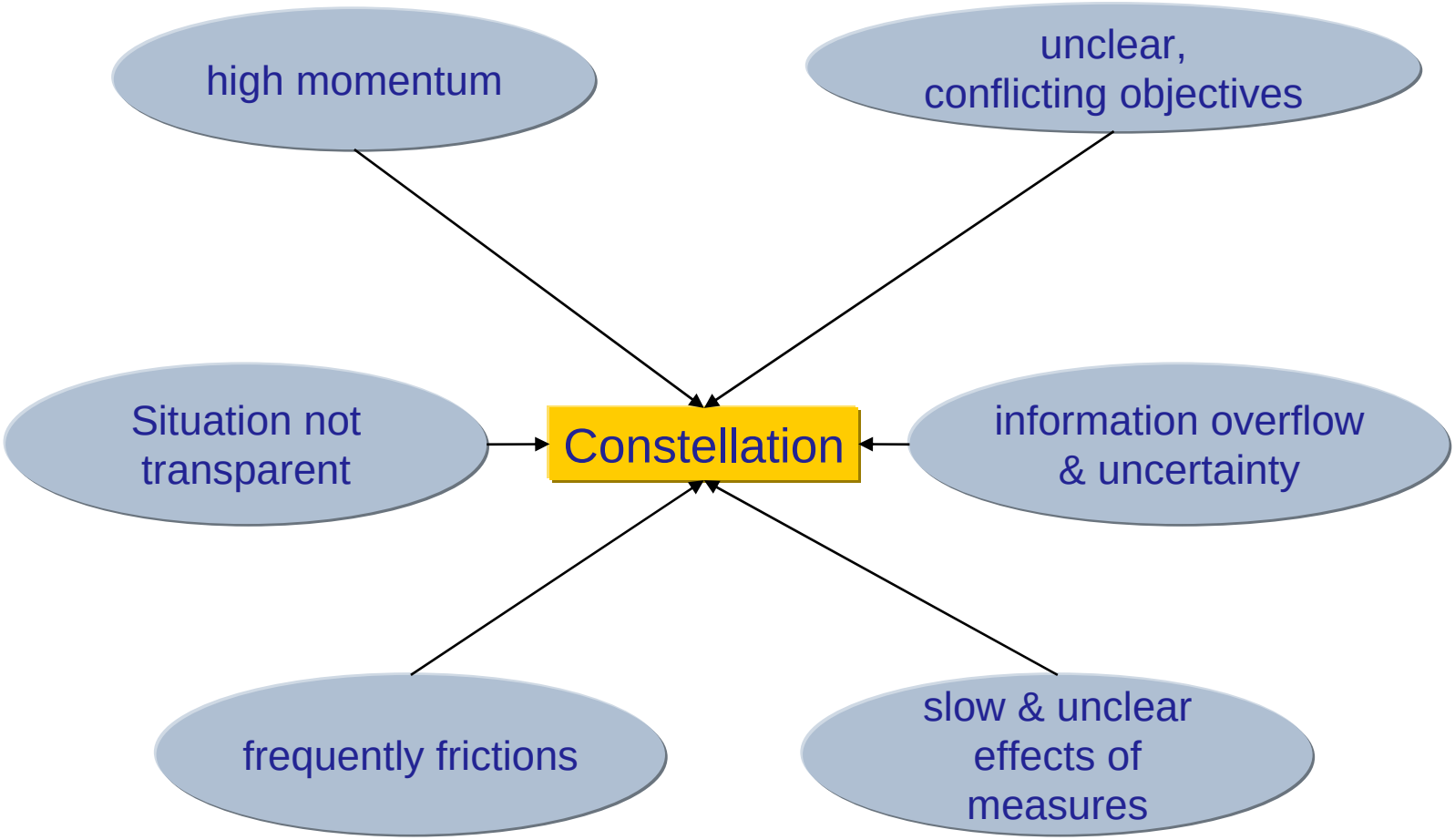
Risk Criteria I



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Risk Criteria II

Personal Factors

- distinct need for security, risk aversion
- avoidance to make decisions
- low tolerance towards indefiniteness
- liability to stress (interference of information handling)
- unincisive proof of competence

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Traditional approach
„Fight the crisis”

- control of crisis by fighting its cause
- presumption of a determined and predictable development of crisis
- preclusion of failings by contingency planning and „technical training“
- predominance of „hard skills“ und functional competences

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Modern approach of „Crisis Management“

- 100% guarantee through technical crisis prophylaxis is impossible
- Development of a crisis is not predictable
- There is no training in “proper crisis behavior” because nobody knows for sure, what kind of behavior could be appropriate
  - This assumption is valid **only** for the crisis command team but not for technical teams. These can operate along Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) or can use pre-defined check lists
- **Crucial:** the development of common unspecific competence in management of unclear, dangerous and dynamic situations
- Growing understanding of the importance of „soft skills“ (communication, process management, strategic competence, dealing with stress).

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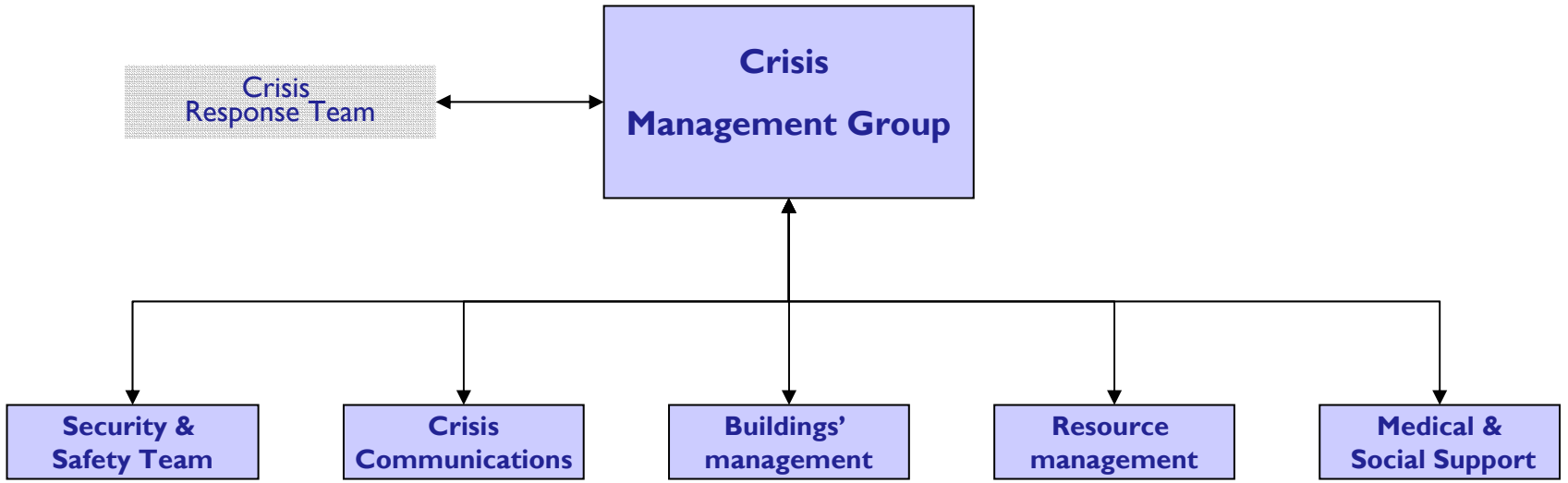
Example of Crisis Organisation



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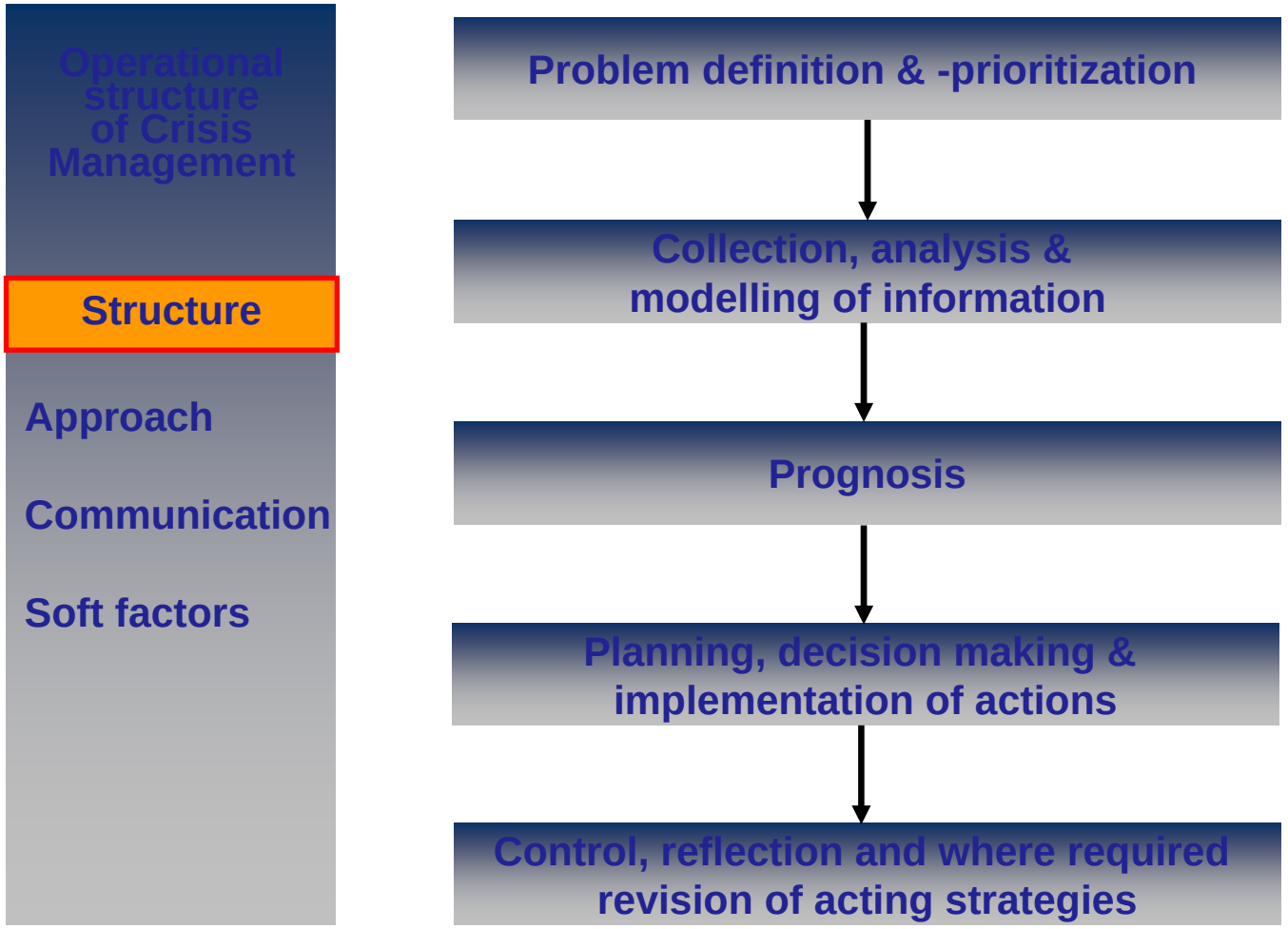
Crisis Management Proceedings

Structure



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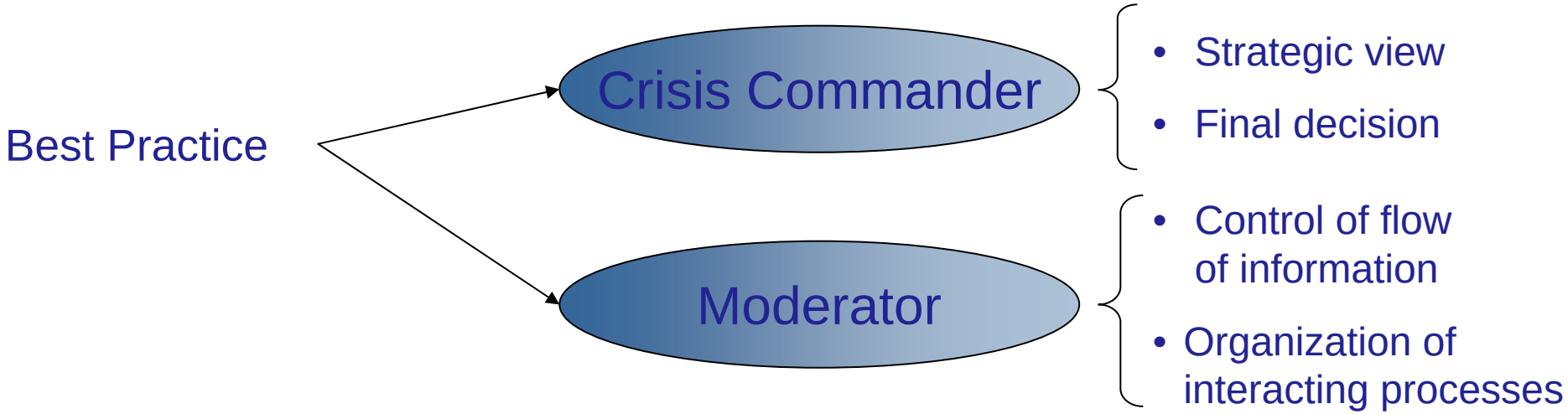
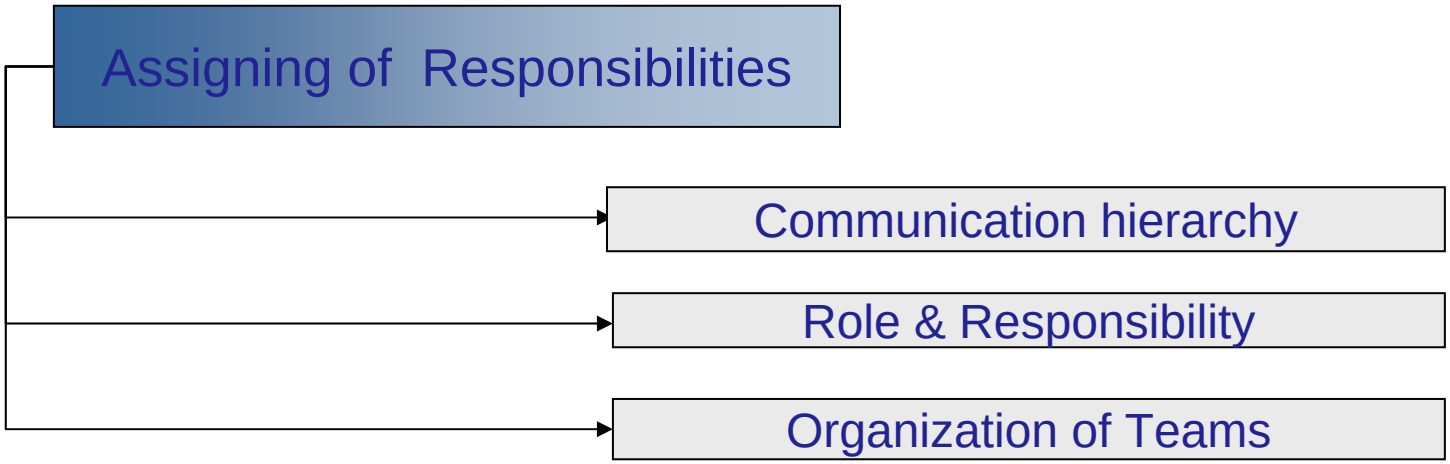
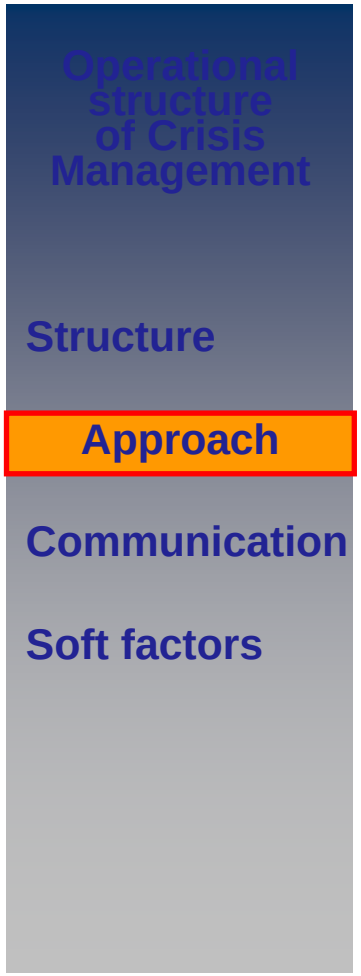
Structure


Best Practice
Crisis Commander
• Strategic view
• Final decision
Moderator
• Control of flow of information
• Organization of interacting processes


Assigning of Responsibilities
Communication hierarchy
Role & Responsibility
Organization of Teams

Approach



Problem definition & -prioritisation

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Collection of information with multiple coding
information filter
modeling (problem, process, team)

↓

Prognosis

↓

Proposal of actions needed
discussion ⇨ decision ⇨implementation

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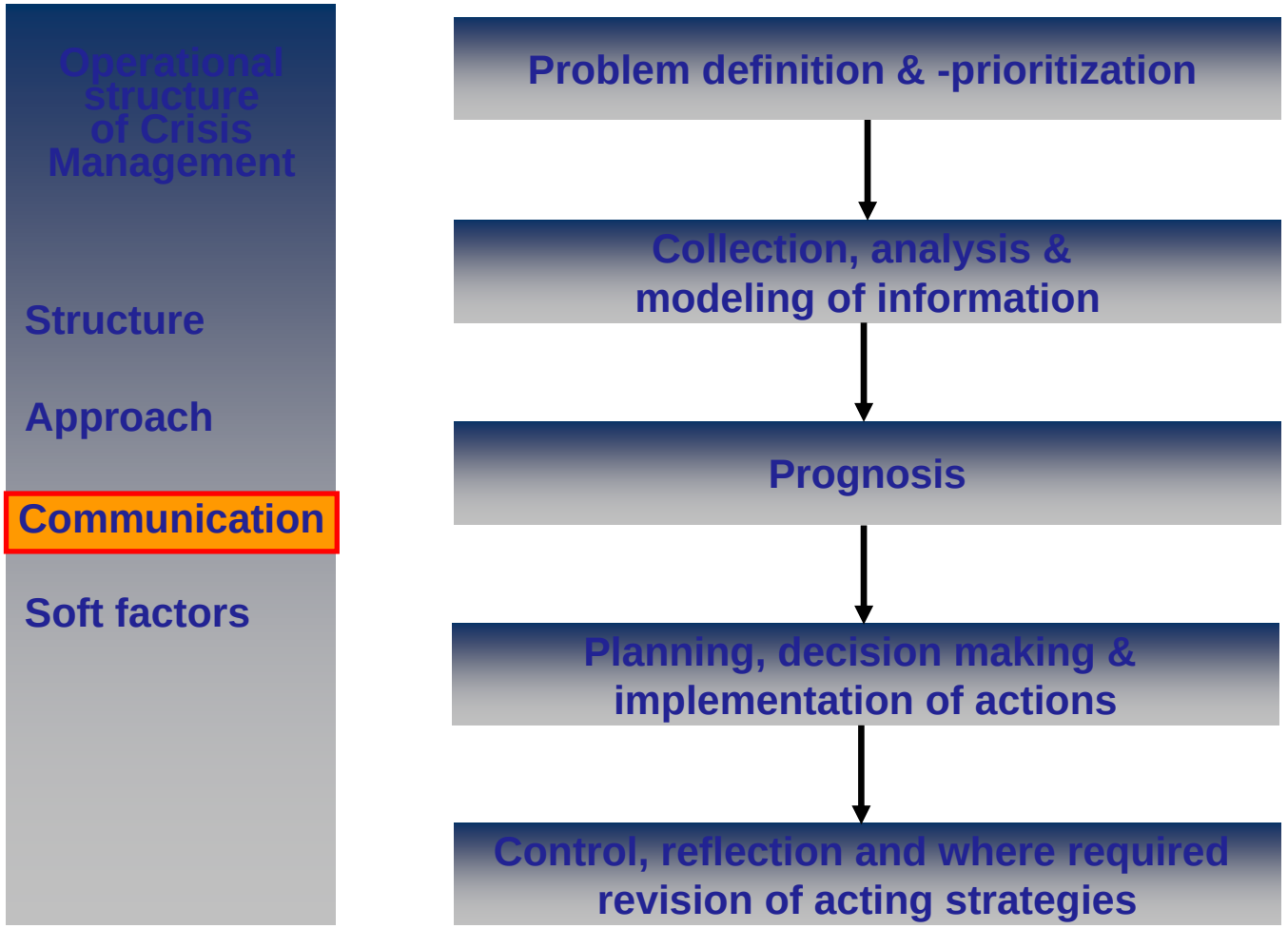
Regular phases of reflection:
„30 minutes rule“
„Can we go on like this?“
Control & where required **Revision**

Communication



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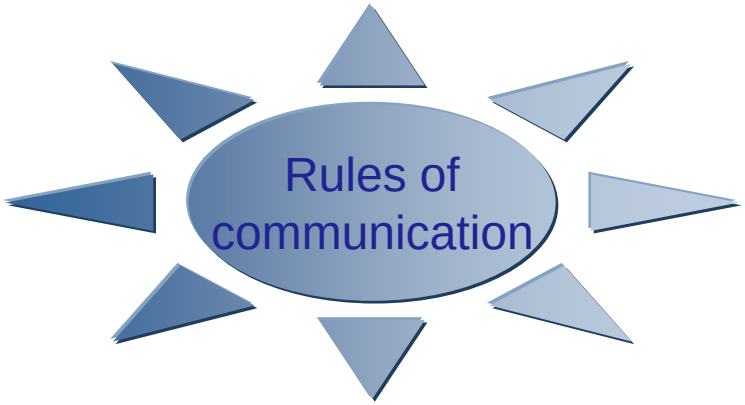
Communication

Discussion panel: everybody talks

Differentiation: personal & factual levels of discussion



Restricted time to speak: e.g. 30 seconds

Speaker is never interrupted

Only contributions to the point no other discussions

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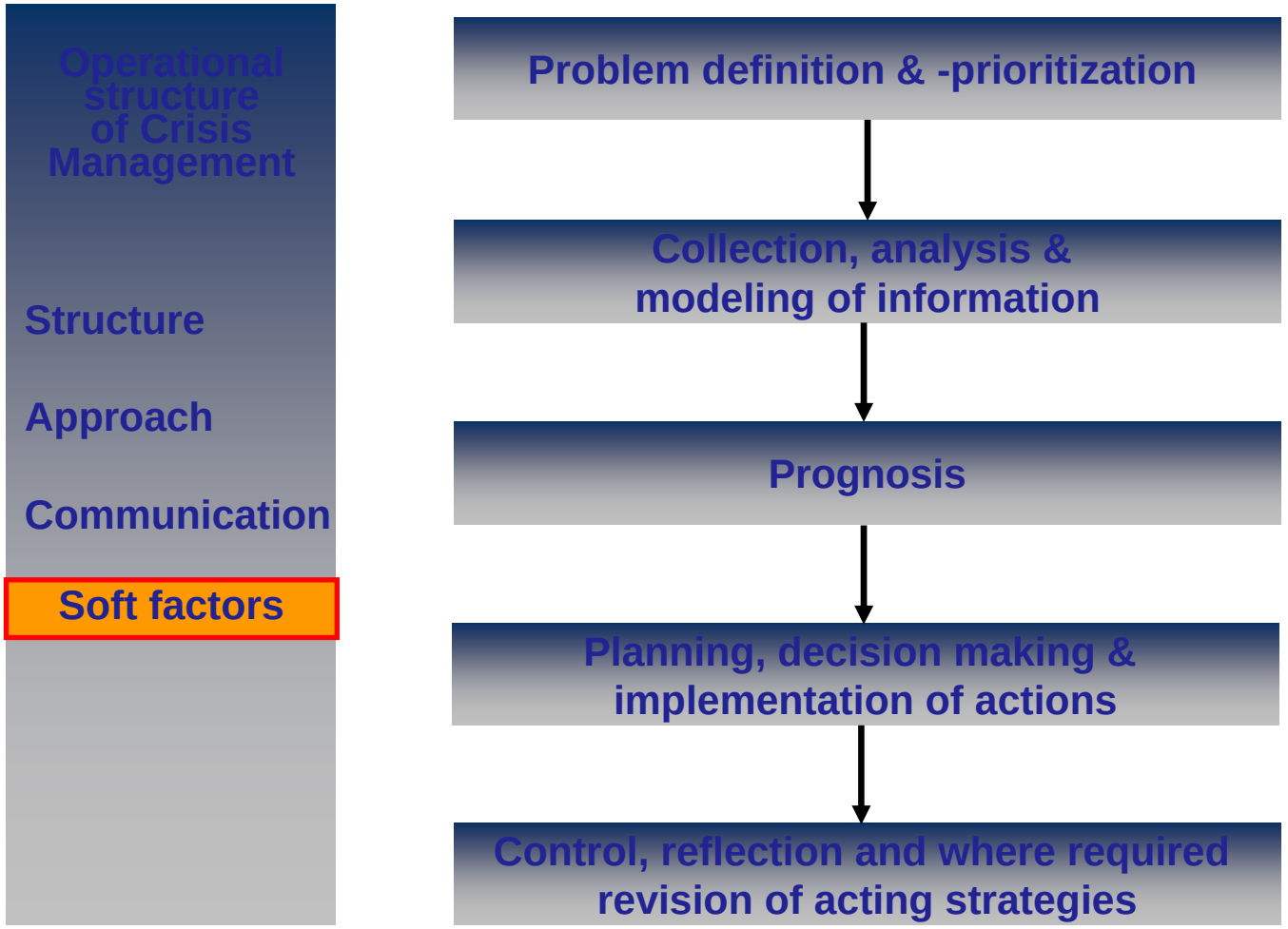
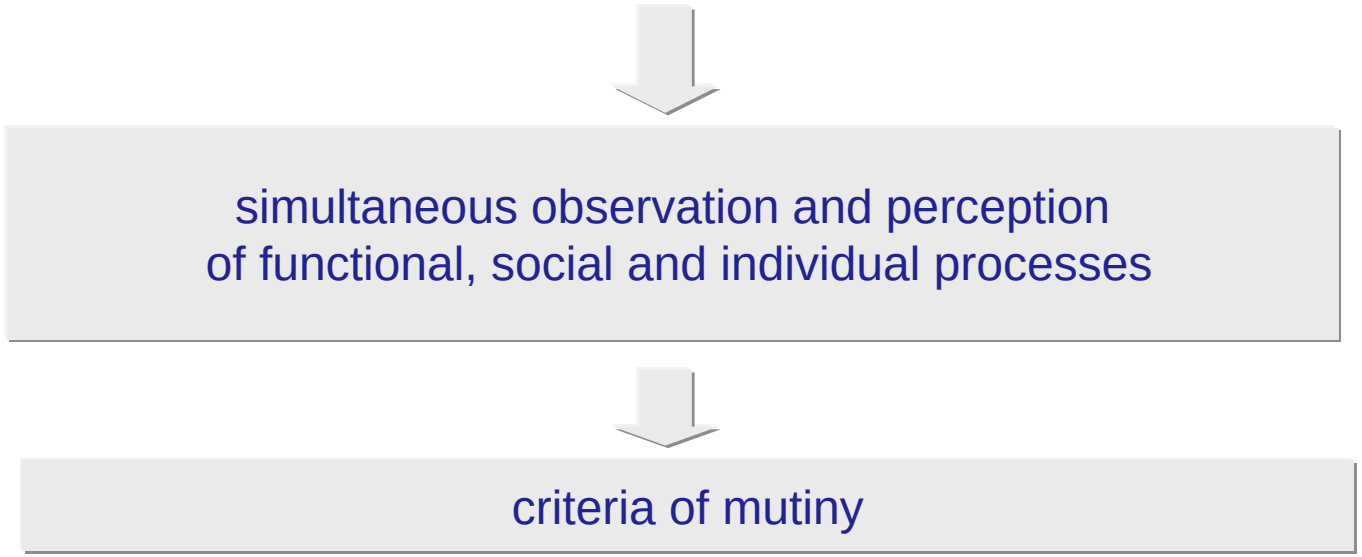
Soft factors



Soft factors

Personal Level

- personal problems or problems on the level of personal interactions are as important as factual problems
- **learning to ask for another one's help**
- consideration of individual patterns of reaction, psychological conditions



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Don’ts to be considered

- „Everybody does everything“
- „Important are only the functional levels“
- „We are not tired, not hungry, not irritable“
- „Schwarzenegger-Syndrome”
- „Hierarchies are important and unchangeable“
- „Everyone talks at the same time but the boss talks most of all”
- „We already know what‘s going on!“
- „Reflecting takes too much time“

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The Eye of the Storm

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