

Brown University Seminar

Scenario Development: Connecting Goals and Audiences

Scenarios: Texts and Contexts

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The logo for the James Martin Institute is a dark square with a yellow border. Inside the square, the text "James Martin Institute" is written in yellow, with "for science and civilization" in white below it.

James Martin Institute
for science and
civilization

(Rafael Ramirez, Trudi Lang, Kees van der Heijden)

Key points

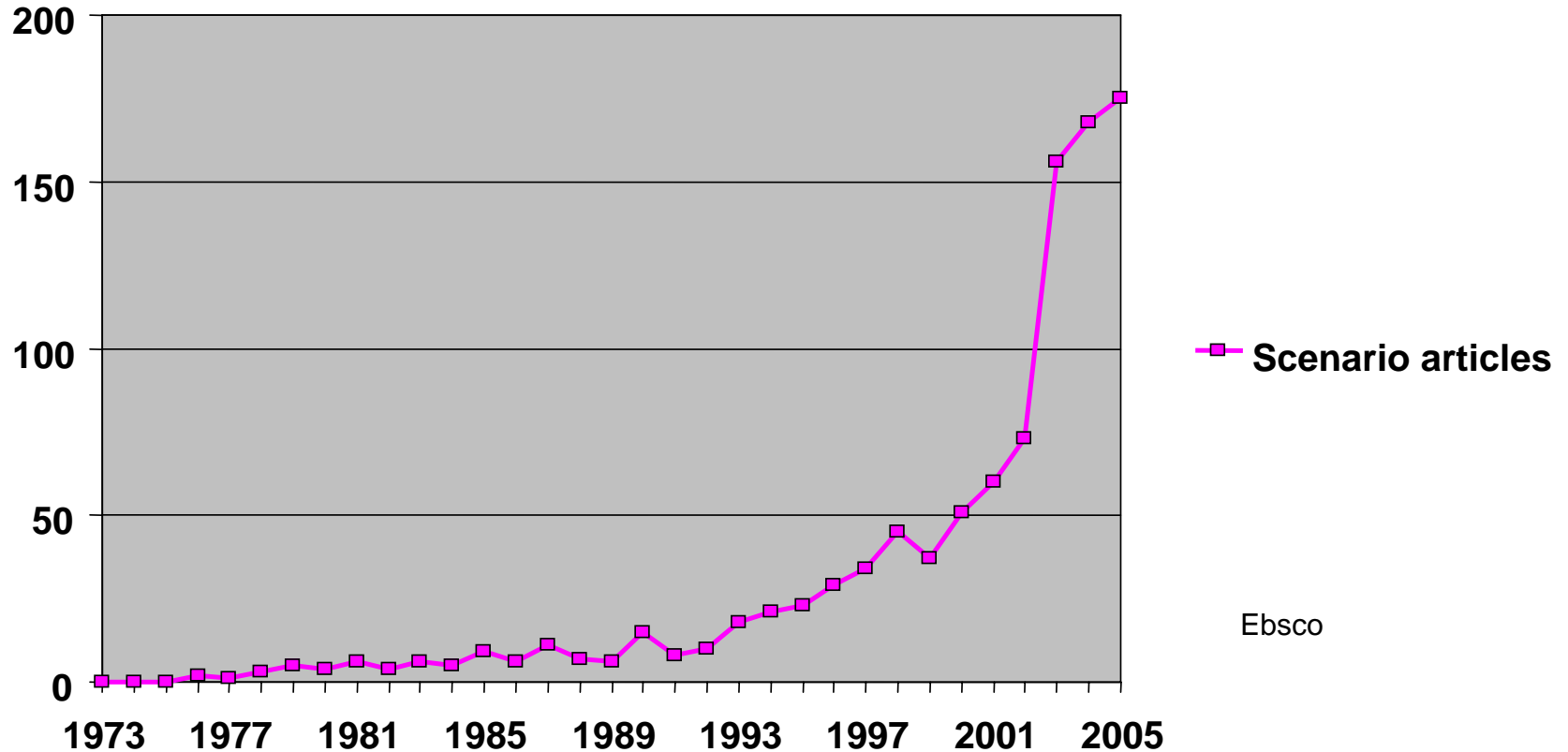
- Brief History of Scenarios
- **Methodological Chaos**
- Challenges in clarifying and extending what works, when and how
- **Futures @ Oxford**

Range of Futures Methodologies

- Technology Forecasting
- Back casting
- Computer Simulation and Modelling
- Visioning
- Horizon scanning
- Search conference
- Trend analysis
-
- Scenarios

*Differences between scenarios and these others:
Futurology or Futurizing?*

A steep rise in articles....



By November 2006, Amazon has listed 175,819 books in English with the key-word 'scenarios'

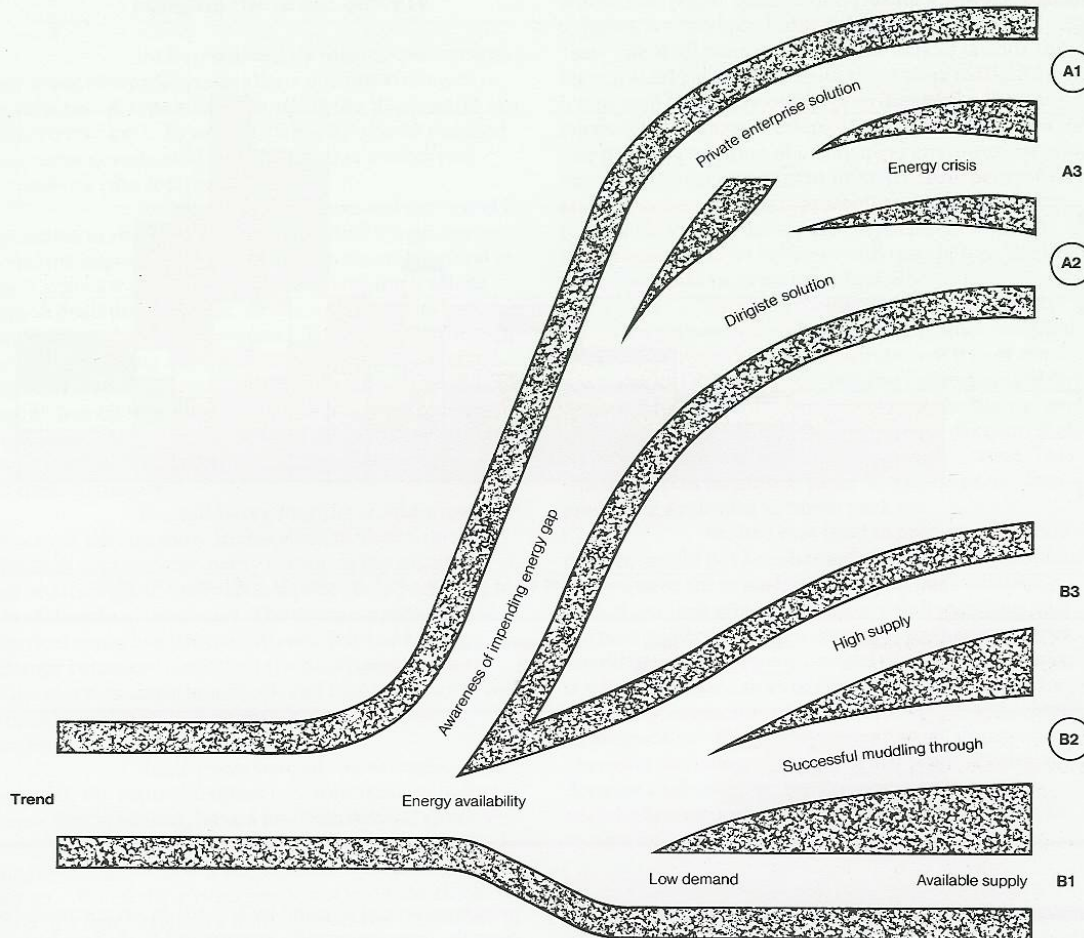
Brief History of Scenarios

The future as probable, possible, preferable

- Post-WW2 - A “Makeable World”
- Need for a methodological tool for strategic planning
- Three schools emerged:
 - **USA: Probabilistic Modified Trends/Cross-Trends School**
 - RAND, Hudson, Institute for the Future
 - Military, then public policy and social forecasting, then corporate planning
 - Kahn (“thinking the unthinkable”), Helmer and Gordon, etc.
 - Delphi technique, systems analysis, probable scenarios
 - Harness computational power to resolve intractable problems
 - **French: La Prospective**
 - Berger, Masse, de Jouvenel, Godet
 - Blueprints for a nation: scientific utopia
 - Normative scenarios
 - **Shell: Intuitive Logics School**
 - Newland, Wack, Collyns
 - Transformation of the ‘Ugly Sister’



1972 Scenarios



1972

Shell's 1972 scenarios

The Future Ain't What it Used to Be (Tom Petty)

Shell's Journey with Scenarios

- **Wack:** re-perception, intuitive logics, pre-determined elements
- **Schoemaker**
- **De Geus:** planning as learning
- **Schwartz:** long view
- **Van der Heijden:** strategic conversation, organisational renewal

Apart from time with Shell, what did they all have in common?

Different epistemologies..

Bifurcation of the scenario community

Futurology

Futurizing

Better prediction

Assign probabilities

Uncertainty due to limited knowledge

Environments as independent of 'client'

Scenarios as foreground



Keep an 'open mind'

Appreciate multiple perspectives

Intrinsic uncertainty

Environments as causal and 'client' specific

Relationship of actor-scenarios as foreground

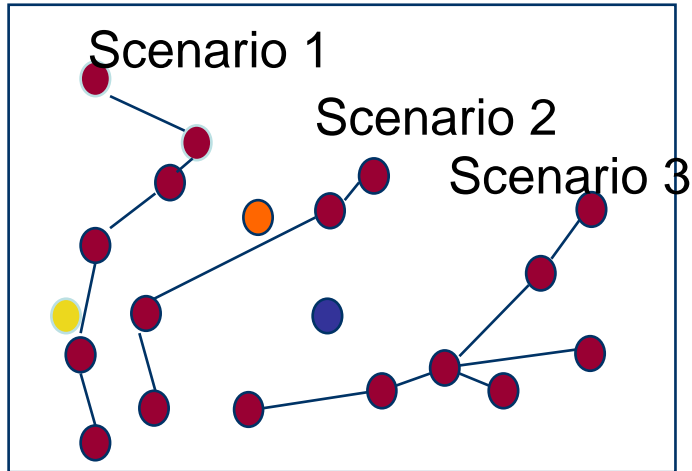
Methodological Chaos!

“few techniques in futures studies have given rise to so much confusion as scenarios” Khakee (1991)

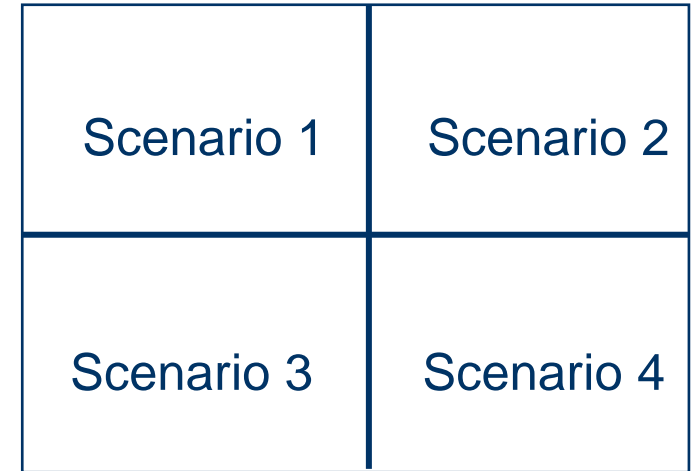
“the term scenarios is increasingly misused and abused” Godet and Roublet (1996)

“the literature reveals a large number of different and at times conflicting definitions, characteristics, principles and methodological ideas about scenarios” Bradfield et. Al. (2005)

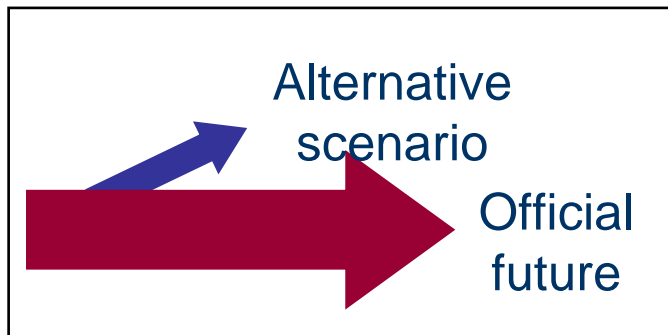
Variety of scenario building methods



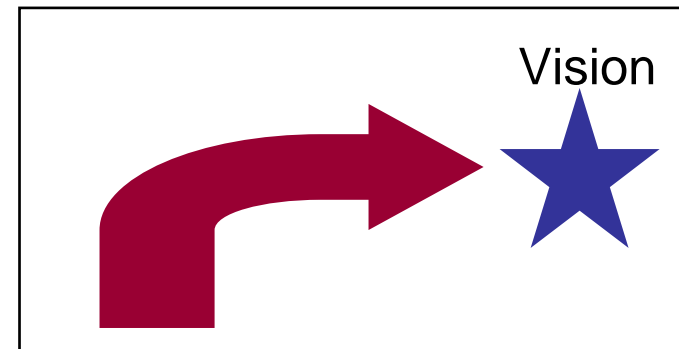
Inductive



Deductive

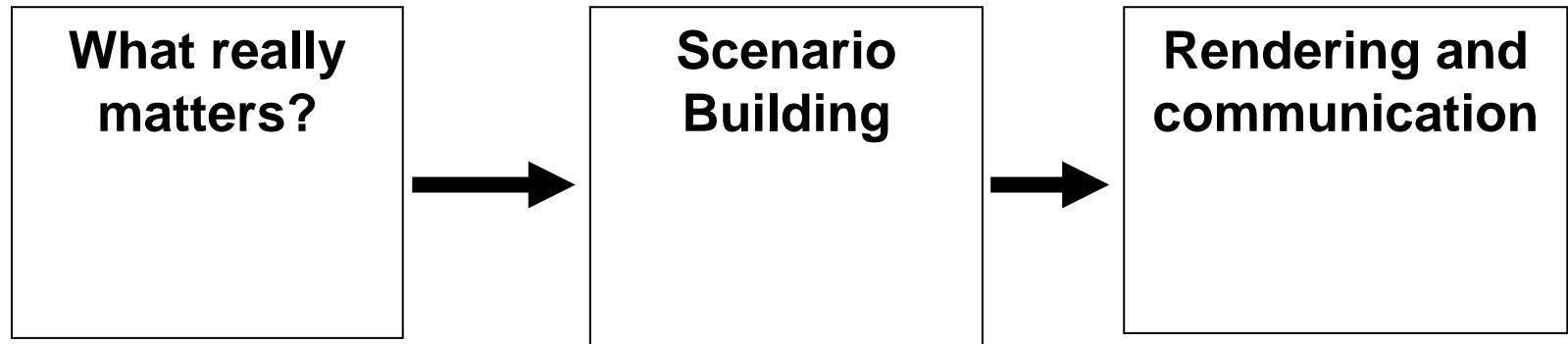


Incremental



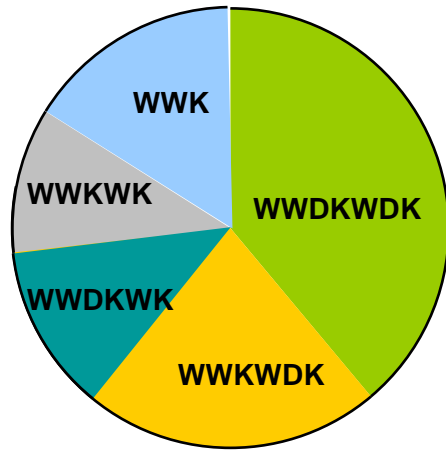
Normative

Producing vs. Consuming? Linear/one-off or iteration?



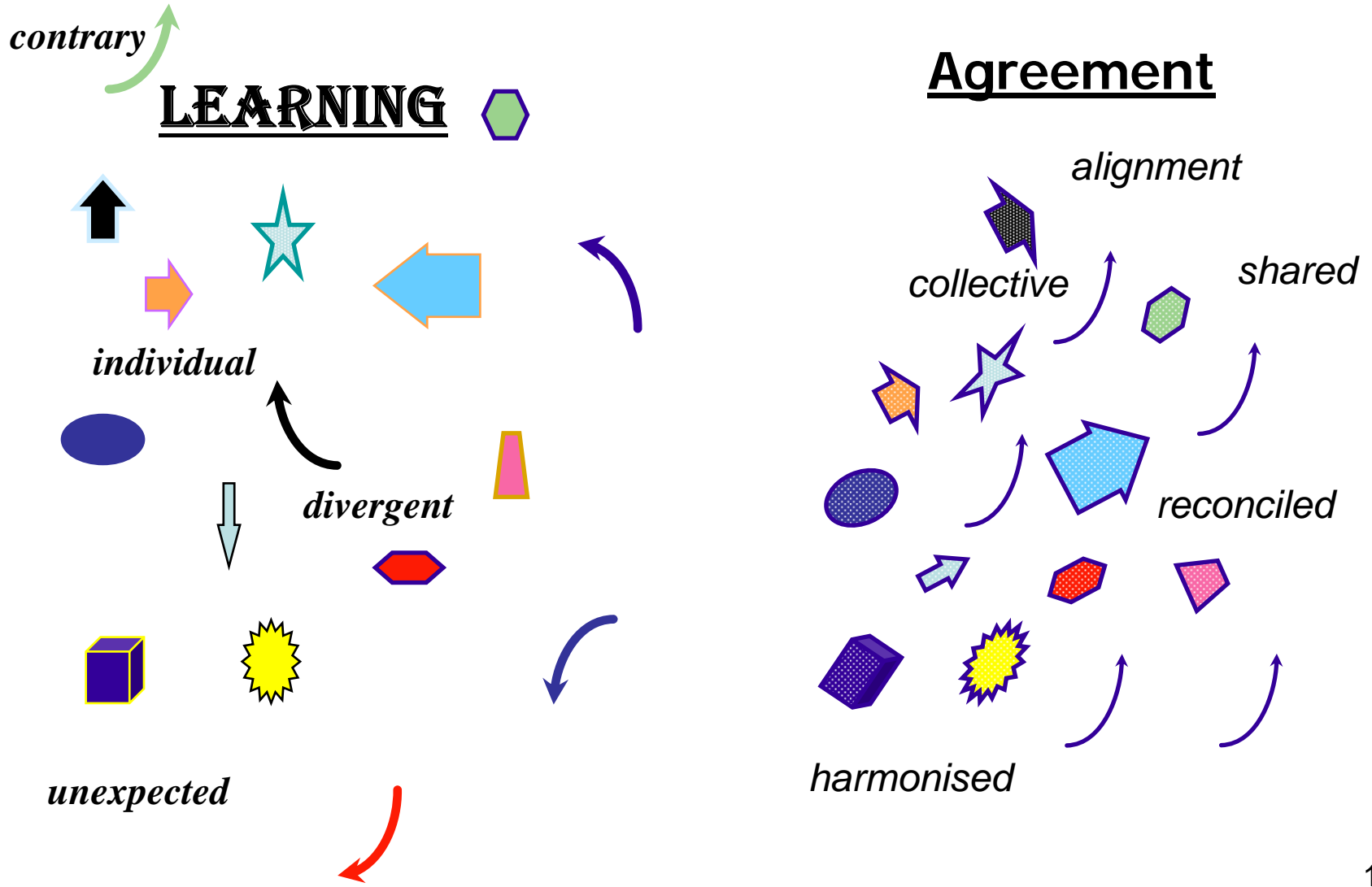
Knowledge and Ignorance

- Social construction of ignorance
- Uncomfortable knowledge
- Abilene Paradox



WWK - What we know
WWKWK - What we know, we know
WWKWDK - What we know, we don't know
WWDKWK - What we don't know, we know
WWDKWDK - What we don't know, we don't know

Facilitating for Learning & Agreement



Researching

Engaged Scholarship

Clarifying and extending what works, when and how

Research into scenarios/scenarios as research

Enabling comparison with other futures practices

Research into Scenarios

- Limited public domain case studies
- Lack of clinical research 'laboratories'
- Second hand learning
- Evaluation criteria:
 - When: linear vs. iterative policy process?
 - What level: individual, process, organisation?
 - Which intended purpose/performance outcomes:
 - Financial performance?
 - Organisational learning?

What informs 'design'?

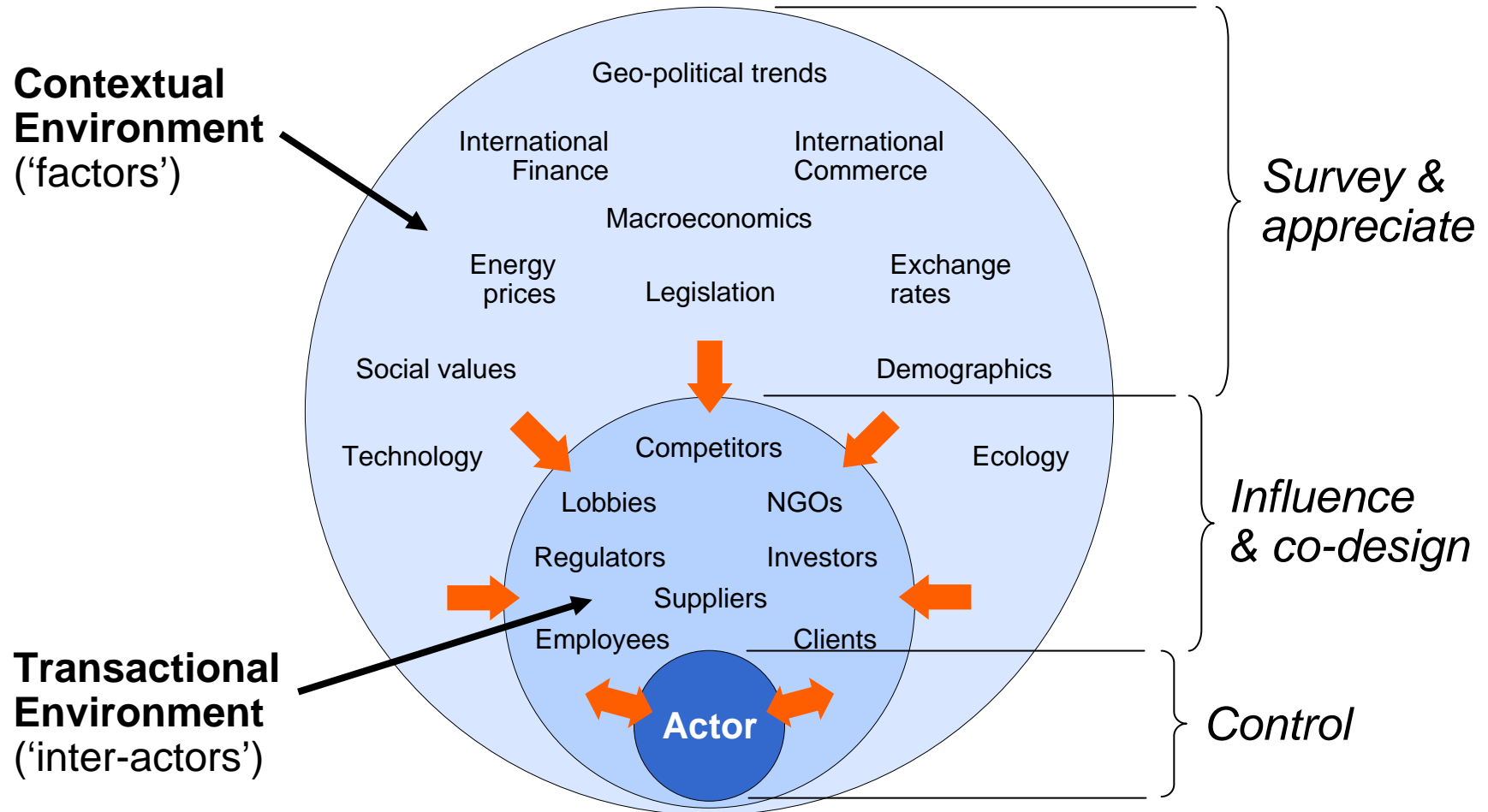
- Purpose
- Role of prediction
- Focus on/number of uncertainties vs. focus on predetermined elements
- One-off or sustained activity
- Participation: who builds, users, sponsors
- Emphasis of resources in production vs. consumption
- Time horizon
- Role of narrative
- Need for quantitative legitimacy
- Other entrenched practices

Some attempts to Reveal Theory/ Link Practice to Theory

- Causal environments and turbulence
 - Selsky, Ramirez & van der Heijden (forthcoming)
 - Emergy and Trist

- Organisational learning
 - De Geus, The Living Company
 - Chermack, Lynham and van der Merwe (2006)

Environmental complexity and Turbulence



Ref: Kees van der Heijden
Emergy and Trist

Purposeful Intervention

Any human activity requires three forms of judgment. Deciding on action requires:

- *Sensemaking: The reality, the facts*
- *Norming: What is good/bad about it (aligning values)*
- *Strategizing: The ability to do something about it*

Ref:

Vickers, G. 1965. *The Art of Judgment, a Study in Policy Making*. New York: Harper and Row.

Vickers, G. 1983. *Human Systems are Different*. New York: Harper & Row.

AIDS in AFRICA: Three scenarios to 2025

