

Envisioning Research Library Futures: ARL's Scenario Thinking Project

Briefing Session Sponsored by:
Transforming Research Libraries Steering Committee

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Stratus, Inc.

The Elements of Strategy

Who We Are

Competencies: Strengths & Weaknesses



Who We Want To Be
Vision: Strategic Intent

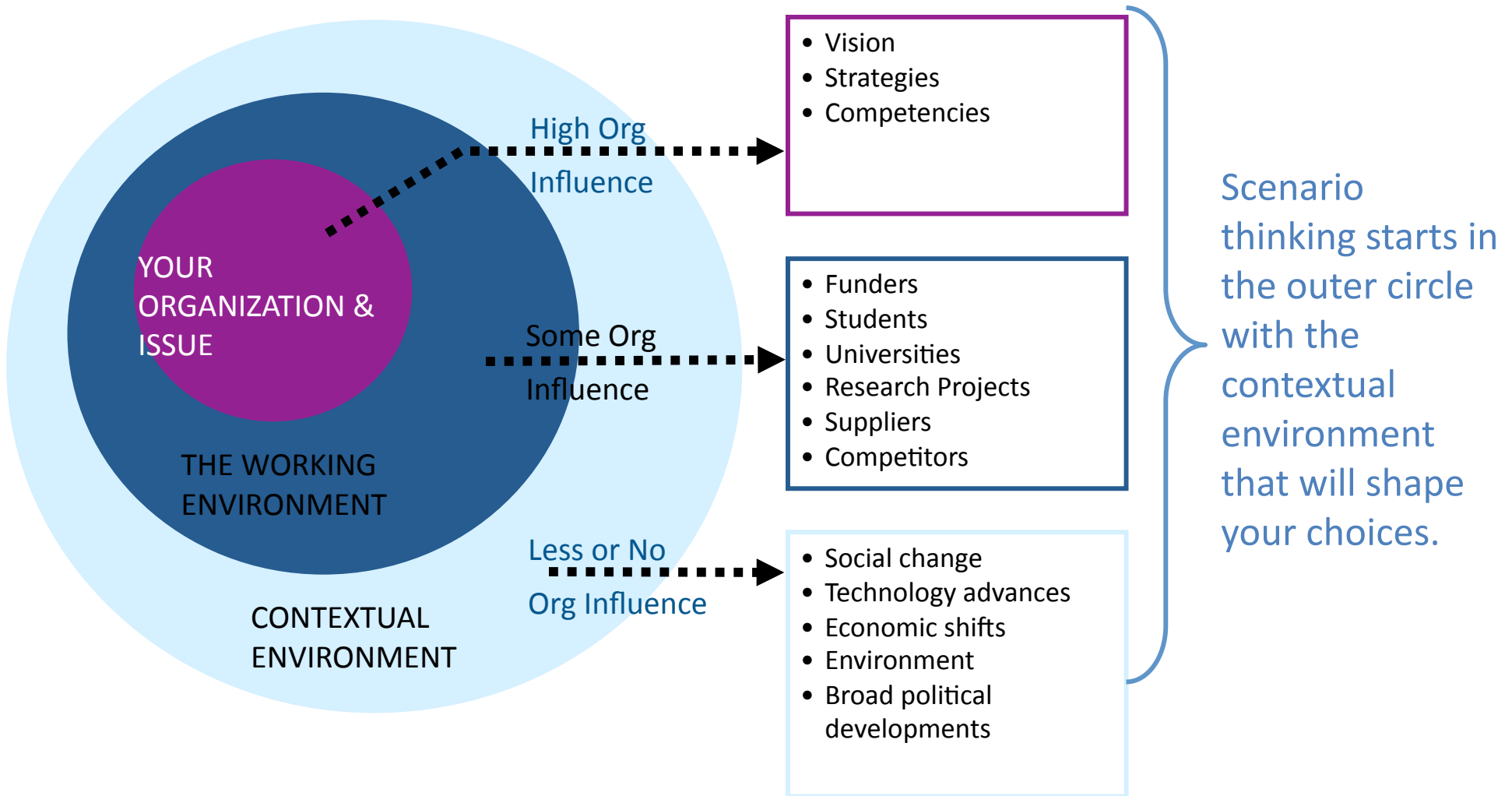
Where We Have to Work
Scenarios:
The Business Environment

Who would have guessed...

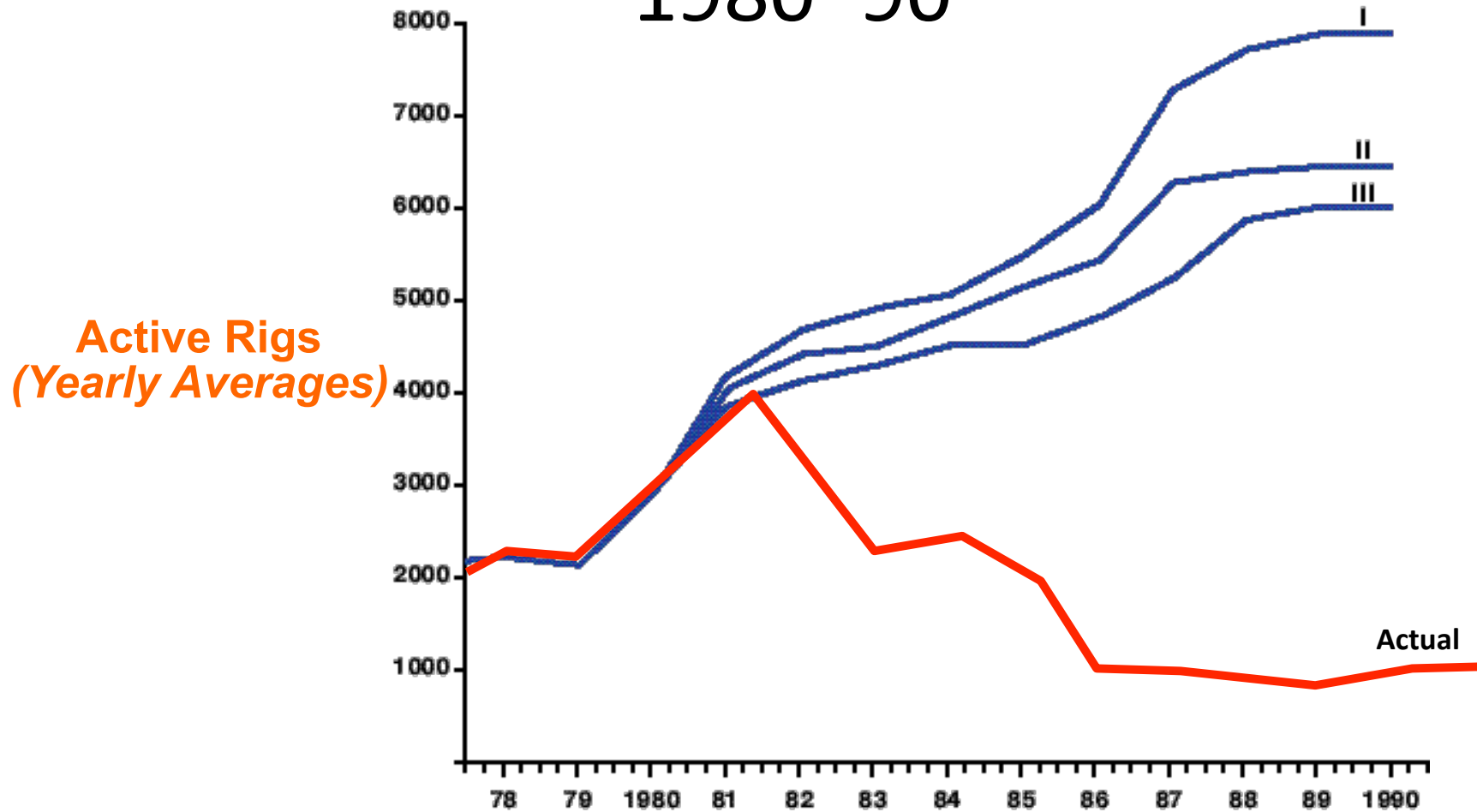
- that oil prices would drop in 1986?
- that the Cold War would end?
- that Apartheid would end in South Africa?
- that commercial airliners would be used as weapons?
- that the dot.com bubble would burst?
- that oil prices would reach \$100+ a barrel?
- that the US would spark an unprecedented global financial crisis in 2008?

THE FUTURE IS NOT KNOWN
AND YET WE MUST ACT.

Scenarios are Created Through an “Outside-In” Approach



Multiple Forecasts of Oil Drilling: 1980–90

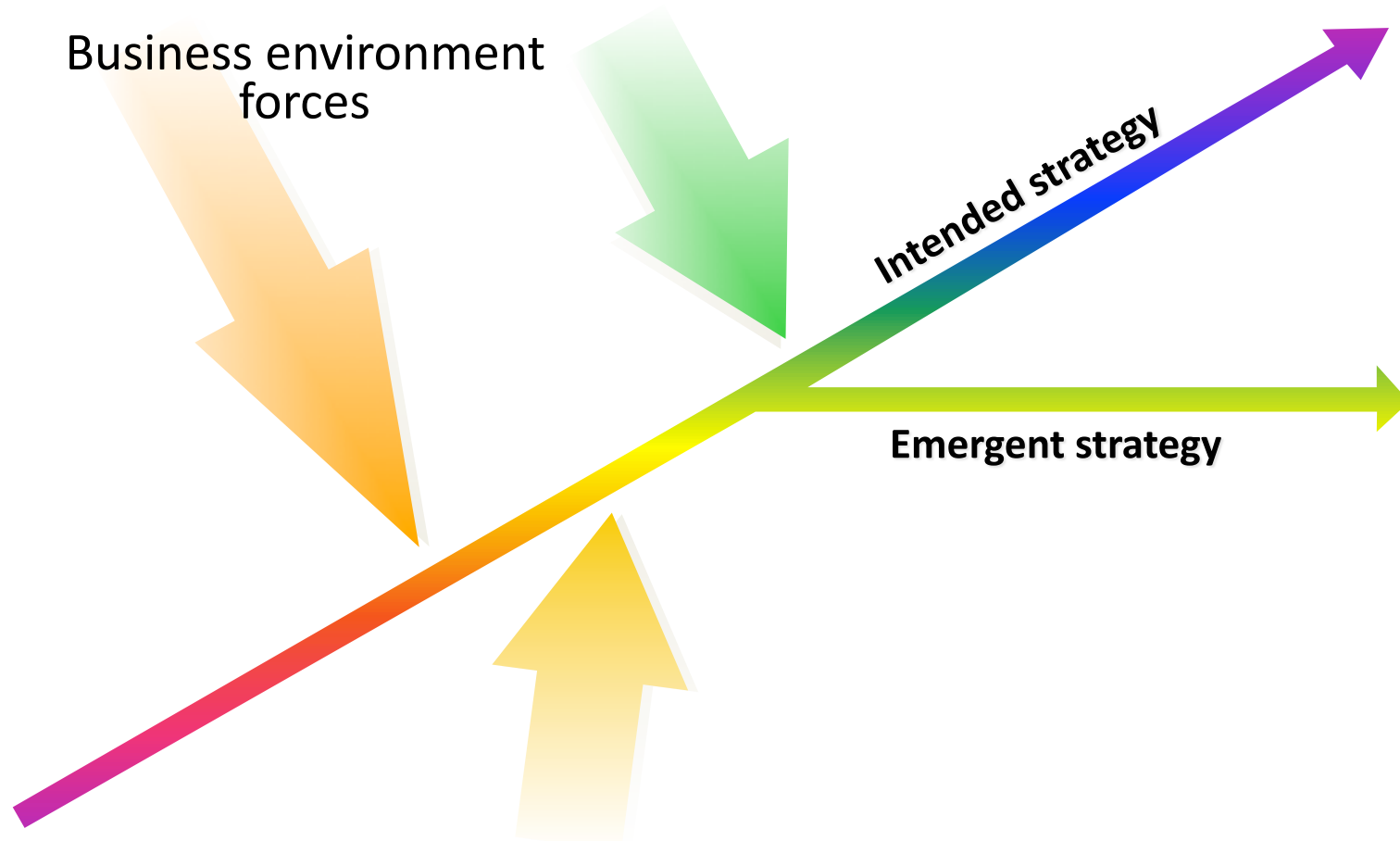


Forecasts by Major Oilfield Equipment Group

Why Scenarios ?

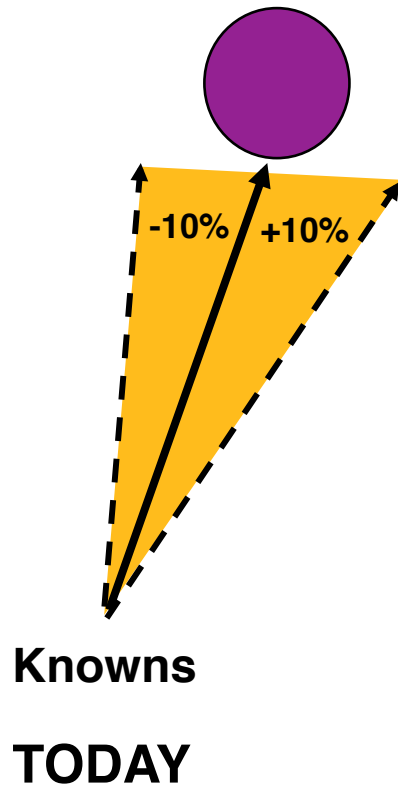
- Clarify and discover uncertainty
- Cast a broad net in which diverse views are valued and shared
- Understand complexity of the business environment better
- Identify change faster
- Enable successful adaptation to change in the business environment through contingent plans and strategies

Emergent Strategy

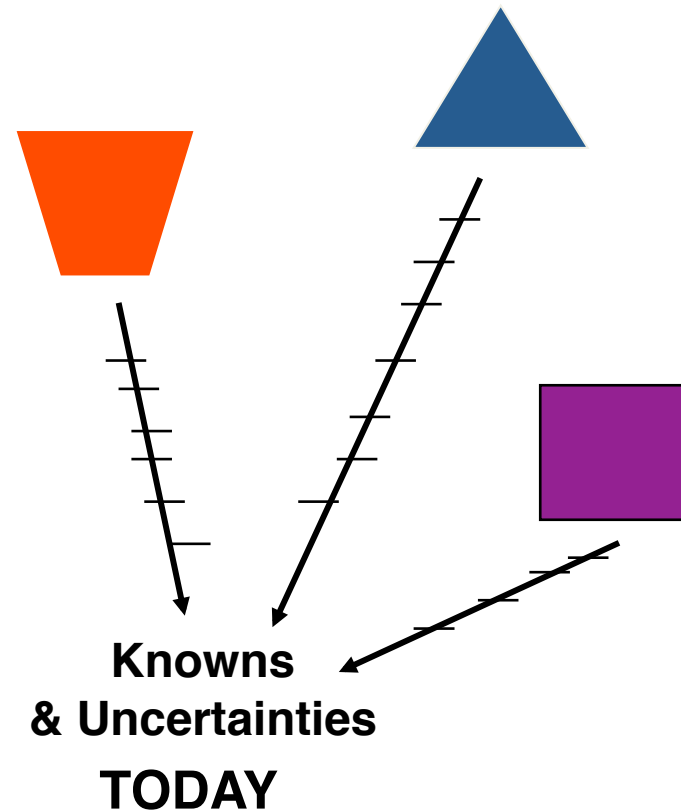


Scenarios compensate for a tendency to oversimplify the future

Forecast Planning *Planning for One Future*



Scenario Planning *Planning for Any Future*



Scenarios vs. Sensitivity Analysis

Scenarios

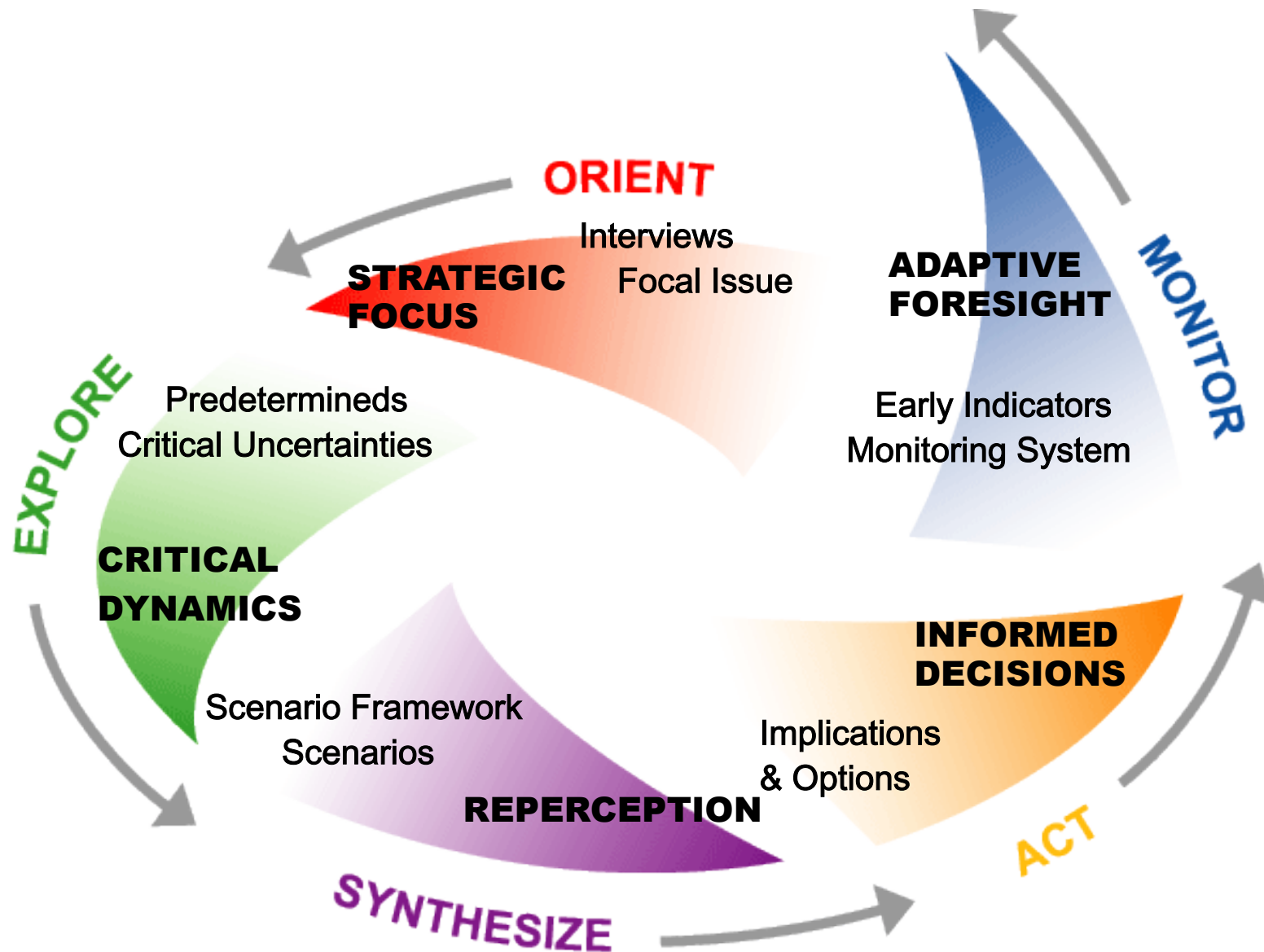
- Outside-in
- Multiple possible futures
- Highlights uncertainty, stretches mental maps
- Primarily Qualitative
- Complex systems

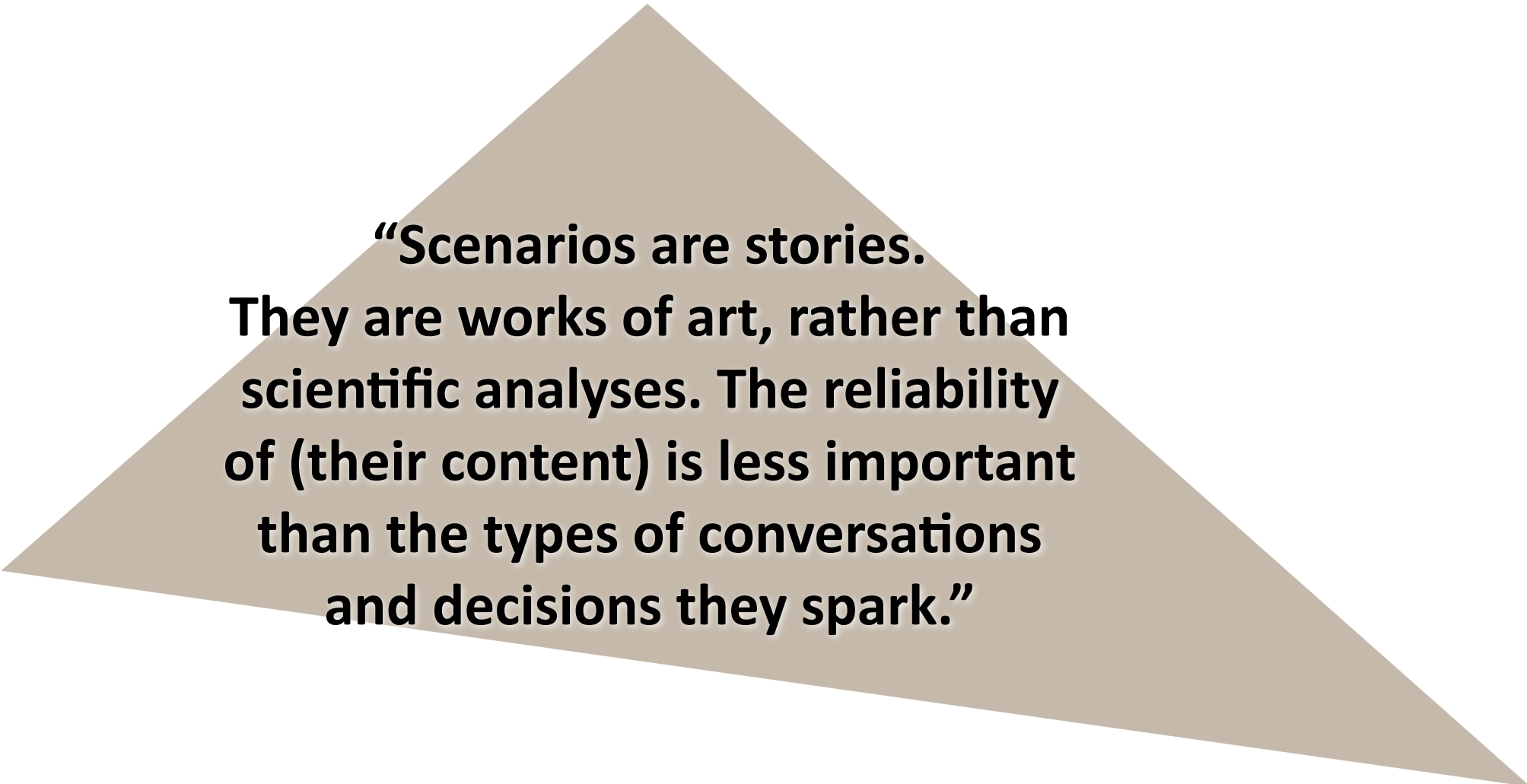
Sensitivity Analysis

- Inside-out
- Based on forecast/single assumption set
- Highlights certainty, supports current view
- Primarily Quantitative
- Single variable focus



Scenarios: Creating Advantage from Uncertainty





**“Scenarios are stories.
They are works of art, rather than
scientific analyses. The reliability
of (their content) is less important
than the types of conversations
and decisions they spark.”**

—Arie de Geus, *The Living Company*

Timeline

Spring 2010

- Introduce to members scenario thinking methodology, including the goals and value of the approach
- Identify the Strategic Focus for the effort through
 - Individual interviews
 - Focus groups
 - Member “survey”
- Define the scenario framework and logics during the June 10-11 workshop

Summer 2010

- Write scenario narratives for members to use in their strategic planning

Fall 2010

- Release scenarios and toolkit
- Surface strategic implications of the scenario process for research libraries