

# STRATEGIC PLANNING IN THE SINGAPORE CIVIL SERVICE





“The nicest thing about *not* planning is that failure comes as a complete surprise, and is not preceded by a period of worry and depression.”

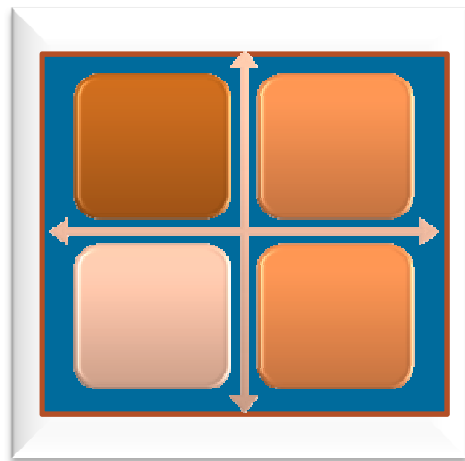
John Preston  
Bolton College

# Public Service for the 21st Century

- PS21: The Public Service Change Movement
- Embracing change and improvement in the Public Service
  - Building a culture of experimentation and continuous improvement
  - Being ready **to** change & ready **for** change
  - Everyone is involved



# Singapore's Strategic Planning Story



Scenario Planning



Risk Assessment  
and Horizon Scanning



Centre for  
Strategic Futures

# National-level, Anticipatory Thinking in Strategic Planning



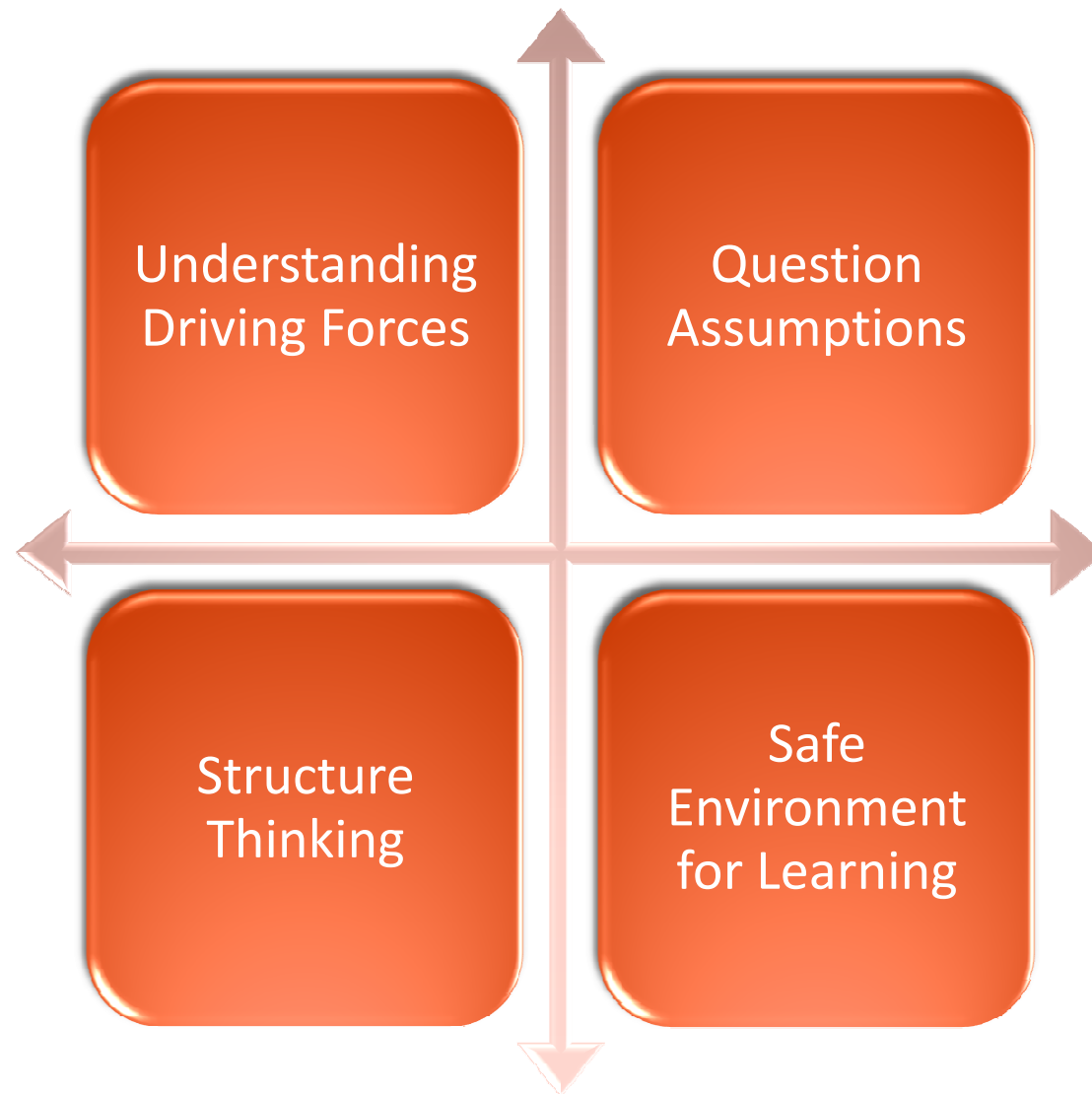
Scenario Planning &  
Futures Thinking

Strategy & Policy  
Formulation

# Scenario Planning in the Public Sector



# Why Scenario Planning?



# Assumptions

“Drill for oil? You mean drill into the ground to try to find oil? You’re crazy.”

Associates of Edwin L. Drake, first person to drill for oil in the U.S., 1859



“Rail travel at high speed is not possible because passengers, unable to breathe, would die of asphyxia.”

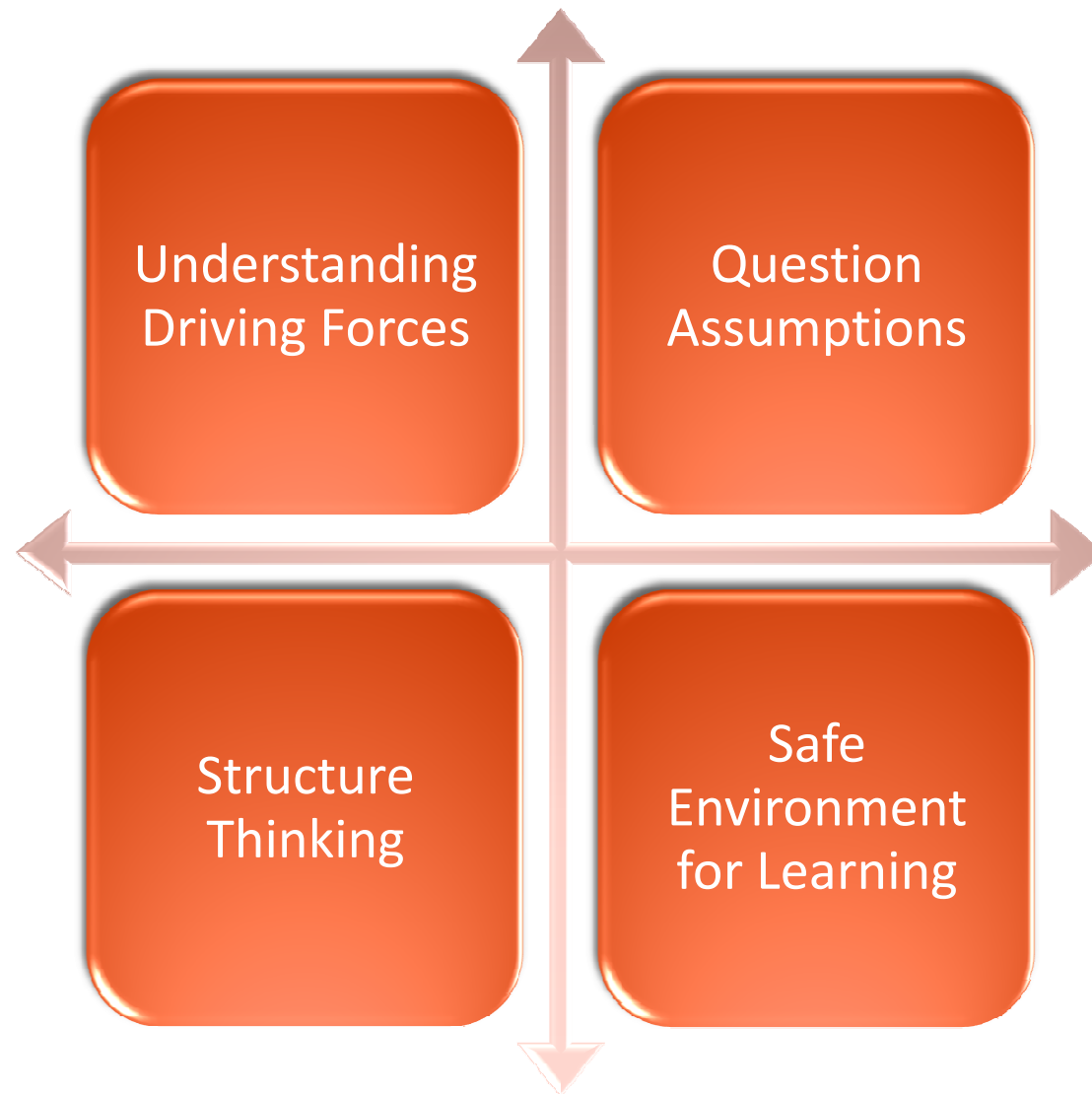
Dr Dionysys Larder (1793-1859)  
Irish scientific writer

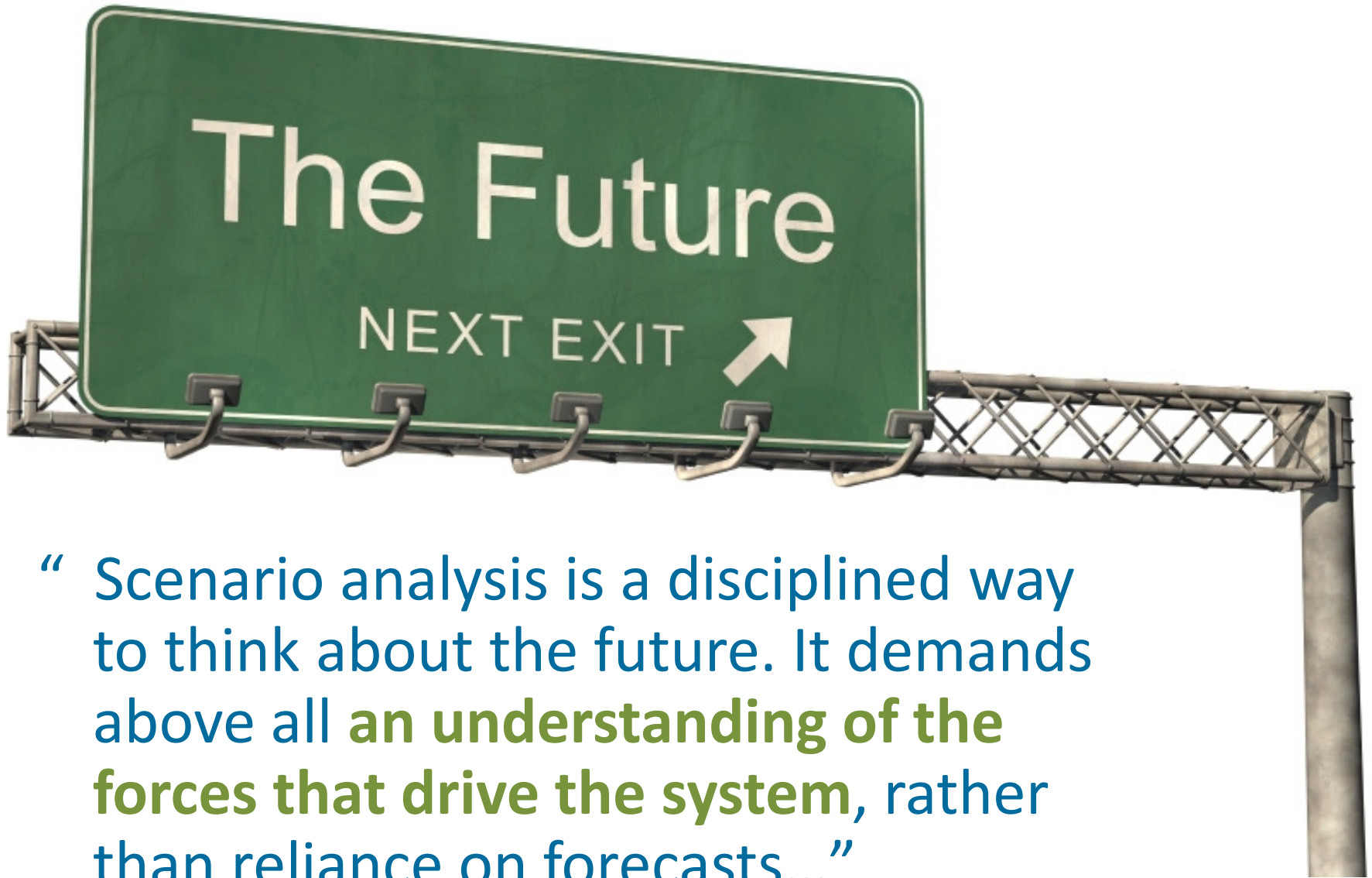
“Worldwide demand for cars will never exceed one million, primarily because of a limitation in the number of available chauffeurs.”

Research prediction  
Mercedes-Benz, 1900



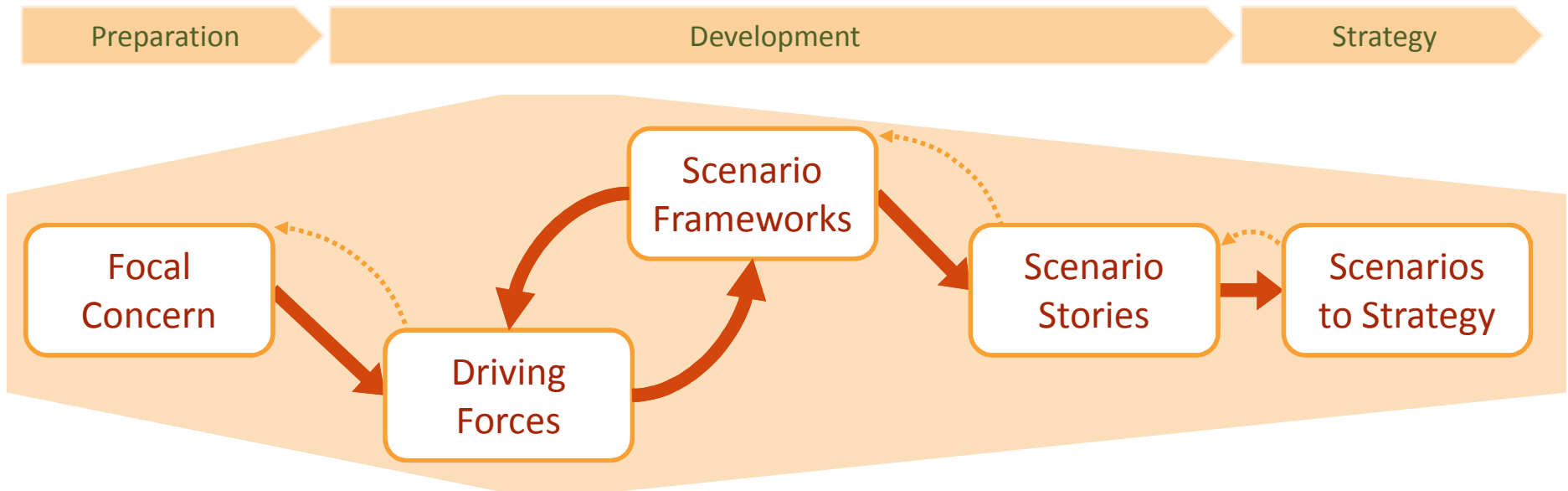
# Why Scenario Planning?





“ Scenario analysis is a disciplined way to think about the future. It demands above all **an understanding of the forces that drive the system**, rather than reliance on forecasts...”

# Scenario Planning Schematic



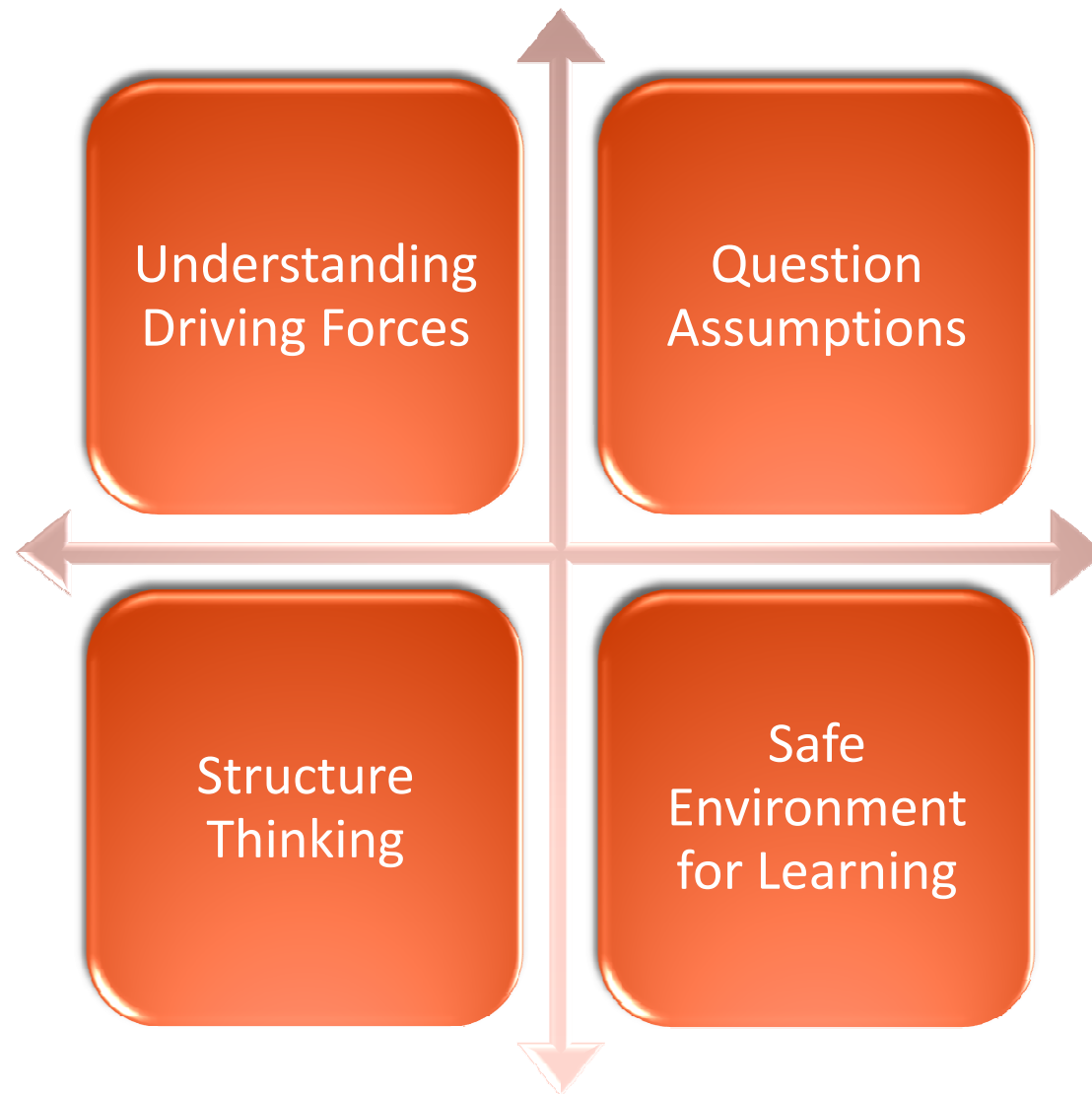
Structure Thinking

Question assumptions

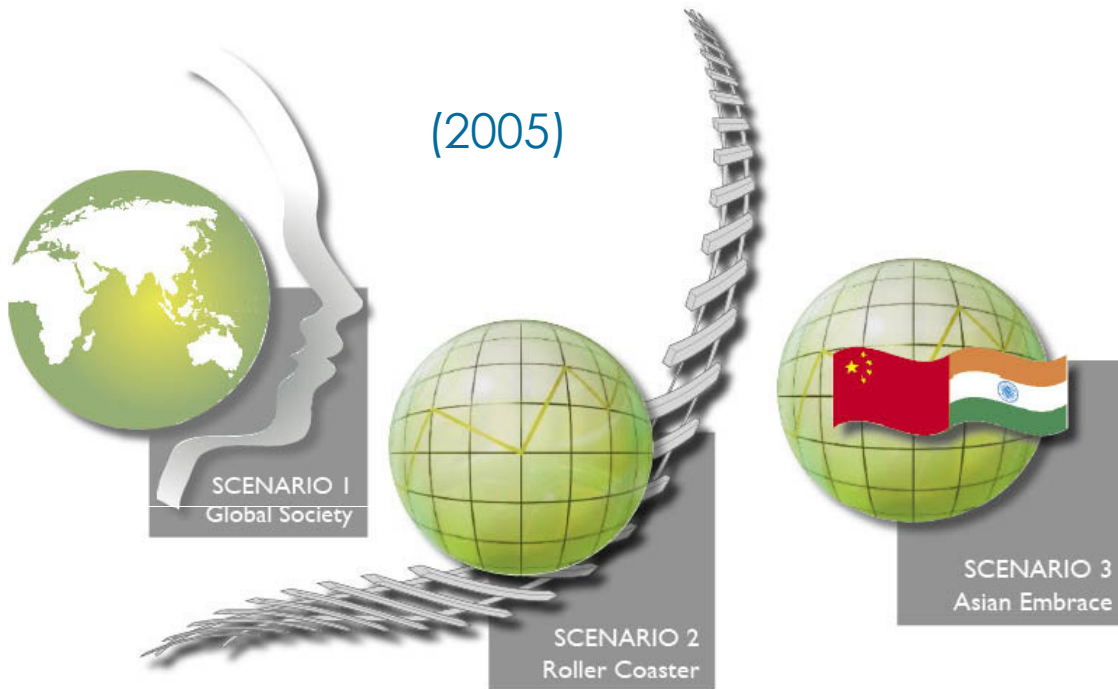
Understand driving forces

Develop plausible scenarios

# Why Scenario Planning?



# National Scenarios



(1999)

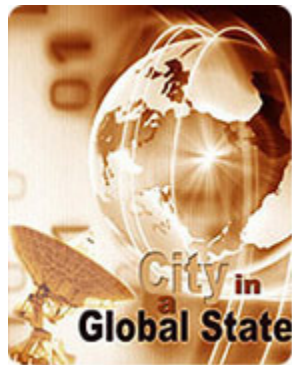
Asia Reborn



Region in Transition



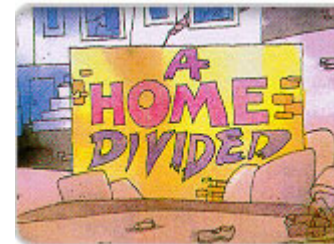
Globalisation in Crisis



(2002)



A Home Divided



(1997)

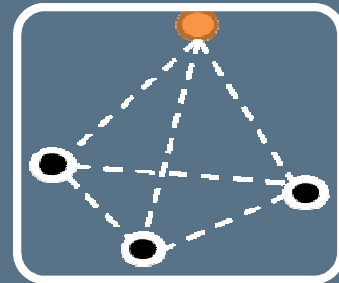
Hotel Singapore



# BEYOND SCENARIO PLANNING



Non-linear, sudden  
shocks



Complexity & sense-  
making





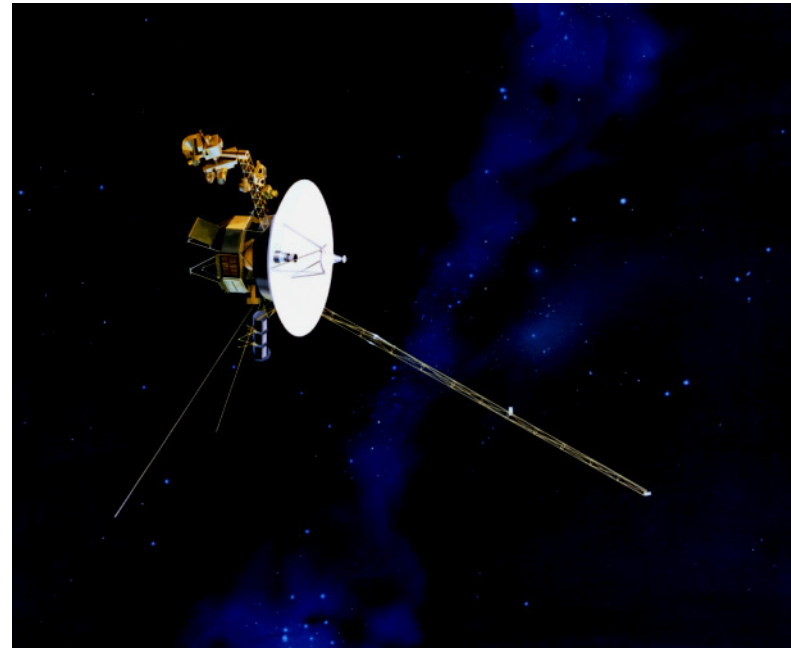
Identifying wildcards



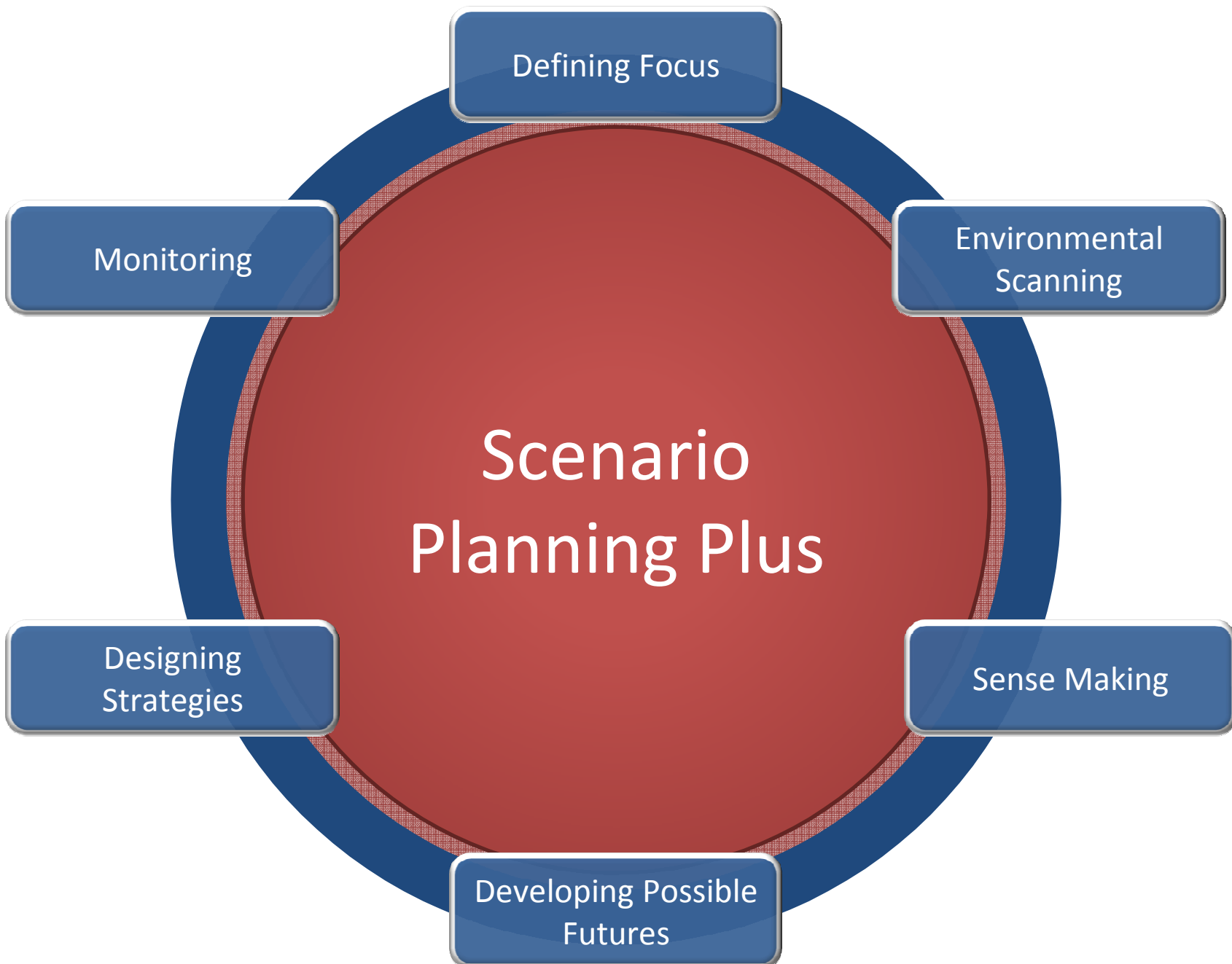
Connecting databases to  
detect weak signals

# CENTRE FOR STRATEGIC FUTURES

Experiment



Discover



Defining Focus

Environmental Scanning

Sense Making

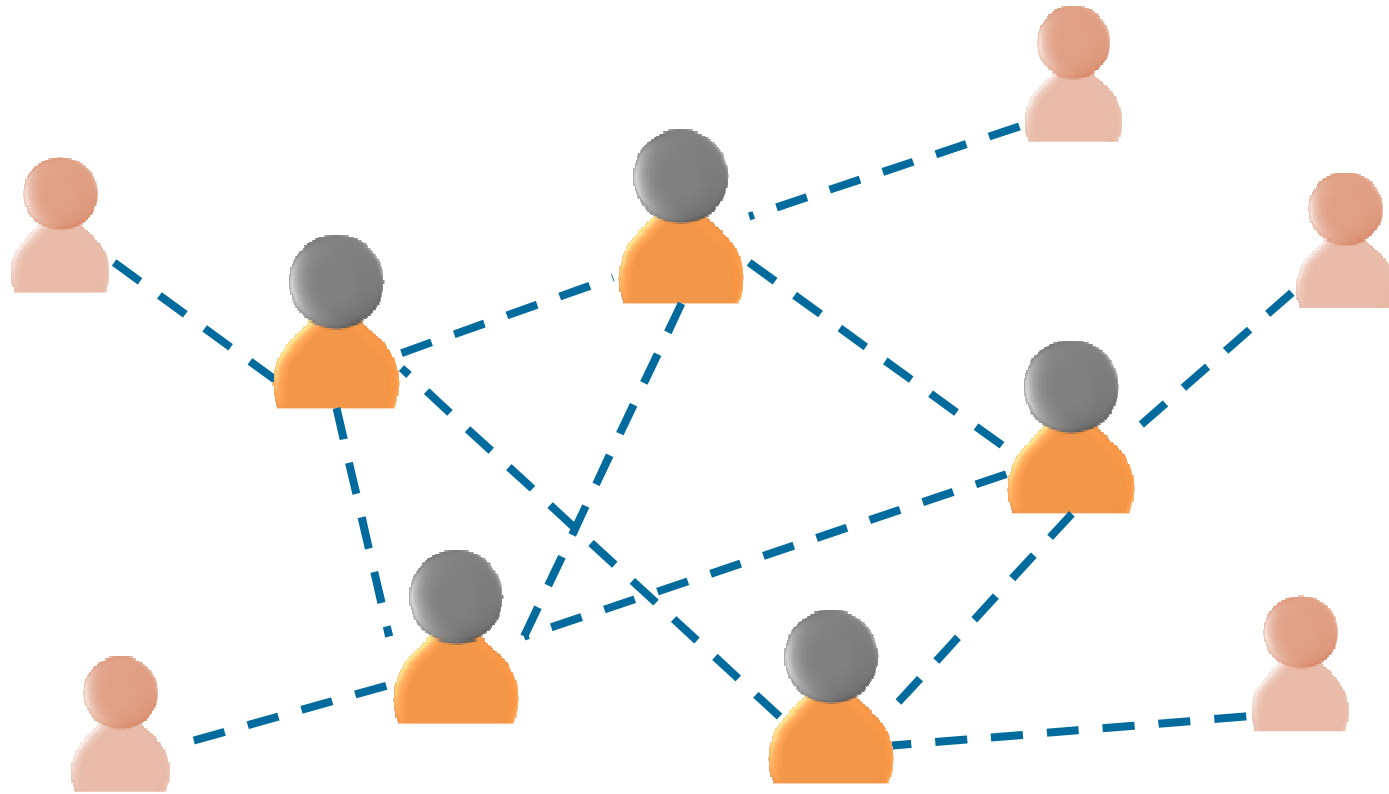
Developing Possible Futures

Designing Strategies

Monitoring

Scenario Planning Plus

# Networked Government



Growing futures community

# Total Risk Governance System



# Summary

National-level anticipatory thinking is a **strategic advantage** for Singapore

**Facilitates long-term planning** through common methodology and **coordinates cross-ministry strategies**

Serves as a **central node** in government networks; builds international networks

Coordinates whole-of-government **risk management**