

The Wizard *of US*

Sustainable Scenarios Project

World Business Council for
Sustainable Development



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Acknowledgment

Imagine that the Wizard of Oz, or perhaps just your boss, has given you \$1 million dollars to integrate sustainability into your organization. What would you do first and why? What problems would you encounter? How would you resolve them?

These are just a few of the questions considered by the United States Sustainable Scenarios Project, an effort conceived and underwritten by more than 20 North American-based businesses, some of which are members of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD). Each company invited one representative from government and one from a community group to participate.

Possibly the most important outcome of the project, however, was the clearly expressed yearning by all to participate more often in partnerships that break down the boundaries between business, government and NGOs. Most recognized that the next steps in the journey toward sustainable development will require people to share leadership and power, working together with courage, wisdom, and heart to achieve the solutions.

Acknowledgment

We, the participants of the Sustainable Scenarios Project, realize our work is a small contribution to the goal of sustainable development. We hope the kit will help others to engage in vigorous and imaginative discussions about their futures and then to create action plans that take them forward.

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1. Introduction

Much has been written in the last half of the 1990s about the use of scenarios in business planning. Prominent and respected leaders and scholars such as Allen Hammond of the World Resources Institute and Peter Schwartz, formerly of Shell Oil have both contributed to our collective vision for the future and eloquently promoted scenarios as a planning tool.

The process of scenario development, however, is not widely understood. Many people never get past the dilemma of how to pronounce the words.

Scenarios are essentially stories about the future, and in that sense, scenarios involve the skill of story creation and telling. For thousands of years and across diverse cultures, humans have told stories to imbed values, wisdom, social expectations and moral teachings. Mothers and fathers tell bedtime stories to their children to make them think about their behavior, parental expectations, personal safety and other issues of growing up. We tell ghost stories around the campfire that reinforce beliefs (or lack of) in the spiritual world, the triumph of right over wrong, and the fear of the unknown.

Scenarios are valuable tools on two levels. The first and most obvious relates to the nearly universal human yearning to look ahead and know what will happen. In building scenarios, we marry the storytelling skills from the right side of the brain with the quantitative, analytical skills from the left side. When done properly, scenarios bring to life vivid, thrilling views of the future, but they are not intended to be predictive. Rather, they are intended to open the minds of those involved, to help them identify key driving forces or variables, and understand how those variables could play out under changing conditions. Scenarios are the consummate tool for anticipation.

A second potential outcome of scenarios is one that we discovered or observed through many scenario projects. When diverse people convene to construct scenarios, they come with their own perspectives on reality. Inevitably, the process of working with others on scenarios — discovering new data, analyzing the drivers and other variables, and creating the stories — brings people to a common understanding of the issue at hand. In short, scenario creation can be a powerful tool for building consensus and collaborative decision-making.

Scenario creation can be done in many ways. On page 37 of this booklet, Lawrence Wilkinson describes in his article, “How to Build Scenarios,” one process that can be used. A complex scenario project that is well supported with research, contributions from various subject experts, and input from professional technicians and analysts can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. But good scenarios are not dependent on financial resources, nor are they relevant only for multinational corporations or institutions. Challenging and relevant scenarios can be created by departments, small companies, non-profit organizations, churches, in short, any one that is interested in its future.

Since the first Earth Summit on the Environment in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, business and industry have been struggling to clarify, even justify, their interest in such a broad concept as sustainability — with little *apparent* connection to the bottom line. We believe that scenarios can help people look at their organizations, the future and key drivers in ways they normally do not and understand them in a new context. Participation in a scenario project enables people to begin seeing the future through a lens they collectively have created, rather than their own narrow scopes. It is through this change in perspective that collaboration and trust are born.

This booklet is designed to provide you with basic tools and methodology for creating scenarios and, if possible, to build bridges between groups or individuals so we can make progress in the journey to sustainability.

2. Personal Case For Scenarios: Changing The Winds¹

Each of us has a choice to make about how we look at the future. Will we be most effective by trying to adapt to what is happening in the world around us? Or by choosing to participate in shaping the future?

Looking back on my career, I can see that I have been working on these questions for the past fifteen years, in large companies around the world and in public projects in Canada, South Africa, Colombia, and elsewhere. This work reminds me of Joseph Campbell's "hero's journey," the stages that all of us — not just great mythic characters — meet on the way to finding our life's work: the call to adventure, crossing the threshold, the road of trials, the supreme ordeal, and the return and gift.

So far, four lessons about strategy have stayed with me from out of my experiences in the cauldron of public conflict.

The Man With The Answers

I grew up in Montreal in a family which believed in working to make the world a better place. Our emphasis was more on thinking and doing more than on feeling and being. I studied physics at McGill University and in

¹ Reproduced with the permission of Adam Kahane, Centre for Generative Leadership L.L.C, Hamilton, Massachusetts, USA. E-mail: kahane@cgl-leadership.com

1981 went to a conference in Calgary organized by Pugwash, an organization of scientists striving to prevent nuclear war. I found it very inspiring, particularly a woman from Sri Lanka who spoke of energy as a more pressing challenge to developing countries than nuclear weapons. I met John Holdren, who invited me to pursue a graduate degree in energy economics. I arrived at the University of California at Berkeley in 1982, eager to learn how to use policy to help the world. One of the courses I took was called “Tricks of the Trade,” about how to influence the world, where I learned that the main thing was to produce the right answer quickly. That way, when testifying before a Senate committee (which we all aspired to do), we could say, “Well, Senator, that’s a good question, and I think that the right answer would be exactly 3.2 terajoules, and that’s why you should support this legislation.”

After graduating, I joined Pacific Gas and Electric. I learned more of the same. You became a star by having quick answers to your boss’s questions: “Well, boss, I think the rate of return on this project would be 15.2 percent and that we should go for it.” Then I was recruited to work at Royal Dutch/Shell in Group Planning Coordination in London, eventually to head up the social-political-economic-technological scenario team. For somebody interested in strategy work, this was the pinnacle. By this time, I was very analytical in my approach, with a lot of knowledge about the energy industry; that’s why I was hired. But I had lost most of my interest in changing the world. I was dispassionate, even cynical. At the same time, I loved the Shell environment. I found the people incredibly smart and knowledgeable. If they were arrogant, it was because they were the best. I admired them and was proud to be one of them.

I learned the scenario method there. What I understood was that the purpose of scenario planning was to observe the world and help the organization

adapt to it. Talking from idealism, about outcomes we wanted, was not only improper, but dangerous. It led people into trouble; thinking about their desired futures, they might act outside their proper domain or miss important signals that didn't fit with their desires. It was critical to differentiate clearly what you could and could not influence. "If you're in a hang glider," we said, "then you have options as to how you lean and distribute your weight. But you only have scenarios for the direction of the wind. If you start talking about options for wind direction, as if your wishes about wind direction could influence it, you will get terribly hurt."

This realistic, adaptive paradigm dominates thinking about corporations and corporate strategy. Philosophically, it corresponds to objectivism and representationalism, where we assume that there is a pre-given world out there that we can study. The danger I saw was that it could end up being reactive and irresponsible. But I also saw problems with its opposite, the idealistic pole, where we assume that we can create the world we want. Philosophically this is subjectivism and solipsism — everything is possible, only my interior life exists — and the dangers are myopia and hubris. So I found myself stuck on the horns of a true dilemma.

I wouldn't have said it then, but in retrospect this period corresponds to Joseph Campbell's "the wasteland," a time of living inauthentically. I learned a lot; looking back, though, I see that I did not fit.

About that time an outsider came in to head up the Shell scenario team, a visionary lawyer and businessman named Joseph Jaworski, who had founded the American Leadership Forum and is now my partner in the Centre for Generative Leadership. Joe caused a ruckus at Group Planning; he wanted the scenario work to be activist, to contribute to shaping a better world. He

also believed in the importance and power of a leader's and a company's higher purpose, beyond simply observing, adapting, making money, and surviving. This stance sparked deep disagreements in Group Planning, but it struck a profound chord within me. I found my energy, which had been sapped, coming back. Campbell calls this "the call to adventure." You hear a call, you don't know what it is, and you don't even recognize it as a call.

In 1991, Shell was invited to send a staff member to South Africa to facilitate a series of workshops being organized by Professor Pieter Le Roux at a conference center near Cape Town called Mont Fleur. The project was an attempt to use the Shell scenario method to improve strategic thinking and conversation among South African leaders about the future of their country.

South Africa had just begun the transition from apartheid to a democratic government. It was only a year since Nelson Mandela had been released from prison and the left-wing opposition legalized; the first all-race elections would not be held for two more years. It was a period of many activities where people who had been in deep conflict were getting together to search for a collaborative way forward.

Scenarios were already well known in South Africa because during the 1980s a scenario exercise led by Clem Sunter, a senior executive at the Anglo American mining corporation, had played an influential, public role in building discussion, particularly among the white population, about possibilities and options. But the Anglo American scenarios, for all their insights, fell short of their potential because they were developed by a fairly homogenous team and in effect handed to the country as a set of answers.

The Mont Fleur scenarios were different. The multi-racial scenario team included twenty-two members from across the spectrum of South Africa's diverse constituencies: community activists, conservative politicians, African National Congress officials, trade unionists, mainstream economists, and top corporate executives. Our objective was to develop a set of alternative stories about South Africa's future, to provoke debate and forward movement.

One Mont Fleur scenario ("Lame Duck") envisioned a prolonged transition with a constitutionally weakened transitional government. Because the government "purports to respond to all, but satisfies none," investors hold back, and growth and development languish amidst a mood of long, slow uncertainty. This was an important scenario because a coalition government was being negotiated, and the scenario allowed people to see potential dangers and how to mitigate them. Another scenario ("Icarus") suggested that a black government could come to power on a wave of public support, embark on a huge, unsustainable public spending program, and consequently crash the economy. For the first time, a team including prominent left-wing economists discussed the possibility of a new government trying to do too much.

The Mont Fleur project contributed to the building of a common language for talking across groups about the opportunities and challenges facing the country. This shared understanding — together with the fruits of countless other workshops, meetings, and negotiations — eventually helped lead to the unprecedented "miraculous" transition from minority to majority rule in 1994. One specific Mont Fleur contribution was creating a more realistic assessment of the crucial economic dimension of the transition; previously, most people had focused only on political, military and constitutional aspects.

Personally, I was overwhelmed by this experience. I liked the South Africans. I found them warm and I admired their extraordinary capacity to listen to each other. I respected the sacrifices that the people I was meeting had made to bring their country to this juncture. At the same time, I was struck by my own effectiveness as a facilitator. In fact, I was more effective in the Mont Fleur project than I had ever been before-and than I would be again for many years. I had done something right, but I didn't know what it was.

Eventually I figured it out. At Mont Fleur, I had had almost no time to prepare. With more time, I would have done my normal PG&E or Shell thing. I would have read, formed opinions, and brought a recommendation. I was effective because I arrived in ignorance and respect. One of the participants, Howard Gabriels, said afterwards, "Adam, we couldn't believe anyone could be as ignorant as you. We were sure that you were trying to manipulate us. But when we realized you really didn't know anything and were really there just to support us, we decided to trust you."

This was my first lesson: I was much more effective when I gave up the stance of knowing and arrogance and replaced it with one of wonder and reverence. This allowed me to enter into what Martin Buber calls an "I-Thou" relationship with the rest of the group. Such relationships are the source of generativity.

The Messy Gray Zone

Mont Fleur was the start of a series of love affairs for me. I fell in love with the country, with this new "servant consulting" work, and with Dorothy, the project coordinator, whom I ended up marrying. I resigned from Shell, moved to South Africa, and started to work internationally as a strategy consultant

to both private companies and public institutions. In Campbell's terms, this was "crossing the threshold" into another world.

I wondered for a long time whether the Mont Fleur scenarios were actually scenarios in the way I had been taught to use the term. Were they stories responding to outside events, like the Shell scenarios, or were they, in fact, options that people might choose? Technically speaking, the Mont Fleur scenarios were Shell-style adaptive scenarios in that none of the participants had the option of choosing South Africa's future. They could only choose options for themselves based on an understanding of events around them. On the other hand, in the years that followed I could see influential South Africans using the scenarios, not only as a guide for their own choices, but as a way to talk through and influence their country's destiny.

I also wondered about a comment made by Rob Davies, a member of the team. "The exercise was very good," he said. "But I felt that I had to compromise." Why, I wondered, did he feel dissatisfied?

Campbell talks about the hero's "road of trials," in which valuable knowledge may be forgotten. In fact, I forgot the first lesson almost immediately. My old arrogance came back, my learning slowed down, and I began to consider myself the North's gift to South Africa. In 1994, I organized a meeting in Berkeley with Steve Rosell, Don Michael, and Ed Schein—all highly respected theorists on collaborative learning. I wanted them to tell me how to make these projects work. It was a terrible meeting. Eventually, Ed said, "You know, Adam, your approach is foolish. You are living in the world's greatest laboratory of collaborative futures and you're asking us what to do." I had reached the nadir of my "knowing," not able to see what was in front of my nose.

I was working at the time with Steve Rosell on a scenario project for the Canadian government. Like most state organizations, the Canadian government had never done scenario work. Why do scenarios when you control the fate of the country and can simply choose the future you want? But when we got there, this assumption of control was being questioned. “We have these levers that as civil servants we’ve been trained to use,” one of them told us, “but the levers don’t seem to be connected to anything any more.”

Meanwhile, I was working in South Africa with various collaborative “forums” composed of businesses, government, opposition parties, trade unions, and community organizations, trying to find a way to reshape the country’s institutions. People in the forums joked that there were both “a practical and a miraculous solution. The practical solution is that we all get out of our chairs, get down on our knees, and pray for a band of angels to come and solve this problem. The miraculous solution is, we stay here, work together, and find the solution ourselves.”

I learned my second lesson from contrasting these two experiences. People seemed much more effective when they gave up the illusion of being in control, and tried instead to work through things with others. When, as with the Canadians, they held onto the need to deal only with things under their control, they weren’t effective. They operated in an all-or-nothing, black-or-white, win-or-lose world that didn’t reflect the way things really work. The South Africans, by contrast, were daring to play in a gray zone between complete control on the one hand and no influence on the other, a generative domain where they had less control than they wished but more influence than they expected.

The Dimension Of The Heart

I later became involved in a larger scenario project on the future of Canada, in the context of fierce debates over economic and social policy, Quebec secession, and other issues. Modeled on Mont Fleur and convened by businessman Michael Adams, these sessions brought together Canadians from across the spectrum: Québécois and Western leaders, business people and trade unionists, community leaders, and aboriginal peoples. The group took a particularly long time to come to consensus; we had to add an extra session. I felt fogged in, unable to see clearly the picture we were trying to create.

The Canadian writer Margaret Atwood has said, “Just because English Canadians don’t move their faces much, doesn’t mean we don’t have feelings.” As a Canadian I certainly had strong feelings about the subjects we were discussing, but I didn’t pay much attention to my feelings and certainly didn’t articulate them. Most members of the group behaved in the same way. Although the rational arguments often had an emotional edge, peoples’ feelings were rarely put on the table. Somehow this slowed things down.

Around the same time, in South Africa, Dorothy Kahane and I facilitated an uplifting strategy session for the Synod of Bishops. Archbishop Desmond Tutu had retired and Winston Ndungane, his successor, wanted to get his thirty-two bishops together to plan for the future of the Anglican Church in South Africa. We knew this would be a very special workshop within the first fifteen minutes, when we were establishing ground rules. Someone suggested, “We must listen to each other.” So far, nothing out of the ordinary; that rule is usually suggested. But then a second bishop said, “No, I think we must listen empathetically.” A third bishop said, “No, we must listen to the sacred within each of us.”

In corporate strategy sessions, we often downplay the spiritual dimension of our work. That wasn't necessary with the bishops. We started and finished each day in church. Although there were many clashes during the workshop, people dealt effectively with difficult and important issues, including some that had been undiscussible for decades.

I learned my third lesson from these experiences. Strategy work is not only work of the mind — the only training I had ever had for it — but work of the heart and spirit as well. Without open acceptance of that heart and spirit, you can have neither true connection nor true passion, the source of commitment and will, and the root of all great strategy.

Now I also had a clue to Rob Davies' concern about compromise. To compromise meant to give in; he had been hoping for a consensus, a true accord. The great social scientist Solomon Asch said that "Consensus is valid only to the extent that each adheres to the testimony of his experience and steadfastly maintains his hold on reality." The bishops had the capacity for true consensus because they were able to speak openly about their experiences, evoking more than only their minds.

Changing The World

To Joseph Campbell, the "supreme ordeal" refers to the peak experience on life's journey, after which the hero is never the same. If I have experienced such an event, it was the scenario project I facilitated in Colombia in 1997 at the invitation of businessman Manuel Jose Carvajal.

Colombia had been our metaphor at Shell for everything going wrong. We used to refer to "Colombianization" as the drifting of an economy into a downward spiral of criminality and impoverishment. Now I was going to

facilitate a scenario exercise in the middle of a guerrilla war with tens of thousands of people under arms, with one of the world's largest drug trafficking operations, under a corrupt political and economic system. One of the jokes at the workshop summarized the country's mindset. "In Colombia, the optimists say, 'The way things are going here, we're all going to end up eating shit.' And the pessimists say, 'Yes, and there won't even be enough to go around.'"

At the same time, the forty-four members of the scenario team were wonderfully intelligent, sensitive, and humane. We divided our evenings between earnest debate and loud singing. The team members were far more diverse than the Mont Fleur participants had been. There were academics, business people, and trade unionists; rebels and members of the militia who were fighting them; retired army generals and members of environmental groups; peasant community leaders and newspaper owners; representatives of black people, indigenous people, and youth. I think that about a third of the participants had lost an immediate member of their family to the conflict that they were discussing: somebody's father had been assassinated, somebody's sister had been kidnapped, somebody's son had been killed. They weren't just observing, they were as intensely engaged as you can imagine.

Technically, it was an almost surrealistically challenging project. One right-wing paramilitary leader had just been released from prison, but all the top leaders of the left-wing guerrillas were either in hiding, prison, or exile. For the ten days of the workshops, four guerrilla leaders participated via speakerphone. One of them, in exile in Costa Rica, called in from a different phone every workshop. Another one called from a prison pay phone, saying, "I only have a few coins, but I really need to give my input on Scenario 'B.'"

Those people who had suffered most in the war were, in many cases, the most humble, open, and respectful of the others. They were able to listen and suspend judgment, even of their enemies. This reminded me of my first lesson, the importance of wonder and reverence. I had seen the same phenomenon in South Africa. In these terrible, terrible situations, people who are not destroyed by the conflict are purified by it—touched by grace. These Colombians realized that they were in a war that nobody could win, that they had to struggle together to resolve. Every day they lived with the second lesson, the need to move from the illusion of control to the gray zone of influence.

The third lesson was also often with us. These participants had the capacity to speak from the heart, to express their fear, anger, hope, and faith. When they did, the fog in the room lifted and the stark dynamics we were trying to study became clear. One of the most powerful sessions was an evening where everyone told a story from their own lives. I said that I was concerned about some of the participants being mortally afraid of each other. One of the guerrillas responded over the speakerphone: “Why are you surprised at this fear, Mr. Kahane? Of course the fear that pervades Colombia is also in the workshop room.”

At the end of 1997, the team meetings ended. Since then the stories have been told and debated throughout the country. One story, “When the Sun Rises We’ll See,” paints a downward spiral that could ensue if status quo attitudes and strategies continue; the moral of the story, drawing on a well known Colombian saying, is “the worst thing people can do is do nothing.” Another story, “A Bird in the Hand is Worth Two in the Bush,” explores how a compromise could be negotiated between the government and the guerrillas; the moral for this one is “any settlement is better than continuing a bad lawsuit.” As of this writing in early 1999, the work has been published

as an insert in every Colombian newspaper (one million copies), televised in a one-hour special carried on every Colombian TV station and watched by eight million people, and presented in speeches to over 17,000 people. After many years of paralysis, things are starting to move in the country, with hopeful negotiations beginning between the government and guerrillas. Somehow the scenario process has exemplified — and perhaps contributed to bringing forward — a shift toward a better future.

I came back in my mind to my questions about what I had learned at Shell. Were these scenarios, we had defined the term there, or were they options? If they were just efforts to develop better ways to cope with outside events, why had there been such a special energy in the workshops? Why had the participants been so passionately engaged? Why had they come at all?

Then the light went on for me. I realized that this project was not really about understanding and adapting. People participated because they wanted to influence and improve the world. They dared to reject cynicism in favor of hope. My colleague Otto Scharmer points out that the team's capacity to sense and influence turns on their being able to tap into their collective passion and will, including by really listening to each other's stories. The fourth lesson from my journey, then, is this: We must give up the assumption that we are powerless, that we can only react to the world, and that we must be passive in its face. If we have the courage to step forward, we can help the future be born.

This fourth lesson also provides the clue to getting off the horns of the realism-idealism dilemma I found at Shell. It is neither true that we must simply react to a world that pre-exists nor that we can create it from within ourselves. The cognitive scientists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela argue that "Every act of knowing brings forth the world." More than simply

describing the world, scenario stories actually help shape it. The key to evoking this generativity is the deep collaboration, even communion, that arises from being with others in the ways I discovered in the first three lessons. As Maturana and Varela say, “We have only the world that we bring forth with others, and only love helps bring it forth.”

Completing Campbell’s circular journey, I see these four lessons as a gift from the activists, bishops, guerrillas, and scientists to corporate leaders and other strategists. To be more effective we must first let go of the arrogance of knowing and move towards wonder and reverence. Second, we must move away from the black-and-white, secretive approach of trying to keep things “under control,” towards the gray zone of greater openness and influence. Third, we must move away from treating strategy and learning as purely affairs of the mind, towards engaging other parts of ourselves, including our hearts and spirits. Finally, we must move away from pure adaptation and reactivity, towards intentionality and generativity. Of course, all of these lessons are easier to articulate than to practice. But I think they offer a prize worth struggling for: the opportunity and the capacity to make the world a better place.

3. The Business Case For Sustainability²

Sustainable Development As An Organizing Frame For Value Creation

How many people is this earth able to sustain? Isaac Asimov once answered by saying :

“This question is incomplete as it stands. One must ask further: At what level of technology? And ask further still: At what level of human dignity?”

Sustainable Development is the language we need to address the question of how will six billion people who know everything about each other live in dignity; and what is their relation to technology?

There are three profound changes in the world we need to deal with, as citizens, as organizations, as regions, as nations.

- 1 We are moving away from a world which revolved around removing material constraints to a world in which that is no longer true.

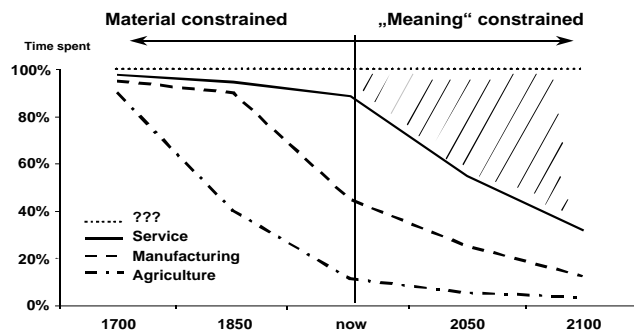
² Written by Ulrich Golüke, Manager Scenario Unit of the WBCSD, Switzerland. E-mail: goluke@compuserve.com

- 2 Human activities have reached the power of geophysics. We are moving from being part of the system to becoming the system.
- 3 Globalization has commoditized the traditional attributes of value creation: availability, price, quality and mass customization.

From Material Constraints To “Meaning” Constraints

Our world is changing rapidly — from one in which the removal of material constraints dominated everything we did, to a world in which we will spend less than half of our time on meeting those material needs³. While seemingly trivial, this shift is profound and unsettling. The questions this shift begs are: How will we live? What will we value? What will we, as individuals, as companies, as regions, as societies, do with our time? And, hence, what will I need to do to survive and prosper in this world?

This thought is illustrated in the following graph:



³ See Arnulf Grübler, *Technology and Global Change*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 305-312

There are six dimensions along which this transition will play itself out:

DIMENSIONS	DOMINANT CONSTRAINT	
	Material	“Meaning”
Structures of everyday life:	Linear	Closed feedback loops
Power is based on:	Physical assets	Networks
Fundamental question of humans:	Is more always better?	What do I really need?
How do I see myself:	I am my function	I must learn who I am
What do I do to survive:	I adapt	I learn
Organizing principle	Scarcity	Sustainability

Sustainable Development is an organizing principle that allows this shift to be turned from confusion to advantage.

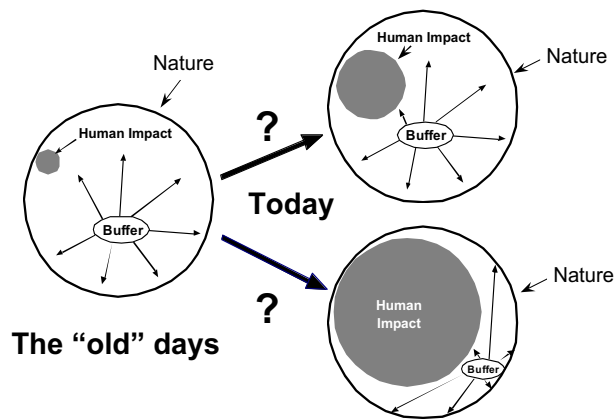
From Being Part Of The System To Becoming The System: Connected Risks

Traditionally, the impact of human beings, our activities, were:

- independent of each other’s,
- self limiting in space,
- self limiting in time,

because we were able to rely on the buffering function of the world around us. Now that our impacts have reached geophysical proportions (complex engineering – Chernobyl –, global climate, germline therapy), we can no longer take for granted the ability of ‘nature’s’ buffer to allow us to “learn from mistakes”. We need to think through and anticipate consequences of our actions. Something we never before needed to do, and hence are not good at.

Entire industries have been built on the assumptions of the biosphere being “a free buffer,” largely because the Earth’s buffering capacity was vast when industrialization began. The same capitalistic system that began innovation, new technology and industrialization had no mechanism to value the biosphere’s contributions to wealth creation, nor its ability to cleanse or simply receive waste. Our understanding of this system’s complexity requires that we rethink how we value it in the context of the total living system called Earth.



Sustainable Development is an organizing principle that allows us to re-think the place of humans as part of the biosphere.

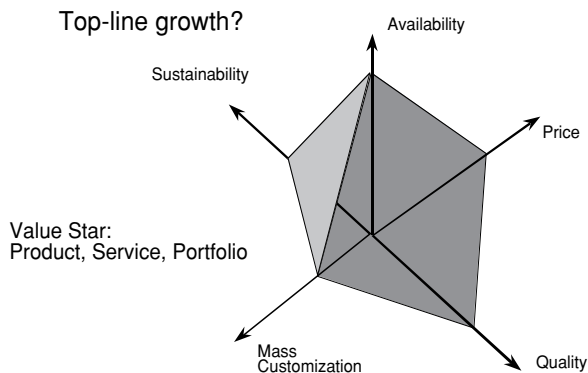
Where Will Viable Top Line Growth Come From?

Traditionally, every product and every service competes on a mixture of four attributes:

- availability
- price
- quality
- mass customization

In a globalized world, where it is cheaper when you live in Geneva, Switzerland, to buy a book from Amazon.com than to go to the local bookseller, all these attributes have become commoditized. In a commoditized world, your only strategy is to become a cost leader; yet, by definition, there is room only for one global cost leader.

Just like the Japanese “invented” quality as a differentiating attribute when the rest of the world was competing on availability and price, so we need to “invent” a new, fifth, attribute to again be able to differentiate ourselves to survive and prosper in the future.



Sustainable Development is this fifth attribute which will generate competitive advantage for companies and regions.

As we enter the 21st century – with all the promise and challenge it will bring – it is difficult to predict when sustainability will become the fifth attribute. But many companies, organizations and individuals are working toward this goal, and their commitment, ideas and research to make a difference, will provide guidance and new milestones to mark our collective

journey toward sustainability. The next century will be critical, because so many variables are converging. We remain optimistic about our collective future.

4. Why Stories Are Important⁴

All human cultures — from nations to corporations and even to families — have a story of how they began. Sometimes cultures live uneasily with several contradictory stories. For example, the current culture of the west embraces a biblical Genesis story that explains, metaphorically, why humans behave the way they do, and a “Big Bang” story that is the scientific alternative to the way the universe began.

In these stories of a culture’s “genesis,” we find the fundamental values of the people who live in the culture. In a corporation or community organization, for example, the story of the founder often embodies “hard work,” or “entrepreneurial foresight,” or a vision of a better world. These founding myths also embody the goal of the culture, whether, as suggested by Genesis, to return to a paradise or, as in the case of a corporation, to provide more customers with the goods and services envisioned in the original founding.

The present is created by the stories we tell about the past and the future. The facts of the past we cannot change, and the future is not under our control. But the plot line — the story we tell about these facts — is within our power to observe and change.

⁴ Written by Betty Sue Flowers, Professor of English, University of Austin, Texas. E-mail: bflowers@utx.cc.utexas.edu

The power of the story can easily be demonstrated in a group of people through the use of a little interactive exercise. Divide the group into sets of partners, A and B. Give A about five minutes to tell his life story to B — as a *hero* story; then B tells her story to A as a *hero* story. Repeat the exercise — but this time, A and B tell their stories as *victim* stories. The third time around, the plot is that of a *learner* — as if there were a purpose to life, and that purpose was to learn, with every event in life as a learning experience.

Participants in this exercise quickly feel the difference in their own energy level and what facts come to the surface as they move from story to story. Most find it far easier to use one plot rather than another. One story feels “truer” than another. That feeling is an illusion, in that all stories are in the domain of “as if.” But it’s certainly true that some “as if’s” give rise to more powerful action than others.

Every community of people working together for a common good has an implicit story of reality — of what is going on. It is the job of leaders to analyze existing stories in the community, and if they are not useful any longer, propose new ones. But new stories for a group cannot simply be manufactured out of whole cloth. They must emerge from the life of the group.

The Power Of Scenario-Building

The power of scenario-building is that it offers a disciplined path for creating stories together. The stories must be coherent and must offer a persuasive chronology of how A leads to B, which then leads to C. But because creating stories is a form of fiction-building, the teams that work together find that certain old arguments can be bypassed altogether, while particular

conversations can occur that otherwise would never come up in the everyday life of an institution. The emergence of “unmentionables” allows difficult issues to be discussed in non-threatening contexts. After all, scenarios are fictions, not plans for actions or visions for the future that any particular faction is promoting. Even though scenarios are fictions, they often have non-fictional outcomes. This occurs not because people decide to follow a scenario, but rather, because new possibilities arise during the course of the conversations. This is one of the most exciting aspects of scenarios.

By their very nature, scenarios are “cartoons” — that is, they are rough sketches, broad-based pictures of different worlds. This roughness offers something of an advantage in that it avoids what often happens when people gather to plan a future that challenges the present, but end up getting sidetracked by incidental details that prevent them from focusing on the big picture. Disagreements over such details can be disheartening to group members and can make the process painful and protracted. Scenarios offer the advantage of minimizing these quarrels over details. After all, any particular scenario is a fiction — the details are only representative examples of what we might find in a given world. Consensus is neither possible nor impossible — just unnecessary.

Analyzing The Stories That Shape Us

One of the wise clichés we often tell our children is that those who don’t know history are doomed to repeat it. But those who *do* know history repeat it also. Because our stories embed our values, we can be stuck in them — we can even kill for them, as numerous wars even in this century make clear.

As we move toward a world which is more globally interconnected, we need to become aware of our differing stories and to work together to encourage new ones to emerge. The “Jazz” scenario⁵ was created by a diverse group of business people and is such a story that is not only about the environment but also society and business. It is embedded in what is currently the most powerful story operating in the world — the “economic myth.” The economic myth is a myth in the sense that it is a context for values organized around a supreme value, or “reality” — in this case, self-interest, whether “self” is defined as a solitary individual or a specific group. But unlike the hero myth, for example, with its stories of representative individuals, or the religious myth with its many stories of fall and redemption, or the myth of enlightenment, with its story of progress, the economic myth has no authoritative story. That means that instead of holding the story of who we are as a belief, we can hold it *self-consciously* as a fiction, as a myth, as an ideal. We don’t have to defend it against change. We can let it evolve as we tell it and live in the present that is created by the future we tell.

The economic story has been seen as the enemy of the environment because self-interest seldom takes into account the interest of the group as a whole. But now the interconnections of the global economy mean that in the long term, our self-interest coincides with the health of the whole. In an economic myth, nations decrease in importance as mediating institutions just as multinational corporations and other financial institutions increase in importance. The long-term self-interest of economically oriented institutions does not necessarily coincide with the self-interest of individual nations, as Ruzaburo Kaku, CEO of Canon, points out: “Today there is only one entity whose effort to create stability in the world matches its self-interest. That entity is a corporation acting globally.”

⁵ The summary booklet “Exploring Sustainable Development” can be downloaded from the internet (pdf format) www.wbcsd.ch/publications/scenariosum.htm

Our global health, economically, environmentally and socially, depends on our learning to tell a new story about the interconnectedness of complex, living systems. In this century we have been given a new image — the blue pearl of the earth as seen from space. And now we need to work together to create a new story that will match this image.

5. How To Build Scenarios⁶

Planning For “long fuse, big bang” Problems In An Era Of Uncertainty

It happens to us all. We look out into the future, trying our best to make wise decisions, only to find ourselves staring into the teeth of ferocious and widespread uncertainties. If only everything didn't depend on, well, everything else. How do we decide what kind of career path to pursue when it's not clear what industries will exist in 10 or 15 years? How do we plan our children's education when we can't know what sort of society they'll live in? As we face each of these problems, we confront a deeper dilemma: how do we strike a balance between prediction — believing that we can see past these uncertainties when in fact we can't — and paralysis — letting the uncertainties freeze us into inactivity.

The senior managers of large corporations face a similar dilemma, but they often carry the additional weight that on their decisions rest the livelihoods of thousands. The cliché is that it's lonely at the top. But for most managers these days, the bigger problem is that it's confusing up there. It's no longer enough simply to execute, to “do things right.” Like us, senior executives have to choose the right thing to do: set a course, steer

⁶ Reproduced with the permission of Lawrence Wilkinson, Oxygen Media, San Francisco, California, USA. He was also President of Global Business Network until 1998. E-mail: lwilkinson@oxygen.com

through the strategic issues that cloud their companies' horizons. Do we or don't we buy that competitor? Build that semiconductor fab plant? Replace the copper in our network with fiber? Or wait and save billions?

Questions like these are known as “long fuse, big bang” problems. Whatever you decide to do will play out with a big bang — often a life or death difference to an organization — but it can take years to learn whether your decision was wise or not. Worse yet, “long fuse, big bang” questions don't lend themselves to traditional analysis; it's simply impossible to research away the uncertainties on which the success of a key decision will hang.

Still, like us, the manager must make a decision - and make it now. The rest of the stampeding world will not wait until certainty appears. Anything that can help make a decision in the midst of uncertainty will be valuable. One such tool is scenario planning. A growing number of corporate executives are using scenario planning to make big, hard decisions more effectively. And it's not just for bigwigs: scenario planning can help us at a personal level as well.

Scenario 1: I Will

The world fragments into a working pandemonium of individuals, organized by jobs rather than geography. Communication is pervasive and focuses on personal empowerment. The Net becomes the chief exchange medium for decentralized work, personal gratification, and global commerce. Physical infrastructure in North America stagnates, while personal spaces thrive. Art and attention are turned inward, as personal expression flourishes in new media and old public spaces crumble. Technology is the global culture. The have-nots become the have-

lates. Ethnic or group differences give way to a homogenized patchwork of unbridled individual variety. Europe is wracked with civil strife as its socialistic civilization unravels. Russia rebounds. Japan lags. China and the developing countries become huge flea markets where just about anything goes.

Scenario planning derives from the observation that, given the impossibility of knowing precisely how the future will play out, a good decision or strategy to adopt is one that plays out well across several possible futures. To find that “robust” strategy, scenarios are created in plural, such that each scenario diverges markedly from the others. These sets of scenarios are, essentially, specially constructed stories about the future, each one modeling a distinct, plausible world in which we might someday have to live and work.

Yet, the purpose of scenario planning is not to pinpoint future events but to highlight large-scale forces that push the future in different directions. It’s about making these forces visible, so that if they do happen, the planner will at least recognize them. It’s about helping make better decisions today.

This all sounds rather esoteric, but as my partner Peter Schwartz⁷ is fond of saying, “scenario making isn’t rocket science.” He should know. Not only did he help develop the technique back in the 1970s, but he’s also a rocket scientist.

Scenario planning begins by identifying the focal issue or decision. There are an infinite number of stories that we could tell about the future; our purpose is to tell those that matter, that lead to better decisions. So we begin the process by agreeing on the issue that we want to address.

⁷ Co-founder and Chairman of Global Business Network, Emeryville, California, USA.

Sometimes the question is rather broad (What's the future of the former Soviet Union?); sometimes, it's pretty specific (Should we introduce a new operating system?). Either way, the point is to agree on the issue(s) that will be used as a test of relevance as we go through the rest of the scenario-making process.

As managers of our own lives, we can do the same exercise. Let's say that our key concern is the quality of life that we'll have in 15 or 20 years and the personal investments that we'll need to make in preparation for the future.

Scenario 2: Consumerland

The world is populated by consumers rather than citizens. Technology breeds unlimited customized choices. The consumer is served by highly evolved companies, aggressively nimble and conscientious of the market's whims. Computers do increasing amounts of white-collar work. Manufactured products are heavily personalized, but do-it-yourself dies. Real leisure increases; dissent withers. Politics means electronic voting. Governments are virtual corporations, with their heavy lifting privatized to commercial ventures. The have-nots are given spending vouchers. Southeast Asia and the coast of China manufacture most of Consumerland's goods, and consume almost half themselves. Latin America is their branch office. Japan gets richer and unhappier. Russia exports trouble in the form of neoreligious cultists and mafioso. The US and Europe become large theme parks.

We Breathe In: Driving Forces

Since scenarios are a way of understanding the dynamics shaping the future, we next attempt to identify the primary “driving forces” at work in the present. These fall roughly into four categories:

Social dynamics — quantitative, demographic issues (How influential will youth be in 10 years?); softer issues of values, lifestyle, demand, or political energy (Will people get bored with online chatting?).

Economic issues — macroeconomic trends and forces shaping the economy as a whole (How will international trade flow and exchange rates affect the price of chips?); microeconomic dynamics (What might my competitors do? How might the very structure of the industry change?); and forces at work, on or within the company itself (Will we be able to find the skilled employees we need?).

Political issues — electoral (Who’ll be the next president or premier?); legislative (Will tax policies be changed?); regulatory (Will the Microsoft juggernaut run afoul of legal/regulatory problems?).

Technological issues — direct (How will high-bandwidth wireless affect land-line telephony?); enabling (Will X-ray lithography bring in the next chip revolution?); and indirect (Will biotech allow easy “body hacking” and thus compete with more traditional forms of entertainment?)

Of course, categories are only handles. Real issues entail a bit of all four forces. The point of listing the driving forces is to look past the everyday crises that typically occupy our minds and to examine the long-term forces that ordinarily work well outside our concerns. It is these powerful forces that will usually catch us unaware.

Once these forces are enumerated, we can see that from our own viewpoint, some forces can be called “predetermined” — not in a philosophical sense, but in that they are completely outside our control and will play out in any story we tell about the future. For instance, the number of high school students in California 10 years from now is more or less predetermined by the number of elementary school children now. Not all forces are so evident, or so easy to calculate, but when we build our stories, predetermined elements figure in each one.

Scenario Logics

After we identify the predetermined elements from the list of driving forces, we should be left with a number of uncertainties. We then sort these to make sure they are critical uncertainties. A critical uncertainty is an uncertainty that is key to our focal issue. For instance, will the percentage of women in the work force continue to increase? Our goals are twofold — we want to better understand all the uncertain forces and their relationships with each other. But at the same time, we want the few that we believe are both most important to the focal issue and most impossible to predict to float up to the surface.

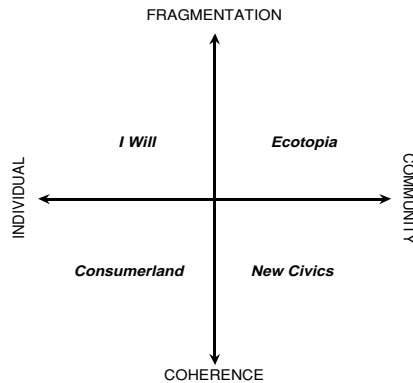
Scenario 3: Ecotopia

The world slows the growth of development. In reaction to earlier decades of high crime and chaos, communitarian values triumph over strictly individualistic ones. Slimmed-down and digitized governments win the trust of people. Directed taxation funds public works, some of them large-scale. Corporations adopt civic-responsibility programs out of long-term economic self-interest. Technology, such as online shopping, makes urban living very resource-friendly. Net access is a subsidized right. Dirty technologies are outlawed, forcing less-developed countries to leapfrog to clean and light technologies, if they can. Initially, this widens the gap between rich and poor nations. Europe erupts into a second renaissance, becoming a moral beacon. Japan mobilizes not much later. The Islamic world awakens. Asia and Latin America become lifeboats for the young and restless of the developed world who find the environmentalism and communitarianism too dogmatic; they settle in “free economic zones,” where their migration and energy help to vitalize growth. North America stumbles as its cowboy individualism is tamed.

At first, all uncertainties seem unique. But by stepping back, we can reduce bundles of uncertainties that have some commonality to a single spectrum, an axis of uncertainty. If we can simplify our entire list of related uncertainties into two orthogonal axes, then we can define a matrix (two axes crossing) that allows us to define four very different, but plausible, quadrants of uncertainty. Each of these far corners is, in essence, a logical future that we can explore.

(We could, of course, spin hundreds of scenarios from combinations of our forces, but experience teaches that fewer are better. The right one, two, or three axes give us a very effective framework in which to explore all the other forces.)

Wired⁸ staff developed, as an illustration, the following matrix as one set of scenarios for the future. The question: What will be the general tenor of commercial life on a global scale in the year 2020?



The first axis of uncertainty is the character of our desire, an “I” or “We,” individual or community.

This uncertainty about the quality of our individual hopes and intentions cuts at the most fundamental level: Will the energy of democratization and the ascendance of the ultimate individualized “I” continue to prevail? Or will our social organization and self-definition be rooted in a group — a nation, a tribe, a collection of users of a particular brand, a more communitarian “We”? The I or the We will never disappear, but which will come to be the prevailing influence in our culture? It could go either way, and with a bang; that is the uncertainty.

⁸ Wired is a monthly magazine. Internet: www.wired.com

The second (vertical) axis shows the uncertain character of social structure: Will society be a center that holds and provides stability, or will it fragment?

Here, we stake out the extreme possibilities of social organization: Will social and political structures (either new or traditional) provide a society wide coherence and order? Or will society shatter into shards, the jagged edges of which do not mesh into a coherent whole? Will there be a state to impose order, level the playing field, and unify a commonwealth? Or, will permanent fragmentation, increasing plurality, and unfettered free-marketism bring us to “bottom-up” functioning anarchy?

Our second uncertainty might seem at first blush an outcome of the first. But in fact, while they're related, they're separately uncertain. Indeed, it's precisely the way they're intertwined that makes them interesting by giving us four scenarios, four very different “future spaces” to explore.

Fleshing Out The Scenarios

We return to the list of driving forces that we generated earlier; these dynamics become “characters” in the stories that we develop. Our goal is not to try to tell four stories, one of which — we hope, as futurists — will be true. Instead, we recognize that the “real” future will not be any of the four scenarios, but that it will contain elements of all of our scenarios. Our goal is to pin down the corners of the plausible futures. These corners are exaggerated — the outer limits of what is plausible. Thus, our scenarios will have a near-caricature quality.

Here's how the Wired scenarios play out in each of the four corners:

I Will is the quadrant where individualism (I-ness) meets fragmentary or marginal control by large organizations. It is a future in which you want and get the ability to make your life uniquely yours. The Net is the ubiquitous medium through which you realize your desires and discharge your few and relatively unimportant social duties. Government has withered in the face of privatization, replaced by a largely electronic marketplace that connects and clears transactions of every type. Most large, centralized institutions have crumbled into a much more finely grained pattern, a many-to-many landscape on which each individual is alternately producer and user. In this future, you coproduce the products and experiences that you consume. Your loyalty is to your tools, knowledge, and skills.

Scenario 4: New Civics

The world settles into small, powerful city-states. Rural areas of the world are second-class, but have widespread virtual hookups. Europe fractionalizes into 57 countries; China, Russia, Brazil, and India also devolve into black market ethnic states. Gangs in developing countries and old inner cities transform into political law-and-order machines. Citizens use networks and databases to watch over and protect each other. Average life spans increase dramatically; general health improves. Civic pride blossoms. Governments use advance technologies to create the largest public works yet, both citywide and global. Corporations are reigned in by civic regulations, although they increase in size — there's the Fortune Global 5,000. Conglomerates fund most of the UN-type activities.

Consumerland is the quadrant where individual desires meet a social and corporate center. It is a future in which everyone is the ultimate consumer, possessed of almost infinite choices. The Net is again a ubiquitous medium — but a medium through which corporations deliver marketing messages tailored directly to your unique preferences, via personal catalogs, personalized ads and coupons, and the like. The products, of course, are “mass customized” to your desires. Government plays an active role, laying down the rules (standards, regulations) by which corporations play. Social organizations proliferate but it is clear that they serve individual yearnings. The citizen becomes a consumer — served by society.

Ecotopia is the quadrant where a communal sense of “We” meets a strong social center. It is the future where the center holds. Government plays a large role in supporting the commonwealth, but more important than government is the emergence of widely shared ecological values. These are not coercive values but a voluntary embrace of cohesion, cooperation, and reduced consumption, backed by legislation and even corporate policies. The Net acts as replacement technology; it’s maximized to eliminate the need to travel on business, to cut down on the amount of paper used, etc.

New Civics is a future in which values are shared but in many small, competing groups. It is a decentralized world of tribes, clans, “families,” networks, and gangs. It is a future in which we want to build and enjoy the benefits of community but without the help of a benevolent Big Brother government. The Net encourages each group to move most of its members’ economic activity and their social services inside a closed group. Thus, government’s role and influence are eclipsed by the sway of these emergent groups; small — often deadly — conflicts among groups pop up continually around the globe. Our primary concern is to be good members of our group.

Our loyalty is to its membership, its mores, and its brands. While this future conjures visions of organized crime and sectarian strife, it is also a future of pride, heroism, and the satisfactions of belonging.

Note that the scenarios don't fall neatly into "good" and "bad" worlds, desirable and undesirable futures. Like the real life from which they're built, the scenarios are mixed bags, at once wonderfully dreadful and dreadfully wonderful.

The Implications Of Our Scenarios

Given that we don't know which scenario will unfold, what do we do to prepare?

Some of the decisions we make today will make sense across all of the futures. Others will make sense only in one or two. Once we've identified those implications that work in all of the scenarios, we get on with them in the confidence that we're making better, more robust plans. The decisions that make sense in only one or some of the scenarios are tricky. For these we want to know the "early warning signs" that tell us those scenarios are beginning to unfold. Sometimes, the leading indicators for a given scenario are obvious, but often they are subtle. It may be some legislation, or technical breakthrough, or gradual social trend. Then, of course, it is important to monitor these critical signs closely.

Ultimately, that's the power of scenario planning. It can prepare us in the same way that it prepares corporate executives: It helps us understand the uncertainties that lie before us, and what they might mean. It helps us "rehearse" our responses to those possible futures. And it helps us spot them as they begin to unfold.

6. “The Wizard Of US”

Models For Using The Video⁹

In this learning tool, you'll find a short videotape called “The Wizard of US,” which uses the journey to Oz as a metaphor to represent the journey to sustainable development. This conversation starter can serve as the first ten minutes of a 30-minute presentation to a service organization about the status of sustainable development in the community. Or, with the workshop and discussion activities suggested below, it can introduce an hour or more of interactive programming. For even more ambitious groups, the drama can be produced as a simple play in which community leaders take key roles. The play is designed with simple and easily available props and costumes and with very little stage action so that the non-actors playing the characters can read their scripts on stage with very little prior rehearsal time required.

Focus For Discussion

Each of the scenes in the video provides a focus for discussion. The discussion activities around the video are most powerful with a group that wants to work on a project — or has been working on a project for some time — and seems to be stuck. The “project” in the video is sustainable development — but any organization (business, community, governmental) project, from improving the schools to cutting down on crime — can be used as the basis for discussion in response to the video.

⁹ Written by Betty Sue Flowers, Professor of English, University of Austin, Texas. E-mail: bflowers@utx.cc.utexas.edu

The Opening Narration — Scenario Descriptions

If your group is discussing sustainable development and is familiar with the WBCSD global sustainability scenarios,¹⁰ this opening narration provides a quick reminder of the main points of the stories: **FROG!**, in which we essentially ignore increasing environmental difficulties in the interest of “first raising our growth” (F-R-O-G); **GEOPolity**, in which we react with tighter government regulations to our environmental problems; and **Jazz**, in which diverse groups work together in innovative ways to solve problems. It was out of such a diverse group (representatives from government, business, and NGOs) that the idea for “The Wizard of US” arose — as well as the idea for providing this entire learning tool. The global scenarios themselves are good conversation starters, and if you have used them in this way for an earlier session of an all-day workshop, the opening narration will provide transition to the next activity — “The Wizard of US.”

The Characters

The key discussion points raised by the video center on the characters, who represent different players on the sustainable development journey:

- **Lion** — NGOs (non-governmental organizations), looking for the courage to go beyond roaring and to work constructively with “others” (however defined).
- **Scarecrow** — Government, looking for brains to come up with the best framework to encourage sustainable development.
- **Tin Woodsman** — Business, looking for a heart to go beyond the financial bottom line.

¹⁰ The summary booklet “Exploring Sustainable Development” can be downloaded from the internet (pdf format) www.wbcsd.ch/publications/scenariosum.htm

The Scenes — Focus For Discussion

The video embodies seven main “acts.” Each provides a focus point for discussion.

1. **The Munchkin Argument** — Their initial conversation consists of stereotypical finger-pointing from a “we-versus-they” perspective.

Focus question for discussion: What similar conversations or finger-pointing occur in your community in relation to issues you are working on? *Participants will probably have a few examples — and they don't have to follow the characters as represented here. For example: “Our local newspaper doesn't adequately support our environmental efforts. It never reports good news.”*

2. **“Over the Rainbow”** — This is the point of aspiration in the video. It is a slightly shortened version of the original with one stanza changed:

Someday I'll wish upon a star
and wake up where the smog
is far behind me.
Where acid rain no longer drops
away upon the forest tops
That's where you'll find me.

Focus questions for discussion: What do we aspire to? Do we have a common dream?

- 3. Journey to Oz** — At this point, the characters decide they have to do something in a different way. They have to “go” somewhere.

Focus questions for discussion: What would it mean to do something in a different way? How do we get to “Oz”?

- 4. Self-analysis** — In this scene, the munchkins have turned into their corresponding characters and are trying to understand what they need. There is still a lot of finger pointing. Analysis, in itself, doesn’t get them out of the situation.

Focus question for discussion: What do we know and understand about our organization’s or community’s strengths and weaknesses?

- 5. Disappointment** — In this scene, the characters are returning from their visit to the Wizard, who has not solved their problems, but has sent them on a witch hunt. The overt question is: Who’s the witch?

Focus questions for discussion: Who’s the witch? Who is usually blamed for the way things are? *All the “witches” should be out in the open by now.*

- 6. Transformation** — Dorothy sees that the witch is not a “who” but a “what” — What is the witch? The answer: witch-hunting itself — trying to find the bad guy rather than working together, with all our imperfections, to solve common problems. The transformation comes from the realization that the Wizard is “US.” The solution to the problem is right here. The disempowering phrase, “If only they would . . .” is rendered meaningless.

Focus questions for discussion: What’s the witch that is connected to us? What is the major block to our progress together? Lack of trust? Disagreement about what the need is? What are our strengths together? What roads to solution are right here in the room? *Depending on the nature of the group and its lighthearted openness to ritual, you can collect all the “witches” that people have written down and put them in a witch’s hat or some other container and throw water over them, which did the trick in the original “Wizard of Oz.” The point is that at the end of this exercise, the usual negative “witches” will be “dead” — and recognized as such if they are raised again in future community discussions.*

7. The Yellow Brick Questions — The video ends with four questions:

- What knowledge do we lack — and where can we find it?
- What courage do we lack — and where can we find it?
- What heart do we lack — and where can we find it?
- How can we find our way home?

Focus for discussion: Answering these four questions, especially the last one.

Workshop Journey - Four Models For Using The Video

1. Discussion Journey

Divide the audience into small groups of 7-10 people. Choose a leader for each group who will help steer the group through each act and corresponding questions, one at a time. (It helps if everyone has a copy of the focus questions for discussion.) If all the groups are meeting in the same room,

an overall leader can operate in place of the facilitators. The leader should signal a movement to the next question so that no group falls behind, and the timing comes out right. At the end of the discussion period, the group leader calls the group as a whole back together and goes through the questions, collecting a few representative answers to each of them. The last four “Yellow Brick” questions can be handled by all the groups.

2. Display Option

You can elaborate on the discussion material by appointing a core team made up of a note-taking representative from each group, who together create a document that integrates the thinking of all the groups in preparation for a second, more strategic workshop. Or, if you wish to elaborate on the spot, you can have an artist drawing what the groups report back as they report. Or, you can have the groups list their answers to each act’s questions on posters that they then put up on the walls. At the end, participants walk around and read all the input. If you choose to use the exhibit approach, it helps to label sections of the walls in advance so that participants put their posters together under each act or section of the video: “Disappointment,” “Transformation,” etc. The last act, “The Yellow Brick Questions,” should be displayed so that each of the last four questions has its own small area, enabling short answers to be displayed under each of the last four questions.

3. A Shorter Journey Workshop

Assign one of the acts and its question(s) to each group. Ask each group to answer its assigned question plus the four questions at the end of the video. (You’ll need to have copies of the questions to hand out or display.) Each group provides a reporter, so that, at the end of the meeting, the questions are answered, in order.

The major difference between the longer journey and the shorter one (aside from time, of course) is that in the longer journey, each participant actively goes on the journey, while in the shorter journey, each participant provides part of the piece for the joint “journey report.”

4. Non-Workshop Discussions

- a. Lead a structured discussion of the questions in the group as a whole, or
- b. Discuss only the last 4 questions. This is particularly effective and even quicker if you divide the group into characters — a table of “lions” talking about courage, a table of “scarecrows” talking about what brains are needed, and a table of “tin woodsmen” talking about what heart is needed. Casting participants as characters increases the sense of lightness and the spirit of play, or
- c. Facilitate an open-ended discussion on anything the audience responds to.

Note: If you choose option #c, you are likely to get a reaction that “Things aren’t so bad here” or “We’re making lots of improvements, and this video makes it sound so negative.” Try to avoid getting into a theoretical discussion about the difference between entertainment, designed to make you feel good so that you’ll buy the product, and a video designed to provoke thought leading to action. Simply point out that the trust necessary to work together for the common good is most often undercut by two common tendencies:

- Hiding the “witch” — unspoken issues that are shoved under the table.
- Witch-hunting — finger pointing (which almost always involves stereotyping); and the milder, more passive form of witch-hunting, playing the “If only they would” game (“If only those other people would do something”).

Melting The Witch

One point the video makes is that you can’t access the power of the Wizard of US — the power that comes when communities act together for the common good — unless you can first identify the witch and then give up the whole witch-hunting habit. With enough practice, a community can learn to instantly recognize a witch-hunting remark. From being the habitual mode of discourse, a witch-hunting comment begins to stick out like an alien intruder, leaving a brief silence in the room during which no one reacts, either to agree or to defend against the attack. This silence is like the water that melts the witch — after which, the journey continues.

7. Bibliography

Of all the books about scenarios, we recommend the following:

The Art of Strategic Conversation by Kees Van Der Heijden, October 1996, John Wiley & Son

The Art of the Long View: Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World by Peter Schwartz, May 1996, Doubleday

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Exploring Sustainable Development: WBCSD Global Scenarios 2000-2050 by Betty Sue Flowers, November 1997, WBCSD

The Dance of Change by Peter Senge, March 1999, Currency Doubleday

8. People

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