Setting the Context:
What is Scenario Planning?

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Opening question:
Who knows what scenario planning is? (...It’s OK if you don’t)
1970s Oil Shock

Big corporations and institutions began codifying scenario planning
Volatile
Uncertain
Complex
Ambiguous

"the new normal"
Changing Planning Paradigm

Plan -> Predict -> Control

- Linear
- Static
- About the “Plan”
- About prediction
- About answers & experts

Sense ->
Learn -> Adapt

- Dynamic
- Adaptive
- About the “strategic conversation”
- About collaboration, collective action
What is scenario planning?

A method for *adaptive* planning and decision-making— for individuals and groups— under conditions of *uncertainty and complexity*.
Forecasting vs. Scenario Planning

- **Single** future
- Assumptions extrapolated from past (often not surfaced)
- Analytical tools only
- Uncertainty implicit (or ignored)

- Multiple **alternative** futures
- Assumptions surfaced & challenged
- Analysis + Creativity tools (“head + heart”)
- Uncertainty explicit
Adaptive Learning

“The test of a good scenario process is not whether you get the future right, but whether the organization adapts and learns.”

- Peter Schwartz, *The Art of the Long View*
Good scenario thinking is about **re-perception**

![Diagram]

- **Most visible**
  - Events
  - Patterns
  - Systemic Structures
- **Least visible, Least aware**
  - Mental Models

Highest Leverage Change
Applications of Scenario Planning

**WHO is involved**
- Decision-makers in Single Org
- Multiple Stakeholders & Sectors

**Main Purpose**
- Vision, Strategy & Planning
- Innovation
- Leadership & Board Dev.
- Organizational Transformation (Adaptation)
- Systemic Change & Conflict Resolution

**Today:** Most projects combine some or all of these outcomes

- + Control & Centralized Action
- + Increasing Complexity of Orgs
- + Collaboration/Decentralized Action
Scenario planning

A flexible method with a range of tools and processes

Integrating numerous disciplines

- Strategic thinking
- Risk & option analysis
- Decision-making scenario
- Systems thinking
- Design thinking
- Stakeholder engagement
- Story telling & World making
- Experiential & behavioral learning
- Creativity tools
- Collaboration tools
- Innovation labs / Change Labs
- Change Mgt.
- Adaptive Planning
- Leadership Development
- Venturing
- Conflict resolution & Negations
What are the pitfalls, potential, and ongoing problems in applying the scenario planning toolbox to an urban planning context?
Nicole’s starting thoughts…

Pitfalls

•Disconnected from key leaders and decision-making
•Not including voices outside conventional thinking & stakeholders
•Confusion around purpose & process: “putting square peg in round hole”
  – Skipping key steps that shift behavior, thinking & operationalize outcomes

Dilemmas/Challenges

•Dealing with power dynamics and political realities -> perceived lack of agency in shaping the future
•Interfacing with the many mandated planning, studies, and legal reqs.
•Shifting mental models of planners and planning
•Getting the time commitment and courage for real change
Scenario Planning Cycle

- Develop Multiple Future Scenarios
  - Embracing Uncertainty

- Develop a Strategic Vision
  - Balance Commitment and Flexibility

- Monitor in Real Time
  - Adjust Dynamically

- Generate Strategic Options

- Implement Effectively
Nicole’s starting thoughts…

Potential

• Powerful, participatory engagement process beyond the “usual suspects”
• More robust ideas
• More adaptive planning process reflective of how world works
• Tool for empowering talent
• Re-imagining our cities is needed!