

Foresight's potential – today & tomorrow

Conference: Keeping the COFISA Communities Alive

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Non-Zero-Sum Development

Main Sections

- **Brief Overview**
- **COFISA Foresight and Rural Development**
- **Foresight in (South) Africa – What Next?**

Brief Overview

What is Foresight?

Foresight refers not only to disciplined *thinking* about the future, but also to the *tools and processes* used to investigate possible futures

Foresight aims to capture the dynamics of change by re-evaluating today's reality within the context of tomorrow's range of possibilities:

- **Inherently *proactive*, reflecting belief that the future may be “shaped” by today's decisions and actions**
- ***Not* prediction, recognising that addressing the future necessitates the *management of uncertainty/complexity*.**
- **Examines a *range of alternative futures*, not just what is currently believed to be most likely or “business as usual”.**
- **Emphasises the human abilities of *forethought, creativity, and systems thinking*, in addition to our traditional emphasis on analysis and judgement.**

Why use Foresight?

Our world has changed beyond the reach of our industrial-era ways of thinking.

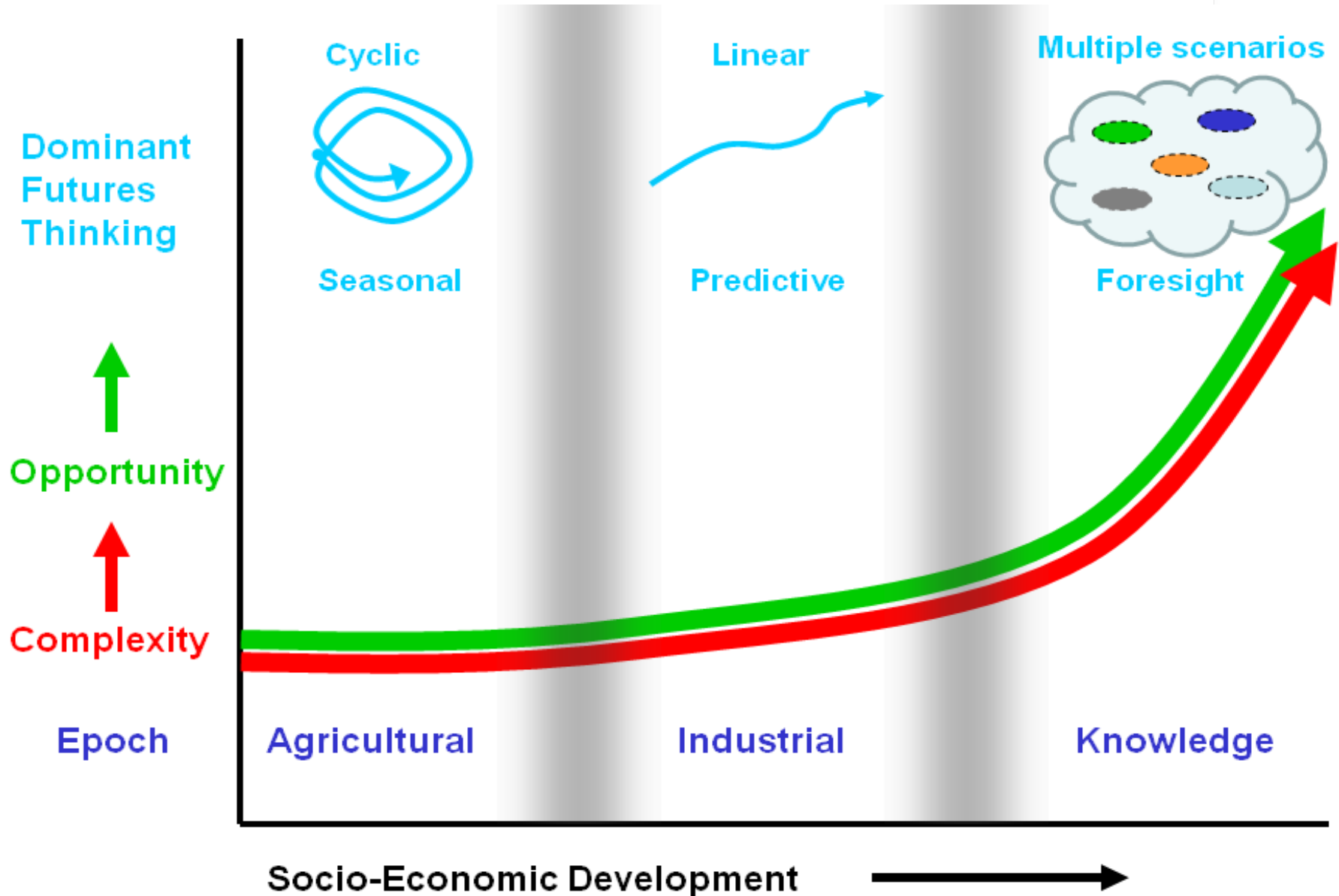
Linear & reductionist approaches to strategy and problem-solving can no longer deal with today's & tomorrow's realities:

- **Certainty of change (technological, environmental, etc..)**
- **Highest rate of change (and increasing)**
- **Uncertainty about the magnitude and direction of changes**
- **Hard to visualise contexts and options in this increasingly complex, interdependent, multi-disciplinary environment**

Foresight can help us adapt and respond sustainably to change:

- **Provides a mechanism for investigating possible futures in a complex knowledge society.**
- **Helps us all, individually and collectively, to anticipate and influence the future.**

Emergence of Foresight



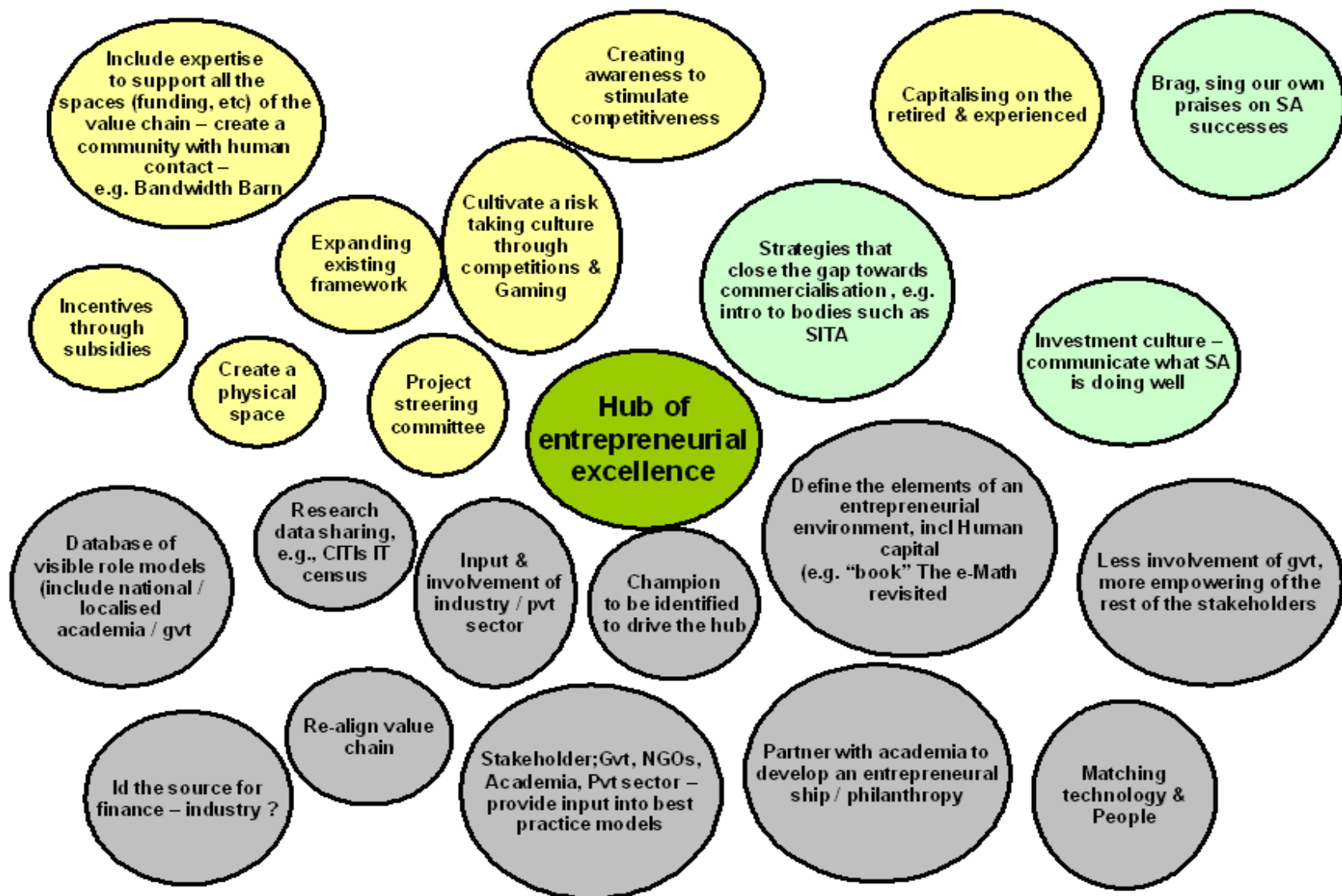
Foresight in COFISA

Regional (i.e. provincial) Foresight was a major mechanism chosen by COFISA to stimulate the development of SA's *regional systems of innovation*

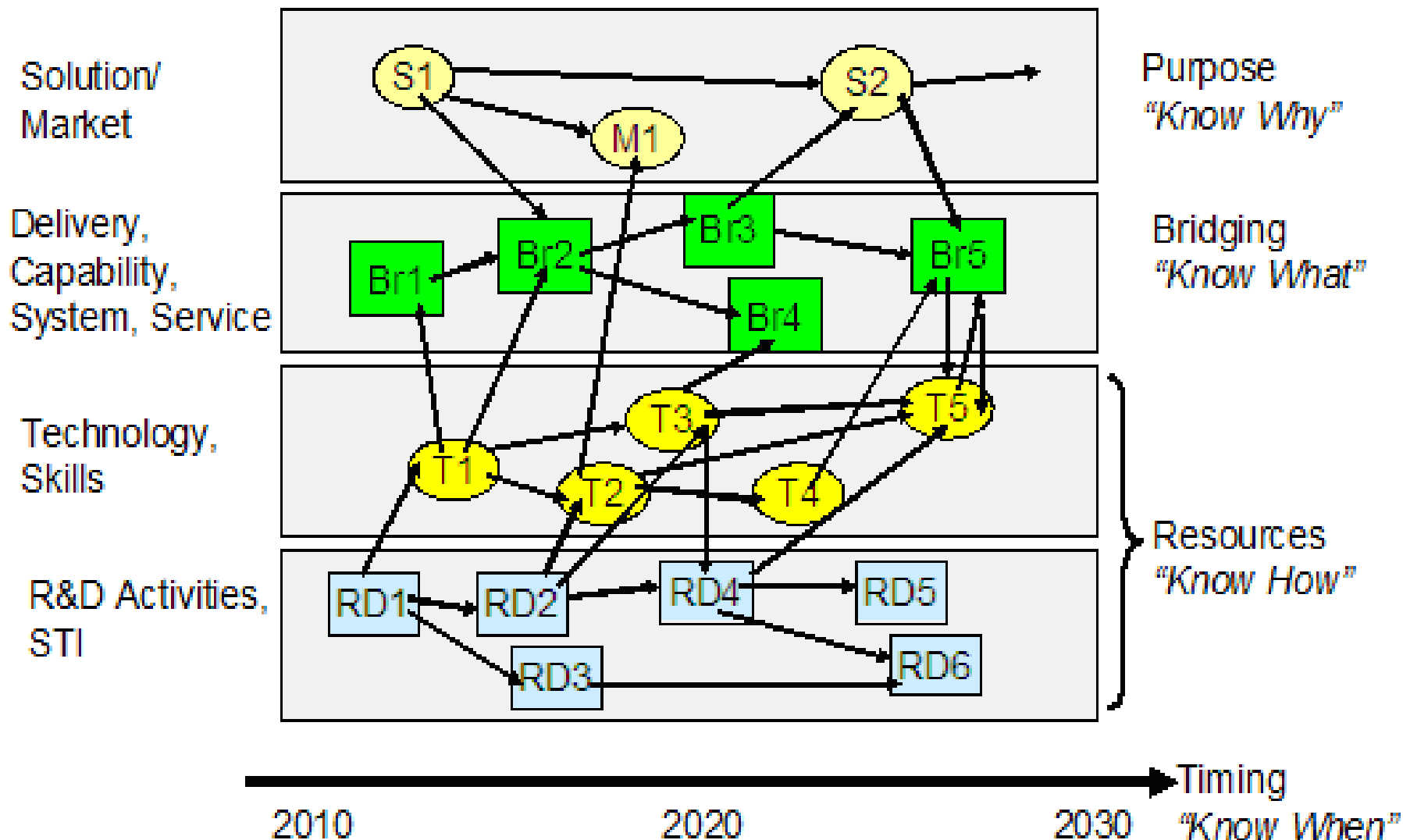
- **Regional Foresight in the E Cape, W Cape, and Gauteng:**
 - Provincial Innovation Foresight (2007 - 2008)
 - Provincial Biotechnology Foresight (2008 - 2009)
 - Smaller exercises used in ICT, SMEs, Ship building, etc..
- **The regional Foresight approach employed many small groups in short but intense creative sessions:**
 - consumed less time of the participants
 - was significantly less costly
 - took less than four months to complete

The most used techniques included:

Futures Wheels



Technology Road Maps



“Successful” City “states”

Fortress suburbs
Private police forces
Urban squalor
Rural poverty persists,
“dependency” grows
Economy grows, but
Much civil strife

Urban Focus

Business As Usual

Polarisation
Divides Increase
High global dependency
Early growth ++: later collapse

Knowledge Economy

(Glocal Interdependence)

“Rural” Balance

“Commons” activities
Transparency
Divides reduce +++
Quality of life
Little early growth –
Later sustained growth

Rural Focus

Rural Industrialisation – Exploitation

Food vs Fuel
Divides reduce + at first
2 level society entrenched
High global dependency

Neo Industrialisation

(Global – Dependence)

COFISA Foresight and Rural Development

‘Rurbal’ Challenge

COFISA’s Regional approach, using Foresight techniques, has highlighted some crucial rural issues

“As the global economy expands, with the elite becoming ever more wealthy, the fact that so many people continue to live in chronic poverty and hunger is a major ethical, economic, health and security challenge to us all”:

- Particularly true in South Africa – unhealthily high Gini coefficient.**
- How high are disparities between urban and rural life? *How sustainable are they in the long term?***

Rural Poverty

– Some Facts

- 2% of people (*urban*) own 50% of the world's wealth while the poorest 50% own only 1% (UNU, 2006).
- 75% of the 2.1 billion people living on <\$2 a day live and work in rural areas, yet only 4% of official development assistance goes to rural areas in developing countries (World Bank, 2007).
- In developing countries, 1.1 billion people have inadequate water access, and 2.6 billion lack basic sanitation (UNDP, 2006).
- 67% of rural people are without electricity (IFC, 2007).
- In the developing world, one in four children under the age of 5 is still underweight, and one in three is stunted. These figures almost double in rural areas (UNICEF, 2005).

YET - The international development community has not yet articulated a shared, compelling vision for rural development.

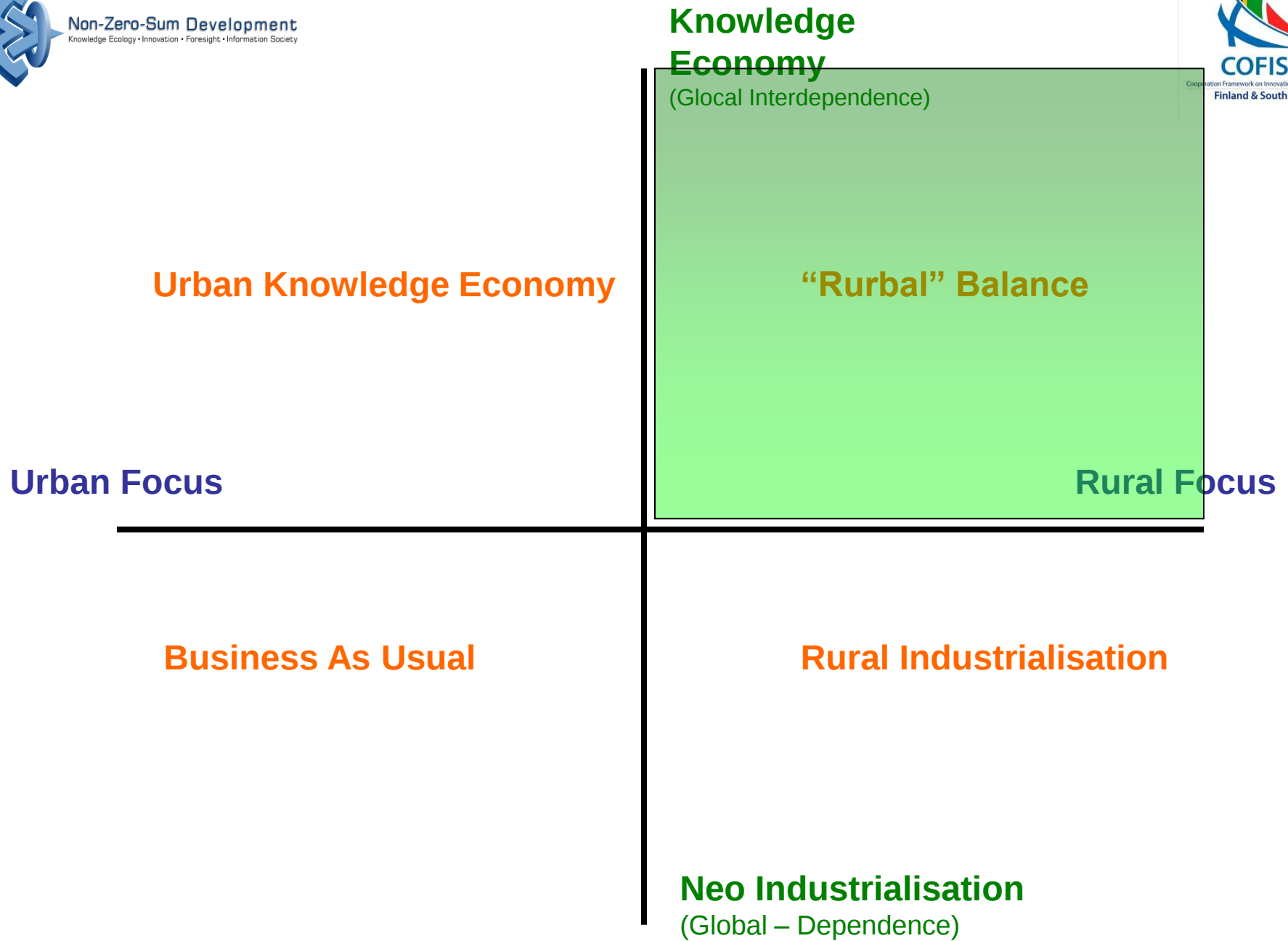
- Consequently, rural development initiatives are usually not systemic, holistic or contextualised.

ISSUE: *The vast majority of people in higher leadership positions (public and private sectors) are urban.*

A very broadly accepted (or *presumed*) mindset for development - *the mechanisms for development are industrialisation and urbanisation*:

- Hence rural development will ‘solve itself’ when most of the population (>80%) has urbanised.
- This dominant urbanisation and industrialisation mindset is reinforced by widespread evidence that this process is unfolding ‘naturally’ across the developing world.
- A related widespread presumption is that rural activities and communities are *peripheral and subservient* to the needs of the metropolitan areas where the major political, economic and cultural activities tend to be concentrated (Lipton, 1977).

Yet, Africa’s experience is that urbanisation is amplifying both rural and urban poverty through a set of negative feedback loops.



Rural-Urban Systems

- The rural-urban (rurbal) system world-wide is far from an equilibrium point.
- Decision-makers (almost all urban) cannot continue to view rural poverty as being peripheral to the long-term sustainability of urban life.
- Business as usual (BAU), based on the old industrial economy models, is no longer an option.
- This represents an opportunity to craft a shared global vision for ‘rurbal’ development that both guides and combines investments in GCC mitigation with investments in holistic rural development.
- There are moves to create *integrated strategies* that consider the different development trajectories of each rural region, based on exploiting local, place specific resources.

COFISA Foresight: Rural Impact

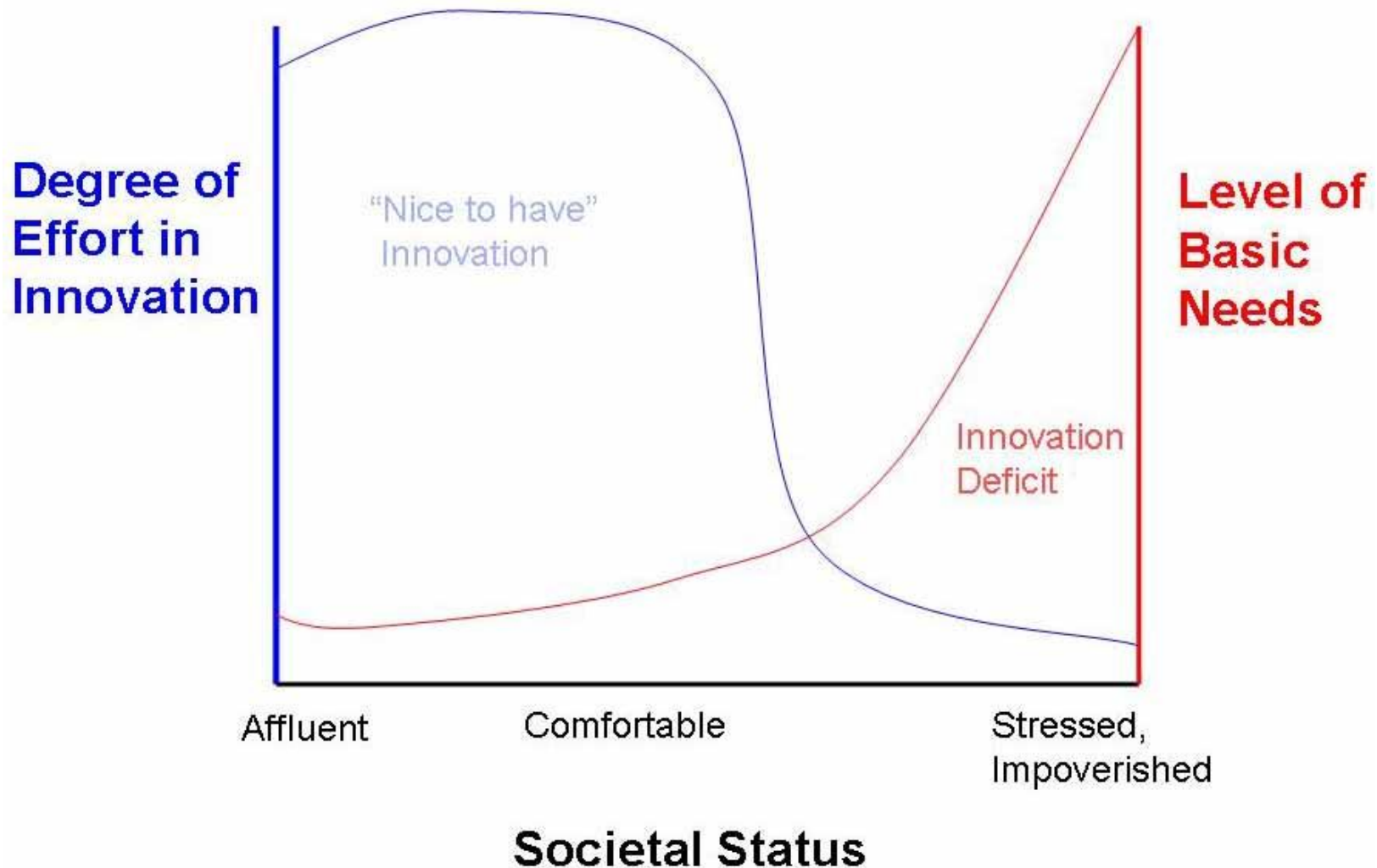
The Foresight generated “Rurbal” approach led to Knowledge for Integrated Rural Development (KIRD), which, in turn, led to Local Action Group (LAG) pilots in Dwesa and Cata.

- *“The LAG pilot is a significant example of how the provincial Foresight process was able to trigger an innovative rural development initiative... at the community level”.*
- Synergies between the LAGs and the Living Lab concept are currently being actively investigated (LLisa).

Interest in the Foresight based approach to KIRD is growing elsewhere:

- Sustainability Institute, Stellenbosch.
- STIFIMO in Mozambique.
- COSTECH in Tanzania.

Innovation for & in Poor Communities



Foresight in (South) Africa – What Next?

COFISA Foresight Messages

Strong messages from COFISA Foresight:

- Key concepts & benefits of Foresight should be made much more widely accessible
- Encouragement and assistance should be given to anyone who may wish to pursue a Foresight exercise within their own context

Suggested that Foresight should be used not only by specialists, or by the highly trained, but also by ALL “ordinary people”.

LDC Governments and Futures Thinking

Why is future oriented work difficult for African Public Sector?

Short term approach dominates:

- Usually in “fighting fires” modes
- Trying to do too much with too little
- Trying to obey “donor rules”

Risk taking (innovation) mediated against:

- Entrenched top-down “silo” structures – little communication or trust
- Vested interests (corruption) “like” the current system – change is a threat
- Bright youngsters (change agents) keep low profiles

**No room for Innovation or a long term Focus
– *so little Foresight***

The Big(ger) Picture

In Developing Countries, important to go beyond national level – on to regional, local, and even individual levels:

- **E Cape Foresight: Poorest people in South Africa, yet futures they developed are connected to global warming and other major issues – networking spreads the “bigger picture”.**
- **Power of Foresight for conflict resolution – many examples**
- **Foresight for impoverished/isolated people:**
 - **Lost self-esteem, feel hopeless. Revive hope that *their* future can improve.**
 - **Personal Foresight (appropriate, practical, logical, evidence-based) can give them their own sense of their possible futures.**

The Future of Foresight 1

- **At the national level:** The full potential of the appropriate use of Foresight has yet to be realised. Pointers to the future include:
 - the *Finnish Parliamentary Committee for the Future*, and
 - the *Scottish Futures Forum*.
- **At the regional level -** The impact of COFISA needs further amplification:
 - opportunities identified need to be pursued
 - all the other provinces need similar Foresight facilitation.

The Future of Foresight 2

- **At the organisational level:** The potential impact of Foresight used by and for SMEs (individual SMEs and in groups) should be exploited. Two particularly exciting areas:
 - To direct investment in SME-intensive (rural) cluster development
 - To strategise the growth of knowledge-intensive SMEs for KIBS
- **At the individual level:** Foresight can be used by any individual at any age to help with the quality & understanding of their thinking about their future. A few “non-expert” tools can quickly spread “Foresight literacy” across the population, including the most marginalised (e.g. women and youth).

Will all the above mean we have a “*Culture of Foresight*”?

Thank You

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Figure 4: Linkages between foresight, the development of innovative regions, the development of innovation systems and the RIS/RITTS projects

