

“Scientific uncertainty often becomes an excuse to ignore long-term problems, such as climate change. It doesn’t have to be so.”

**Shaping the Future** Steven W. Popper, Robert J. Lempert and Steven C. Bankes.  
*Scientific American*, April 2005, Vol. 292 Issue 4, p66, 6p.



## **Steven C. Bankes to Discuss Decision Making in the Face of Scientific Uncertainty**

**Thursday, July 21, 2005, at 2:30 p.m.  
Orchid House Conference Room 175**

Arizona State University, the Decision Theater and the Decision Center for a Desert City are pleased to welcome Steven C. Bankes, a senior computer scientist at RAND Corporation, and co-author of the recently-published article “Shaping the Future.” Bankes will discuss the article and the implications of the authors’ findings on sustainable development.

“Shaping the Future,” published in the April, 2005, issue of *Scientific American*, was co-authored by RAND Senior Economist Steven W. Popper, RAND Senior Physical Scientist Robert J. Lempert and Bankes, and discusses a new approach to dealing with uncertainty. Rather than seeking to eliminate uncertainty, the authors’ approach is to instead bring attention to and attempt to manage areas of uncertainty. The three authors also operate *Evolving Logic*, a company promoting the use of revolutionary technology for synthesizing data from a myriad of sources within an organization (legacy spreadsheets, enterprise software tools, management input, etc.) into dynamic, useable models.

Bankes and his colleagues favor a focus by policymakers on flexibility, using technology to outline strategies that are suited to a wide variety of possible circumstances, rather than allowing the decision-making process to become bogged down by waiting for a precise prediction of the unpredictable and uncertain future.

“Science and technology cannot change the future’s fundamental unpredictability,” note the authors. “Instead they offer an answer to a different question: Which actions today can best usher in a desirable future?”

The RAND Pardee Center, of which Bankes and his colleagues are a part, pursues ambitious objectives: to improve our ability to think about the longer-range future – from 35 to as far as 200 years ahead – and to develop new methods of analyzing potential long-range, global effects of today’s policy options in order to design sound policies that are sensitive to those effects.

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decision making through research and analysis.

---

**For more information or to RSVP for this lecture**, please contact Deirdre Hahn, Assistant Director of Outreach and Events, Decision Theater, at 480-965-9512 or [Deirdre.Hahn@asu.edu](mailto:Deirdre.Hahn@asu.edu), or Michelle Schwartz, Administrative Assistant, DCDC, at 480-965-3367 or [Michelle.Schwartz@asu.edu](mailto:Michelle.Schwartz@asu.edu).



Decision Center for a Desert City