THE THIRD SECTOR IN 2045
mapping the future for non-profits

About Scenario Mapping
The purpose of this project is to forecast the future of the Third (a.k.a. Nonprofit, Charity or Voluntary) Sector and Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) in 2045.

The issue such futurology grapples with is the immeasurable potential of the future. To acknowledge the wide range of possibilities, this project will use the methodology of scenario mapping. This methodology determines the potential forces (or ‘drivers’) influencing the future and envisions different scenarios where each driver has varying effect. The ‘real’ future will likely have elements of multiple scenarios and lie somewhere in the middle.

Having access to this scenario map will allow TSOs to recognize and rapidly respond to situations with prepared contingencies, ultimately improving the health of the Third Sector.

The project thus far has been a literature review focused on identifying the circumstances and drivers likely to affect the third sector. This poster details a small sample of drivers likely to have the greatest impact and hypotheses about the scenarios resulting from their influence.

What are the Shapes of 2045?

Government Funded Elite
Mounting pressure for smaller government results in funding cuts for the third sector. By 2045 traditional grants will no longer be available and all government funding will be by strict contract.

In 2045 only the large transnational TSOs will have the capacity to compete and fulfill government contracts, crowding out smaller TSOs.

Danger Zone
Smaller, locally-based TSOs will cease to exist.

Corporate Cooperation
Absence of government funding forces the majority of the sector to seek support elsewhere. TSOs will become social entrepreneurs, establishing profit-oriented social enterprises and cooperating with transnational corporates.

Consumer demands will force conscience-stricken corporations to seek legitimacy by partnering with TSOs through sponsorship, joint ventures and organisational transformation.

Danger Zone
TSOs will be ‘swallowed up’ by for-profit ideology.

Crowd-Sourced
Technology benefits TSOs allowing them to support locally and globally.

Decentralisation means charity is consumed as easily as Facebook or Farmville – Kickstarters, Student Armies, Ice Bucket Challenges and more, so long as it’s engaging and accessible.

By 2045, crowd-sourced funding is the ultimate source – with a camcorder and convincing sob story, people and robots will rush to solve any problem.

Danger Zone
TSOs with missions to solve unglamorous problems will be squeezed out.

Home Grown
An ageing yet healthy population provides an octogenarian army for traditional and local concerns: gala fundraisers, sports club coaches and meals-on-wheels.

Volunteering becomes a social activity for those with time on their hands, as well as being a fundraiser for TSOs.

TSOs will become volunteer managers, rather than employing their own staff.

Danger Zone
Helping takes a back seat to socialising as TSOs become a ‘hangout space’ for the elderly.

This research was undertaken by Harry Berger (harry@hsb.co.nz) as a summer scholar of Victoria University of Wellington. The project was supervised by Associate Professor Carolyn Cordery (School of Accounting and Commercial Law) and Associate Professor Karen Smith (School of Management) at the Victoria Business School.


Zweig, J. (2007). Government Funded Elite. Mounting pressure for smaller government results in funding cuts for the third sector. By 2045 traditional grants will no longer be available and all government funding will be by strict contract.

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