



GIVING SCENARIOS 2030

TWO PLAUSIBLE FUTURES





NPVC's Giving Scenarios 2030 are a much-needed and timely exercise as the world emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, and amidst significant shifts in the geopolitical, economic and environmental spheres globally. As a small and globalised city-state, Singapore experiences such shifts keenly. As our own social compact evolves, the nature and role of Giving in Singapore society in the future becomes an even more pertinent question.

Scenarios are a useful way to stretch our imagination in thinking about the future. The "Cliffs" and "Isles" scenarios are multi-dimensional and thought-provoking in sketching out what the Giving space might look like in 2030, and how various stakeholders might need to respond.

The NVPC team has leveraged its extensive research on the key trends that may shape Giving in the future, informed by wide consultation with a variety of stakeholders, in crafting evocative scenarios that question fundamental assumptions about Giving – including that Giving is necessarily good. It is a commendable effort to foster deep discussion on this important topic.

PETER HO

Senior Advisor

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Giving is not typically an area that people spend time discerning the future for. To many, Giving 'just happens', if at all.

But Giving could be so much more — COVID-19 taught us that. In crisis, people of Singapore dig deep into their humanity and give from their hearts.

What if Giving can be in the DNA of our society? What if Giving, true to its root word, is about holding space for each other; holding out an offer and holding acceptance with gratitude? To (re)define how we give, ultimately, is to (re)define how we relate to each other as a society.

History remembers Singapore as a society that gives, pioneered by the thriving clan associations in our pre-independence days. The present records our outpouring of generosity in the face of the crisis of a generation, and charts our dream as Asia's Philanthropic Hub.

The future is for us to write today. What plausible stories can we write for our future selves? What audacious goals and cautionary tales do we bear in mind as we pave our own pathways towards the next decade — not just about how we give, but also how we live?

We are standing at the beginning of this journey.

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Executive Summary

Giving Scenarios 2030 presents two plausible futures of how Giving could look like in Singapore in the next decade. Named "**Cliffs**" and "**Isles**," they play on two fundamental sources of fracture in society: economic fragmentation and social disintegration.

CLIFFS presents a world in which Singapore society becomes more unequal in a K-shaped economic recovery. Social cohesion is strained by the growing distance between the top and bottom strata. Giving helps in the redistribution of resources, but the growing inequality calls for a stronger social glue to mend a deepening rift.

ISLES looks at a society fragmented along the lines of emerging affiliations and identities, ultimately calling into question the existence of a common national identity. Giving happens mostly within groups but rarely across groups, inviting an urgent re-examination of giving against a backdrop of deepening identity politics.

Neither utopian nor dystopian, each scenario puts a spotlight on fundamental tensions in society and fleshes out the potential implications of each trajectory on the giving space. They start by outlining how the 'world' comes to exist, what forces define the macro environment, and how new dynamics shape the giving space. Readers can adopt the viewpoint of a 'resident' of the world and consider a series of questions at the end of the chapter.

We invite you to use these scenarios to co-create how we want to live, and give, in the next 10 years in Singapore.



“... to design scenarios that would lead our decision-makers to **question their inner model of reality...**



...and **change it as necessary**, in order to **take action.**”

Pierre Wack (1985). Scenarios: The Gentle Art of Re-perceiving.





Photo by Freepik

INTRODUCTION

Change The Lens To Change The View

WHY SCENARIOS

Scenarios are, in Pierre Wack's inimitable words, a 'gentle art in re-perceiving the future.' If landscape research are mirrors reflecting the present, and projections are telescopes peering into the future, Scenarios are akin to refraction lenses. They slightly distort the path of realities, systematically and based on present-day signals, to eventually help us arrive at a focal point. Not what is, but what could be.

WHAT SCENARIOS ARE USED FOR

Scenarios are not visions. While we remain committed to the City of Good vision, the two plausible scenarios we outline here present a grounded critique of this vision.

Each scenario deliberately pushes against prevailing mental models, highlighting unintended consequences and surfacing blind spots. It potentially leads to a more resilient path to achieve the vision—even discovering a new vision altogether. This makes Scenarios a useful tool for strategic planning, albeit an uncomfortable and contentious one.

Co-creation Process

A common set of Scenarios allows for a common vocabulary and framework for stakeholders in the Giving ecosystem to co-create future-proof pathways to realise their preferred future.

The [Futures of Giving 2021](#) trends, strategic plans of key organisations, and co-creation and validation with thought leaders, were used to set parameters and guide the development of this set of Scenarios, providing a starting contextual narrative. The implications, however, are unique to each organisation and are subject to interpretation.



Bringing Scenarios to life

We invite decision-makers and leaders in the Giving space to contemplate both plausible futures and develop your own responses to them. Each scenario can be appreciated on its own (pages 10 - 37). When contemplated side-by-side, they present interesting contrasts and highlight trade-offs (pages 40 - 43).

We have found the process of discussion, deliberation and reflection to be even more useful than the eventual decision. To maximise this process, we have included a set of Questions (pages 44 - 46) as fodder for thought. The Appendix outlines the Scenario Design Process (pages 48 - 53).

Lastly, we have developed our very own Scenario Workshop for leadership or staff retreats to extend this co-creation process. Please approach the [NVPC Scenarios Team](#) who can run this pro-bono with selected partners and stakeholders, using our customized Scenario Workshop kit.

Happy exploring!

How You Can Use The Scenarios

Scenarios on their own are just stories. They only come to life when readers fully engage with them, discuss the implications of each trajectory, and identify pitfalls to avoid and promises to capitalise on.

We find these Scenarios to be most useful for **board and C-suite leaders, founders, strategic planners, transformation officers, organisational development practitioners**, and others with a responsibility to **develop, articulate or transform their organisation's vision**.

Readers in **mid-level management** who constantly toggle between 'the forest' and 'the trees,' serve as **interlocutors among cross-sector stakeholders**, and sit in **organisations within the giving ecosystem**, might find this resource of great relevance.

Here are a few ways of using these Scenarios for your strategic planning process:



INDIVIDUAL OR PAIRED REFLECTION

1. Read the Scenarios individually
2. Go through the Immersion and Reflection questions on your own or in pairs



DISCUSS AS A GROUP (2-5 pax)

1. Read the Scenarios individually
2. Group discussion of the Immersion and Reflection questions (page 43 - 45)
3. Option for each group member to assume the role of a different stakeholder group



RUN A HALF-DAY ROLE-PLAYING WORKSHOP

1. Reach out to the [NVPC Scenarios Team](#) who can work with your team to run this pro-bono, using our customized Scenario Workshop kit

TWO PLAUSIBLE FUTURES



CLIFFS



ISLES



CLIFFS

Cliffs is a world in which the Singapore society becomes more uneven, where social cohesion is strained by economic concerns and pragmatic outlooks.

CLIFFS

Growing Concentration Of Power

The **uneven K-shaped economic trajectory** leads to an inevitable **wealth gap** between the top and bottom segments of the populace. This is worsened by growing wealth and affluence in Singapore, with **the local and foreign High Net Worth population** making up 9% of Singapore population in 2030. The bottom segment of the populace continues to struggle, with a significant lowering of median income.

Economic power is concentrated in the hands of the corporate elites, even as the government continues to put aside significant budget for social spending. Unemployment is high, as over 20% of **work force are displaced by AI** and robotics in various industries, with disproportionate effect on low-income and senior workers.



Photo by [Matthew Henry](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Policies of direct cash transfers and vouchers continue, with the Progressive Wage Model covering **94% of all low wage workers**. To narrow the gap, the government seeks to grow the provision of health and education services by encouraging private solutions. For example, innovations in healthcare delivery improve patients' access to advanced med tech at home, while the education front sees a boom of ed tech and the use of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in **schools and lifelong learning**—serving young adults and senior clienteles alike.



Photo by [Lily Banse](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Photo by [Greg Rosenke](#) on [Unsplash](#)

CLIFFS

A Digital Reversal

Technology pervades every aspect of everyday life as the smart nation vision fully unfolds. The digital divide—deeply enmeshed with class inequality—expresses itself in unequal opportunities even among the so-called digital natives.

An **undercurrent of digital disenchantment** is evident, with pockets of the population reverting to analog modes of communication. Some do this to **resist what they perceive as a 'digital [panopticon state](#)'** which leverages big data to achieve all-round surveillance of the population. Others are growing paranoid of **falling victim to a myriad of digital crimes** like deepfakes and identity theft.

For the first time, digital device ownership plateaus after decades of rapid growth. Largely fuelled by sustainability and mental health advocates, and ironically organised through social media, the **calls to #unplug and #switchoff** grow increasingly louder.

Hands free? Businesses faced with the analog revolution

Sectors report a growing number of employees who demand a return to traditional communication modes.

SUN, MAR 31, 2030 – 9.51 AM



More employees have been resisting attending virtual meetings and employers' trackers of work activity, in line with broader social 'digital disenchantment' trends. In a recent Singapore Business Guild (SBG) report, workers have been turning to #unplug, #switchoff and #handsfree movements, which involve snail mail, park meetings and tv-less lunches.

"We had one case where an employee deep-faked herself as her friend, so that she could take the ESG accreditation examination in her friend's place. This was not a one-off incident. In fact, we have also seen a rise in identity theft, with hackers passing off as corporate employees to get customers' personal information," said Yee Soo-Jung, Managing Director, SBG.



CLIFFS

Rise Of The Corporates

This is an **era of corporate oligarchy** with big businesses calling the shots in society.

Globally, charismatic tech moguls captain **deep tech superpowers**, holding the key to unlock solutions to intractable global issues like deforestation and malnutrition. Many establish their **headquarters in Singapore**, along with a few homegrown unicorns, to serve the Southeast Asian bottom-of-the-pyramid market.

Each boasting a strong R&D core and competing for social impact supremacy, they tend to **work in silos** or through corporate-philanthropists-NGO alliances. The urgency of the climate emergency and its far-reaching consequences means that **corporate-led partnerships favour efficient and quick solutioning**.

This ambition often **falls out of step with public sector sensibilities**—with the latter tending to be perceived as being risk-averse in setting policy direction and regulations.

CLIFFS

Policymaking In An Emergent Space

Policymakers themselves are operating in a much more dynamic political landscape, both globally and locally. **Policy direction in emergent areas often have no clear answers**—bound by various global multilateral pacts and heavily debated in a multi-party parliament.

This results in **policies at times not catching up quickly enough with corporate solutions**, leading to a **declining level of confidence in the government from both corporates and the general public alike**. It is also not uncommon for the imposition of far-sighted policies, especially those in relation to public goods, to spark discomfort from some private sector players.



Photo by Reuters

For example, at \$15 per tonne of greenhouse gas emissions, **carbon tax is mandatory** for all corporates operating in Singapore. **Corporates are split in their response**, especially those in key industries like manufacturing who are concerned over the impact of ESG reporting on their financial performance.

While some are compliant, a few choose to **'sidestep' the Environmental pillar by pursuing Social and Governance strategies instead**. This manifests itself in a growing display of corporate philanthropy and volunteerism, and more corporates adopting inclusive hiring, but **concerns of social washing abound**.

The **ESG regulations for SMEs have been piloted** for the past few years, with most **SMEs struggling to keep up with the new reporting requirements**. Many resort to greenwashing tactics to avoid penalties and are pessimistic that they can continue once government incentives dry up.



Illustration by Tobias Lunchbreath



Photo by Pixabay

CLIFFS

New Affluent Local And Non-local Givers

Uneasiness about the growing income and wealth gaps, and a richer tapestry of the Singapore social fabric, have prompted **a surge in volunteerism and donations from two major groups.**

The first is among **the self-made affluent and technopreneurs-turned-philanthropists.** Many feel they owe a debt of gratitude to society for their rags-to-riches success stories and want to give back to the community. The mainstreaming of online giving platforms like GoFundMe and the ease of establishing one's own foundation prompt **the growth of millennial micro-philanthropists.**

This includes **returning Singaporeans and non-Singaporeans** who spent their formative or early career years in Singapore, who seek to fund projects benefiting both their home and host countries.

FOURBES



SOCIAL IMPACT

ALISHA NAYZER, 25

FOUNDER, FLEDGLING FOUNDATION

UNDER **30**



"We don't have as much as others, but we are so blessed and should give back, since we can."

Alisha Nayzer is from Singapore, one of the richest countries in the world. Born to a teacher and a regional director of sales, she translated her family's traditional middle-class values into the Fledgling Foundation ('average funding for average people by average people').

Since then, Alisha has helped champion a wave of young and moderately-wealthy 'micro' philanthropists who want to do good with what they have.

[FULL PROFILE](#)

The second is among **the expatriate community** who, despite their 'outsider' presence, are eager to be plugged into the community. Volunteering for the **arts, heritage, sports and environmental causes are particularly popular** as they are more accessible to the non-/new Singaporeans.

This leads to the impression that non-social causes are more 'exclusive,' **driving away local volunteers to focus on the community and social service sectors.** Additionally, 'incentives' such as tax-deductible donations and priority admission into local schools are likewise enjoyed by expat volunteers, leading to **sceptics doubting their giving motives.**



Photo by owenjamesevents

CLIFFS

Private Funders' Market

Institutional philanthropy is growing as a function of wealth accumulation in the region. **Family offices, encouraged to put aside 10 percent of their wealth for local charitable purposes,** are a major player in the space. Along with corporate foundations and venture capitalists, they offer a **broader range of funding options such as Social Impact Bonds and Social Impact Guarantees.**

This results in a thriving giving landscape. **More regional giving is now taking place,** facilitated by the relaxing of the overseas fundraising rule and growth of microfinancing platforms serving the Southeast Asian market. **Less dependency on government funding** also leads to a broader range of **projects that support areas previously considered 'grey'** such as refugee support and the LGBTQ community.

More innovative and collaborative on-ground solutions, led by smaller actors like medium-sized charities, groundups and social enterprises, are running impactful last-mile projects with the local community.

Many focus on the **creation of micro-jobs and gig work in the community** to empower low-income families hit hard by the economic situation. Groups that were traditionally considered to be 'beneficiaries', such as single mothers, persons with disabilities and ex-offenders, step up as leaders to serve various needs in their community for a stipend.

With many of these **'volunteers' being older in age**, 'old school' activities and dying trades such as community storytelling, street barbers and cobblers return to inject an unexpected **sense of nostalgia amidst a hyper-digitalised world**.



Photo by [Asep Irman](#) on [Unsplash](#)

CLIFFS

A Cliffside View

In Cliffs, the view from the top might look very different from that from the bottom. But avid mountain climbers and resilient valley-dwellers are weathering the seemingly treacherous cliffsides, carving out gently undulating tracks where the two paths meet.

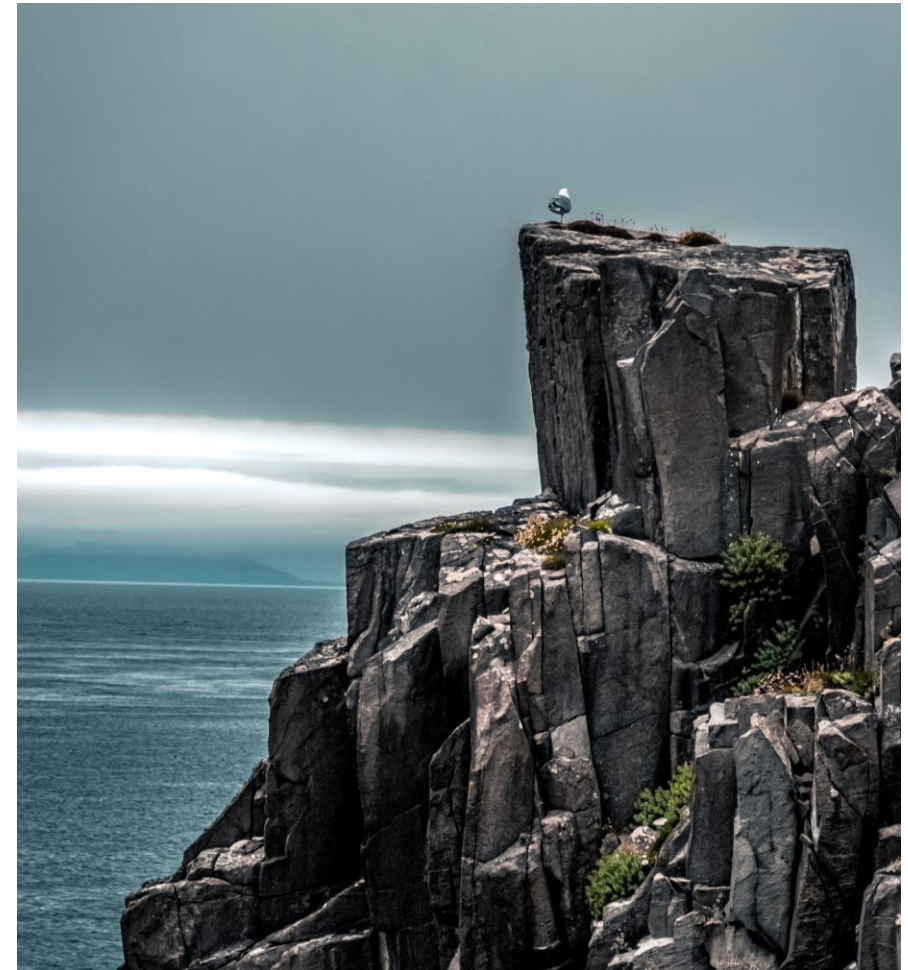


Photo by [Emilie CR2RD](#) on [Unsplash](#)



ISLES

Isles is a world in which Singapore becomes an archipelago. New forms of affiliations within the virtual and hyperlocal worlds give rise to **strong but fragmented group identities**—or “islands”—which put a strain on national identity.



Photo by [shawnagg](#) on [Unsplash](#)

ISLES

Looking Out For The Familiar Others

The battle against COVID-19 takes longer before it settles into a truly endemic state. The global economy sees a **double dip recession within the decade**, and Singapore is not spared. Following the initial [sharp world growth slowdown](#) post-pandemic, **economic growth rate somewhat moderates over the decade**, although a return to pre-pandemic levels is deemed elusive.

In this period of extended crisis, the people of Singapore have developed **a new norm of resilience**. The general mood is one of **constant alertness**. People are keenly aware of the ever-evolving situation, cautious of potential risks, and **constantly looking out for one another in their own community**.

The **notion of community itself has evolved**. Amidst growing polarisation of values and [threat of identity politics](#) in Singapore, the long period of COVID-19 restrictions has further changed the nature of social interactions. **Strangers pose risk, while the familiar other is valued**. People become more selective in defining their kinship and friendship circles.

Over time, these tight-knit social networks form Singaporeans' everyday reality, while **the construct of nation as an imagined community gets diluted**. Groups are drawn together, and push away from each other, based on **hardening lines of identity, affiliation and circumstances**. Some examples include diasporic communities, parent support groups, neighbourhood blocks, alumni networks, and lifestyle circles.

yesterday

Singapore World Big Read Small Read Commentary Videos



By Lim Y. S.

Published MARCH 14, 2030

1,497 SHARES

HDB: neighbourly interactions on the rise, correlated to sense of belonging to place



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SINGAPORE – More residents engaged in “higher-intensity interactions” with their neighbours last year, the HDB said. For example, keeping watch over a neighbour’s flat went up from 61.0% in 2028 to 63.8% in 2030, a steady increase from 44.6% in 2018.

HDB’s survey found that higher-intensity interactions were positively correlated to residents’ sense of belonging to their precinct – people are more likely to interact with their neighbours the more quickly they develop a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood.

ISLES

Fragmented Identities

Virtual identity is a dominant identity in the Smart Nation. School children and professionals spend time mostly 'within' their devices, with their [lifelike AI avatars](#) doing complex human functions and interactions in their 'second life.' The metaverse connects them with other virtual identities, either by choice or by algorithmic chance. Gradually, **multiple [virtual communities](#) emerge**, ranging from interest groups, cause-based communities, diaspora circles and more.

While the virtual world expands, the physical world shrinks. The combination of an ageing population, declining physical mobility and hybrid work norms has resulted in people commuting less. Parks, supermarkets, schools, entertainment centres, and health facilities are found no more than a 10-minute walk away from each home. Thanks to a string of highly successful [age-friendly neighbourhoods](#) and [placemaking](#) campaigns, as well as digitally-facilitated social connection, **people are [spending more time in and around their homes](#).**



Photo by [lucas.law](#) on [Unsplash](#)

This gives rise to **a stronger sense of attachment to one's neighbourhood**, as park connectors, community rooftop gardens and multigenerational playgrounds become nodes of community activity.

Towns are the nerve centres of community life where physical and virtual communities coexist. Physically, each town boasts a unique characteristic or accolade—such as the Punggol Digital District, the Queenstown Health District, or Sentosa Cove. Their residential profiles reflect fairly homogeneous occupational profile, income level and demography, even within the prevailing multiculturalism legislation.

Overlaying these physical zones is an inexhaustible, invisible criss-crossing of virtual communities. Both a circle of trust and an echo chamber, each virtual community is a hotbed of emerging values and identities that **contest primordial lines of ethnicity, age, class, ability and nationality**.



Photo by [Gigi](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Photo by Darul Makmur Mosque

ISLES

Community Before Self And Nation

If each community—be it virtual or physical—is a unique island, then Isles is an archipelago. Each 'island' develops strong in-group lingo and subculture and attracts like-minded members. **Intra-group connection is strong and robust**, characterised by strong trust and generous exchange of help within the community—conveniently aided by technology. However, **inter-community connection is tenuous**, marked by indifference, competition and the occasional hostility.

In the physical community, political divides complicate the picture somewhat as strong neighbourly links shape people's demands of politicians. There is **greater pressure for Members of Parliament to physically live in a constituency**, actively contribute to community life, and to listen and act on residents' concerns.

With [more opposition MPs](#) making it into parliament, long-standing issues such as [differential estate upgrading](#) between majority-party neighbourhoods and other areas emerge more frequently. Such uneven distribution of public facilities—real and perceived—stoke inter-group hostilities, especially [across neighbourhoods of different income levels](#).

With a strong **us-versus-them mentality**, there is little reason for anyone to venture beyond their own community and risk exposure to a stranger—physically and ideologically. This **weakens empathy and connection across different groups**. Over time, the weak bridging of social capital puts **a strain on overall community productivity and social cohesion**.

A Company Limited by Guarantee

Since 2022

THE STRAIGHT TIMES

Trust among Singaporeans from different regions at all-time low: Report



- Researchers from the Academy of Public Surveys (APS) asked Singaporeans for their views on their lived experiences.
- 93% of respondents “don’t trust very much” or “don’t trust at all” a person they meet for the first time, the highest figure since the World Values Survey began in 2002.

SINGAPORE: Trust among Singaporeans has hit an all-time low, with nearly 95% of respondents to a survey saying they would rather not deal with strangers who are not from their neighbourhoods and towns. This follows recent media reports of a rise in ‘not in my backyard’ incidents between community groups and organisations.

Isles

A Lively "Glocal" Economy

MNCs and investors continue to be attracted to Singapore as a global financial and sustainability hub, even with the [introduction of wealth taxes](#) to reduce inequality amidst slow economic recovery. More [companies are decentralising](#), opting to have offices in neighbourhood areas or even going for entirely remote working arrangements.

However, the biggest winners are the smaller players, with **start-ups and local micro small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) enjoying strong growth**. As people spend more time in their neighbourhoods, 'hyperlocal' pain points and demands emerge, providing new market opportunities.



Photo by [Galen Crout](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Home-based businesses do well, thanks to one-click convenience, which in turn create opportunities for gig workers to cover more service delivery roles. With greater ease to reach the global markets digitally, many local MSMEs in the fashion, jewellery and food and beverage sectors make overseas leaps without first having to ‘scale up’ locally, with cult followings in Southeast Asia, China and the US.

The growing MSME market, in turn, provides an opportunity for **start-ups serving last-mile needs** like financial inclusion, home-based care, and door-to-door transport. The diverse population in each neighbourhood provides market opportunities for solutions that are replicable across different communities. A growing number of **newly minted homegrown start-ups** enjoy robust valuation from foreign investors, adding to the ranks of **Singapore-based unicorns that have successfully gone public.**



Photo by Ng Sor Luan

ISLES

A Saturated Giving Ecosystem

This world of tight intra-group dynamics and weak inter-group ties significantly impacts **stakeholder dynamics in the giving space**. Strong in-group ties mean that social purpose organisations in the same neighbourhood are caught in a **constant cycle of collaboration and competition**.

Ground-up initiatives from the same precinct, for example, have **more opportunities to discover each other and uncover real needs** on the ground, aided by digital solutions. Stories of local ground-ups coming together to connect communities-in-need with different kinds of assistance around the clock abound. However, there is also considerable **'competition' for donors and volunteers—mostly local residents**—among the various social purpose organisations within each neighbourhood.



Photo by Young Women's Christian Association of Singapore on Giving.sg

Non-profit organisations (NPOs) are increasingly challenged to define their roles amidst emerging players. Between ground-ups with strong last-mile presence, and Volunteer Centres acting as coordinating hubs, **more traditional NPOs are fighting for relevance**. Additionally, large NPOs doing community work face **challenges in multiplying and scaling their programmes**, as each neighbourhood develops its own unique characteristics, needs and desires.

Some respond by changing their operating models, with **individual branches becoming increasingly autonomous**. Others, especially those supporting universal causes like women's empowerment, diversify with more online programs and expand their reach overseas.



Photo by Kampung Senang

ISLES

Post-Volunteerism Giving

Amidst these changes, **formal volunteerism and philanthropic giving trends are on steep downward declines.** This is not because people are giving less of their time and talent. Rather, given the high levels of neighbourly interactions and strong sense of communal bonds, there are **more frequent spontaneous acts of kindness and informal giving** among family and friends. Local crowdfunding, direct donation to artists/creators, and adopting vulnerable groups in one's backyard are growing in popularity. People in Isles find **more meaning in this kind of immediacy of action and reciprocity in relationships within their own intra-groups.**

In the few occasions that individuals and groups volunteer formally, many report feeling like **unwelcomed 'outsiders' when serving in neighbourhoods other than their own.** Conversely, 'not in my backyard' sentiments are often heard, with **local communities and ground-up movements tending to be inward-looking.**



Photo by Singapore Art Week

This leads to a **vastly uneven landscape of causes**. While local volunteers support community-related causes and global causes in droves, “nationwide” issues and movements like the National Reading Movement or Singapore Kindness Movement decline in significance.

The **non- or new Singaporeans too show partiality towards causes that support their own community**—for example, Indonesian tycoons donating to support Indonesian domestic helpers and Indonesian community groups in Singapore. Consistently, **overseas fundraising is on the rise**, driven by supporters of regional and global causes and diasporic givers opting to give to causes in their home countries.



Photo by Migrant Workers' Assistance Fund



Photo by [sutirbudiman](#) on [Unsplash](#)

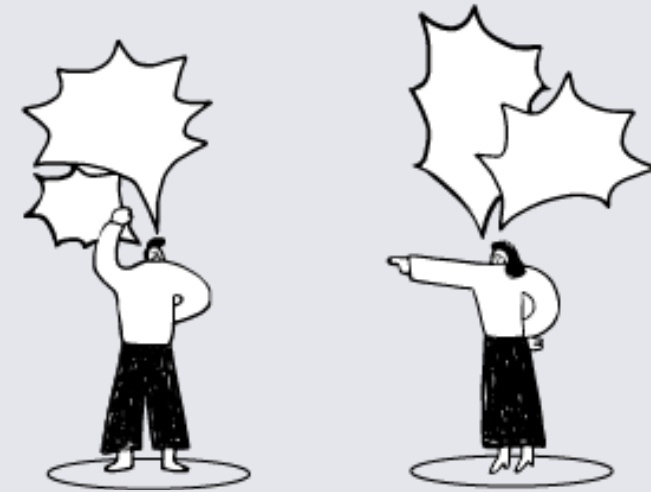
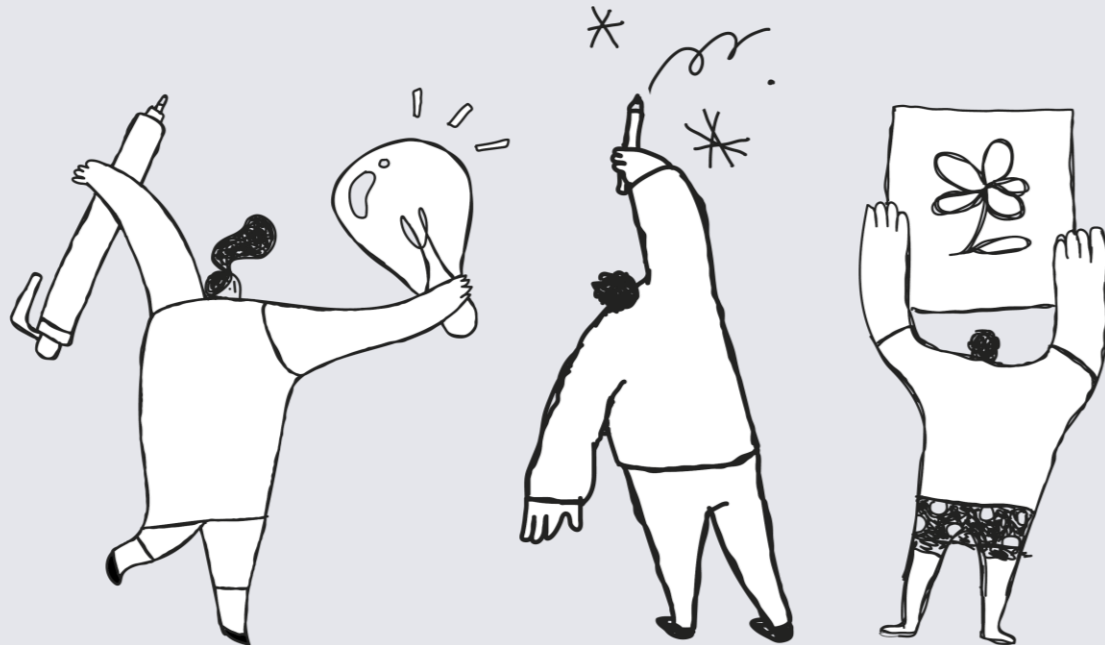
ISLES

A Tapestry On The Brink Of Unravelling?

In Isles, everyone belongs everywhere and nowhere.

Some view the island of islands as a rich tapestry, albeit loosely woven together. Others lament how **inward-looking and closed communities have become** – despite the strong ties within, many have become guarded against the 'other'.

"Scenarios deal with two worlds: the world of facts and the world of perceptions. They explore for facts but they aim at perceptions inside the heads of decision makers..."



...Their purpose is to gather and transform information of strategic significance into fresh perceptions. This transformation process is not trivial—more often than not it does not happen. When it works, it is a creative experience that generates a heartfelt “Aha!” from your managers and leads to strategic insights beyond the mind's previous reach.”

Pierre Wack (1985). *Scenarios: Shooting the Rapids*.



Photo by [Amanda Dalbjörn](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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SCENARIOS COMPARISON

Both *Cliffs* and *Isles* play on key fractures in society. **Cliffs look at a society divided by vertical fragmentation along economic lines, while *Isles* play on the notion of horizontal fragmentation along identities and ideologies.**

Both forces already exist today. The Scenarios pull apart and amplify each notion to present more extreme socioeconomic context to shape the choices and interactions of different actors and societal institutions.

This section summarises the key tensions presented in each Scenario along three major clusters—moral obligation, social cohesion, and collaboration. These are arguably the fundamental assumptions that shape our present understanding towards Giving—that Giving is an expression of society's moral obligation to each other; Giving leads to social cohesion; and collaboration solves complex issues.

The accompanying questions encourage readers to examine these assumptions more critically and reconsider their definitions of Giving.



CLIFFS VS ISLES: MORAL OBLIGATION

In **CLIFFS**, Singapore finds itself in a harsh environment of deepening wealth inequality. There are clear winners and losers in society, which potentially leads to deep fractures in social cohesion.

- **What is our moral obligation to each other when the rich become richer and the poor become poorer?**
- **Do people give because they have to, or because they want to? Does it matter in the end?**

In **ISLES**, we consider the possibilities of **how Giving, done 'wrongly', could undermine social cohesion**. This happens against the backdrop of a society fractured and fragmented along identity and ideological lines.

With limited jobs and resources to go around, people hoard or exchange resources within their own tribes but not others. On the surface, Giving activities abound, but are often done in pursuit of group benefits or individual gains such as boosting social credence.

- **Are there 'bad' or 'wrong' ways of giving, for example when giving is done with ulterior motives? What other forms of 'bad' giving must we anticipate?**
- **Should we discourage 'bad' giving? How do we do so without moral grandstanding, and what is the most effective way to do so?**

CLIFFS VS ISLES: SOCIAL COHESION

CLIFFS adopts a utilitarian standpoint where Giving helps to bridge the resource transfer between the haves and have-nots. The deep-seated inequality in Cliffs pushes this notion further by forcing us to consider whether Giving potentially masks, and even perpetuates, a deep-seated inequality.

- **Where does Giving sit vis-a-vis redistribution policies like taxes and welfare provision?**
- **What kind of Giving policies need to be in place in the context of a deeply unequal society?**
- **Conversely, how might Giving look like in a more equitable society?**
- **Other than Giving, what else can be the social glue to bridge these deepening fractures, and how Giving play a part in it?**

In ISLES, Giving that is inward-looking deepens group boundaries and threatens social cohesion. Isles further presents a unique case of strong intra-community links, which is a fertile ground for informal giving, yet challenges existing notions of formal giving.

- **What if the community becomes an antidote to charity? Can we pursue one without the other?**
- **How must the traditional notions and institutions of charity evolve to adapt to a more fragmented society?**
- **Apart from Giving, how else can we promote social cohesion?**

CLIFFS VS ISLES: COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONING

In **CLIFFS**, with increasingly complex and cross-cutting social issues, collaboration is traditionally seen to hold the answer to solving society's intractable problems. But time is running out as planetary boundaries are being crossed and global goals are being missed at an alarming pace.

- **What if these urgent issues cannot wait for different actors to come together, align and collaborate?**
- **What if the risk appetite and power distance between various stakeholders are too different, and there is no clear incentive to pool together resources and collaborate?**

ISLES presents a context where collaboration is not a clear-cut answer to solve complex issues. There are many other ways to arrive at solutions to complex issues, including powerful actors working in silos, or in self-selective small groups of like-minded stakeholders.

- **Do we pursue collaboration as a means towards an end, or as an end in itself?**
- **What are the trade-offs of collaboration that we might have ignored, and how else might the objective be achieved?**
- **What are the conditions that need to be in place for collaborations to be successful?**

ACTIVITY 1:

Immersion Questions

INSTRUCTIONS:

The following set of questions are designed to help you immerse more fully into these Scenarios.

This activity can be done individually, in pairs or groups.

WHAT YOU NEED:

To help with the visualisation, it might be helpful to have a few sheets of paper and writing or drawing tools to articulate your responses.



20 mins

WARM UP:

- What are your initial impressions of both scenarios?
- Can you recap/re-describe each scenario in your own words?

SCENARIO IMMERSION / VISUALISATION:

Imagine yourself living in this 'world' in 2030.

- What do you like/dislike about this scenario?
- Who are the 'winners' and 'losers' in this scenario?
- What are some opportunities and pitfalls in this scenario?
- What do you think you'll be doing in this scenario? How will you live/work/play?
- How about your organisation? Who will be its main stakeholders?

GIVING-RELATED:

- What are the biggest needs/issues/social ills we face in this scenario?
- How do you think people will give in this scenario? What causes (if any) do they give to?
- Who would give and who would receive? How would their relationship be like?
- How would formal/informal giving look like? Which new actors/institutions emerge? Which actors/institutions will be defunct?

ACTIVITY 2:

Reflection Questions

INSTRUCTIONS:

The following set of questions are designed to help you reflect on the implication of these Scenarios on your organisation and/or sector.

These questions are ideal for in-depth interviews or focus group discussions.



45 – 60 mins

FOR CROSS-SECTOR INDUSTRY TASKFORCES

Assuming these scenarios become a reality in 2030...

- How might they impact **the industry and business ecosystems**?
- **Who will pay** to solve societal problems?
- How might they **shape public-private partnerships**? Might there be situations where silos, instead of collaborations, allow us to achieve greater social impact in these realities?
- How might they impact our **economic model**? What economic philosophy would underpin each world, and what are the opportunities and drawbacks of each?

FOR INDIVIDUAL CORPORATES

Assuming these scenarios become a reality in 2030...

- How might they **impact your company and industry**? How might your company and industry respond to each world?
- How might they impact **your company's giving-related strategies**? (Prompt: This could include CSR, Diversity and Inclusion, philanthropy and sustainability efforts)
- How might they impact the **corporates as a whole**? How might different types of corporates (MNCs/LEs, and SMEs) respond to each world?
- How might this impact **corporate purpose**?

[More Reflection Questions >>>](#)

ACTIVITY 2: Reflection Questions

FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES OR UMBRELLA BODIES IN GIVING-RELATED SPACE

Assuming these scenarios become a reality in 2030...

- How might they impact **government agencies' role as overseer, enabler, regulator, and funder**?
- How should policymakers work with **private funders**?
- How might **charitable activities** be defined and look like in each scenario? Who are **the key actors and players**, both on the formal and informal giving sectors?
- What mode of governance might be best-suited for various forms of **charitable /social impact organisations**?

FOR NON-PROFITS

Assuming these scenarios become a reality in 2030...

- How might they impact upon **the charity sector** as a whole?
- How might **different types of charities (by size, sector, funding sources), and different stakeholders (donors, charities, intermediaries, beneficiaries)** respond to each world?
- How might **other institutional givers (social enterprise, ground-ups, etc.)** find their niche in this world?

FOR FUNDERS AND PHILANTHROPISTS

Assuming these scenarios become a reality in 2030...

- How might they impact **your Foundation and the philanthropic** space?
- How might **philanthropic activities** look like in each world? Who will pay to solve society's problems? and who will be the main players?



Photo by Freepik

CONCLUSION

At the end of the day, it is not about what the scenarios are, but what we do with the scenarios.

It can be challenging to separate the insights from the noise around Scenarios. The question is not which Scenario is more likely to happen, nor are we seeking to contest or disprove certain aspects of each Scenario. Neither is it about finding an all-encompassing solution that seizes all opportunities and sidesteps all potential pitfalls.

Rather, the fundamental question is this:

Knowing these two trajectories could unfold in 10 years, what must we do in response to each Scenario? What do we need to start doing, keep doing and stop doing today, to prepare for these plausibilities?

The Giving space is birthed from our individual actions and decisions. Each of us, whether we are a non-profit, ground-up, foundation, philanthropist, corporate, government agency, volunteer or donor, have a hand in shaping the space. Giving is after all a collective reflection of how we work, play, and live as a society.

What will you do **today** to shape how we live—and give—tomorrow?

APPENDIX

- 49 Scenario Design Process
- 50 Pre-determined Elements &
Critical Uncertainties
- 51 Mental Models & Key
Relationships
- 52 Scenarios Internal Logic
- 53 Co-creation Tiers

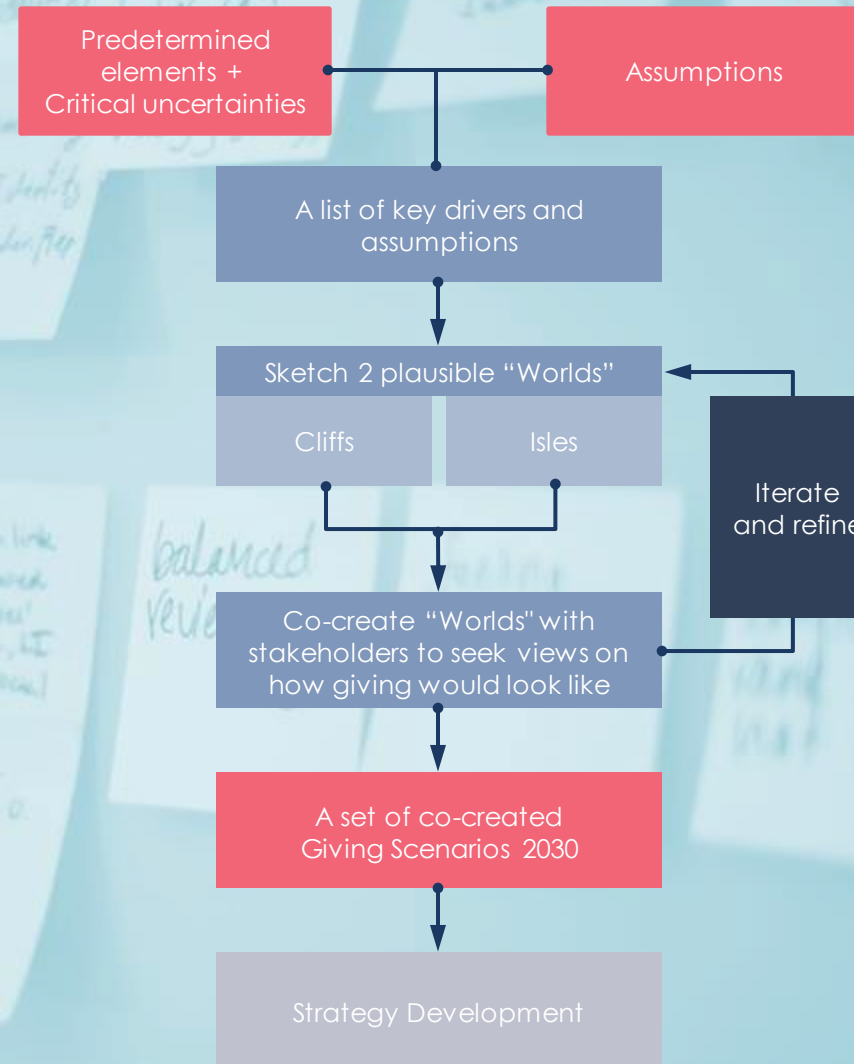
SCENARIO DESIGN PROCESS

We adopt a heavily co-creative perspective in developing the Scenarios.

We started with the [Futures of Giving 2021 Trends Report](#) and existing national-level policy blueprints. A series of closed-door conversations with the NVPC Leadership Team led to a shortlist of predetermined elements and critical uncertainties.

We also reviewed publicly available organisation and sector strategies of players in the immediate operating environment, namely MCCY, NCSS and NVPC's own strategy. These pointed the direction towards the prevalent mental models and assumptions in the giving sector.

Playing on these building blocks, two distinct worlds seemed to emerge. We developed rough sketches of the worlds to capture the unique characteristics of each. These incomplete designs were then used as the basis of multiple rounds of co-creation process with internal and external stakeholders, until full scenarios emerged.





Predetermined Elements

Based on the 6 drivers and 21 trends outlined in the [Futures of Giving 2021 Report](#), the following are identified as Predetermined Elements. These are 'stable' trends that will highly likely happen, or are already happening, in Singapore in the next decade:

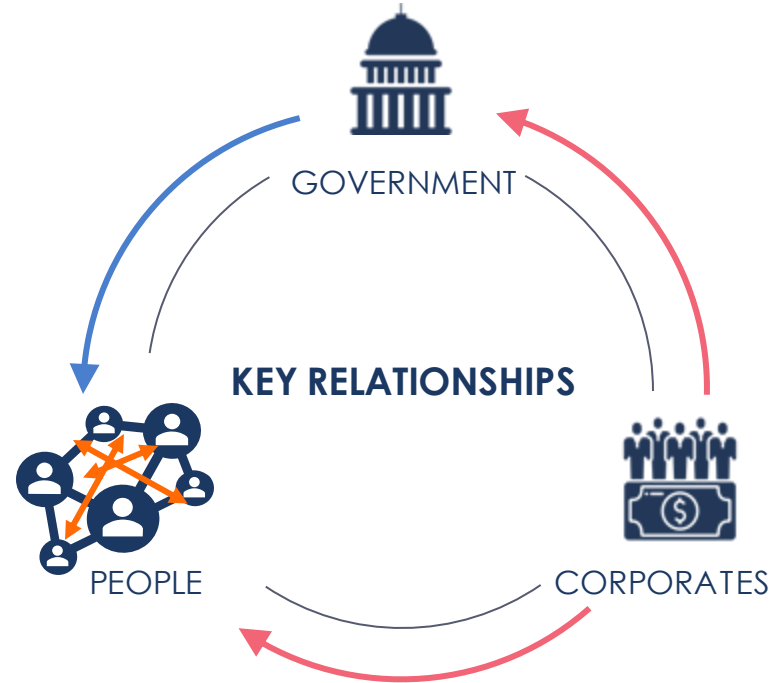
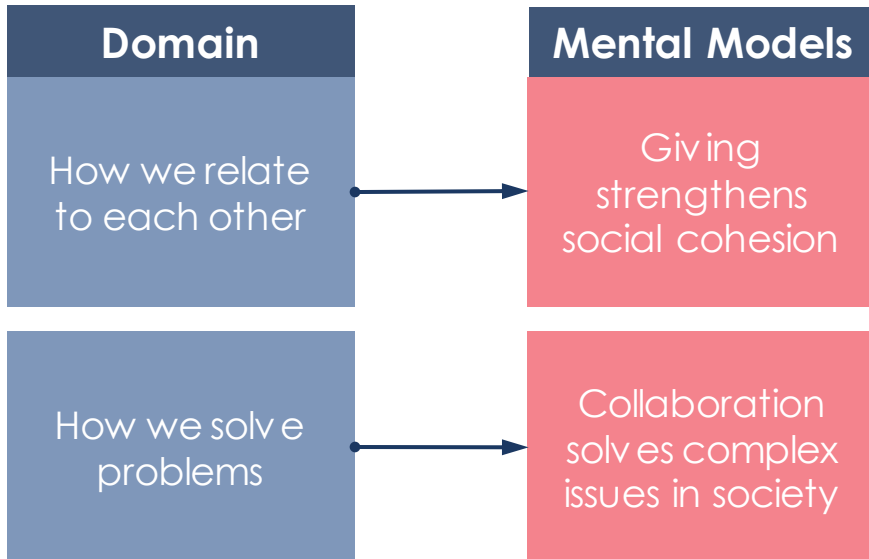
- **Demography**— ageing population and growing millennial workforce
- **Economy**— growing affluence, wealth gap, support for low wage workers
- **Sustainability**— green plan commitments, corporate adoption of sustainability
- **Technology**— smart nation plans, digital perils, work automation and worker displacement

Critical Uncertainties

Looking more deeply into these domains, some Critical Uncertainties are surfaced. These fundamental questions might open distinct trajectories for Singapore and the giving space:

- What will the attitudes and norms of **key demographic segments** be, and how will these impact society?
- Will the **economy** affirm the dignity of work, redistribute wealth, and broaden the notion of success?
- Will **corporates** across the board embed purpose in their business models?
- **Who will pay** to solve society's problems?
- What will the **relationship between government and society** be?

MENTAL MODELS & KEY RELATIONSHIPS



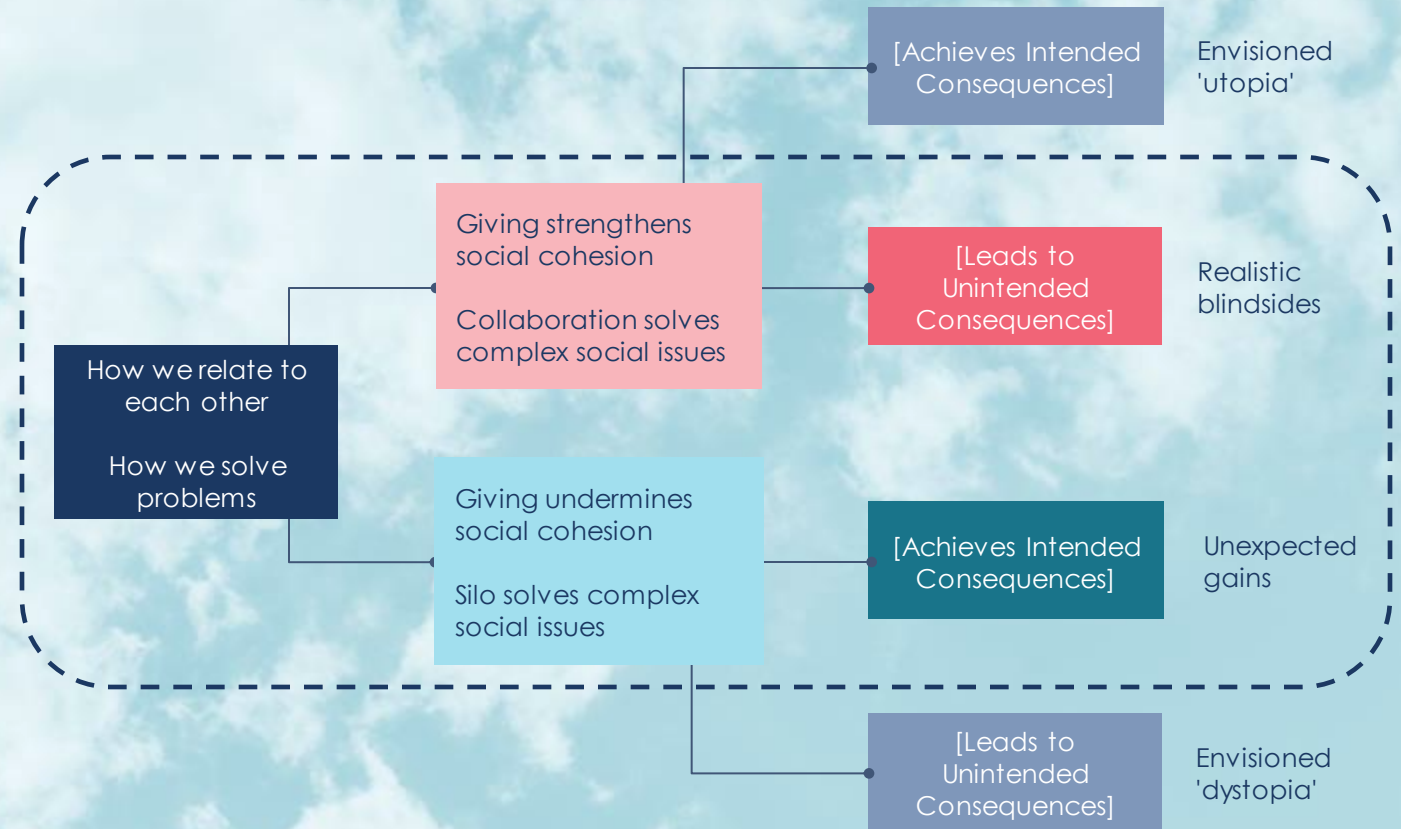
SCENARIOS INTERNAL LOGIC

To stress-test and even overturn the Mental Models, the following logic model is derived.

This ensures the Scenarios are meaningfully distinct from each other. Each Scenario also follows a central backbone narrative that ensures its internal coherence.

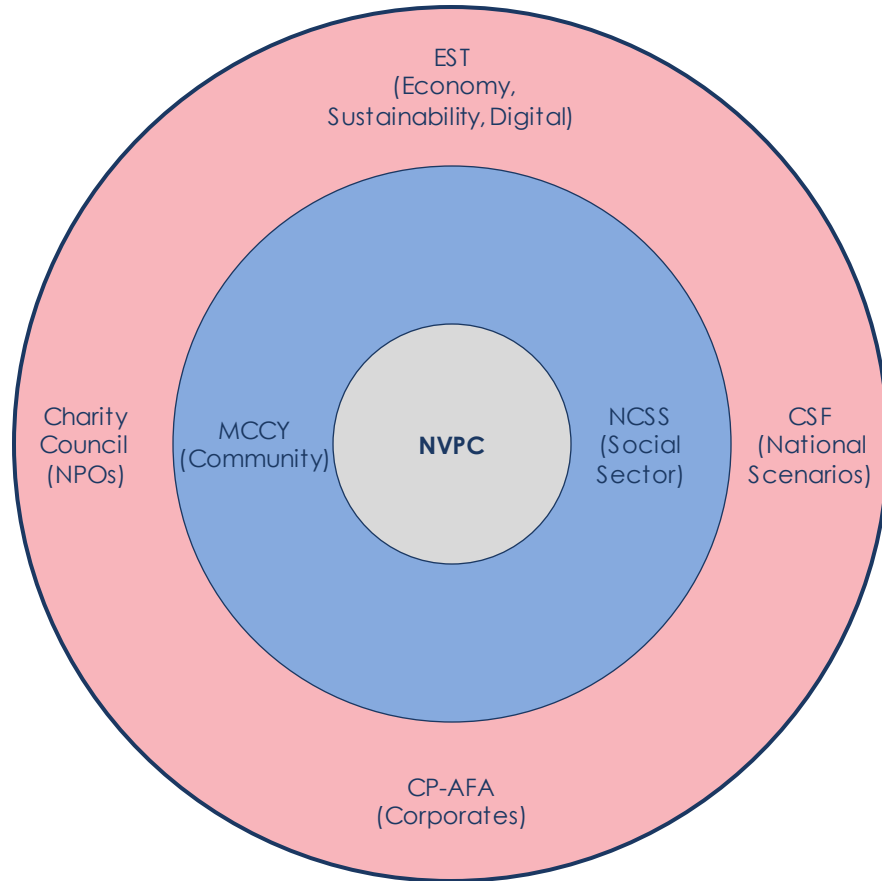
With the Predetermined Elements forming the common backdrop across all Scenarios, the Critical Uncertainties and the Key Relationship dynamics become the key differentiators that lead each Scenario down its unique trajectory. Some creative liberties were inevitable to ensure the internal coherence of each Scenario narrative.

To avoid obvious polarities or 'black and white' Scenarios, the clearly Utopian and Dystopian spaces are avoided. This leads to only two 'middle' Scenarios, which we fleshed out fully to become Cliffs and Isles.



Co-Creation Tiers

Using the initial set of 'sketches,' we then spoke to a total of 25 participants across 13 closed-door sessions to co-create and refine them into full Scenarios. The full list of Participants can be found in [Acknowledgements](#).



CO-CREATION PARTICIPANTS:

- **Tier 3: Broader Environment**
 - Selected umbrella authorities /intermediaries for specific stakeholder domains
 - Categories that broadly mirror Futures of Giving drivers/trends

- **Tier 2: Operating Environment**
 - Organisations of strategic importance to NVPC with immediate influence on funding and programmes
 - Directly impacted by/ impact on NVPC's strategy

- **Tier 1: Internal**
 - Directly carries the vision (Board) and implementation (Management and Staff) of NVPC's strategy to shape giving ecosystem

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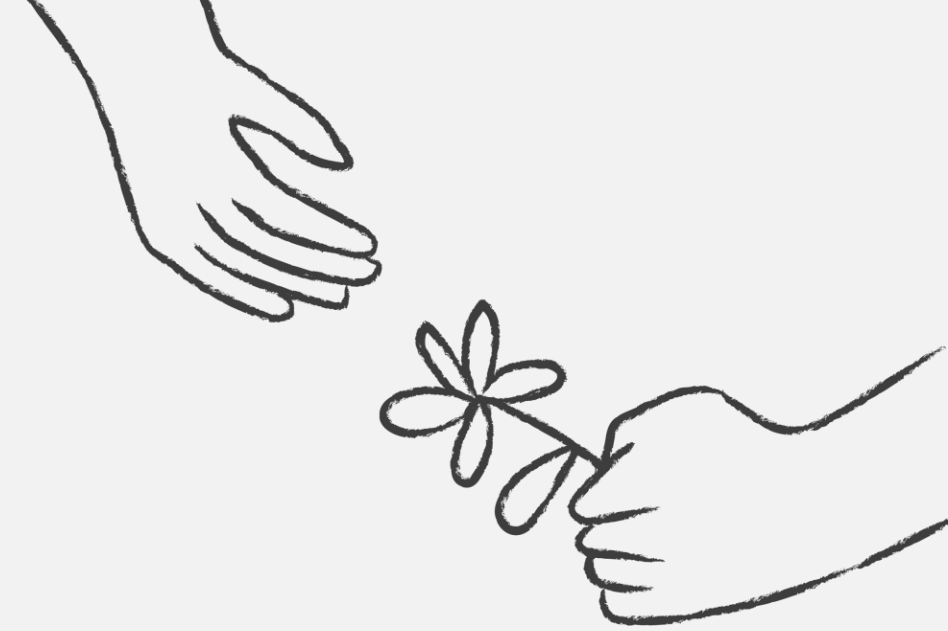
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(past team member no longer with NVPC—Brian Theng)



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