

## IPS Prism Report

## PROJECT OUTLINE

1. The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) launched IPS Prism to engage Singaporeans in reflecting on the different dimensions of governance and to work towards a future that they desire.
2. The central question driving the process is: “How will Singapore govern itself in 2022?”
3. The objectives of the project are to gather the public’s views on:
  - Choices and challenges in governance and policy-making that Singapore faces as a small and thriving city-state in the Southeast Asian region
  - Ways in which governance is a shared process between government, people, and leaders of different sectors in society
4. The IPS Prism project consists of three phases:

### *Phase One (Jun-Aug 2012)*

5. Through workshops with diverse groups, deep and uncertain trends of change and how they could interact to shape alternative scenarios of how we govern ourselves in 2022 are identified and developed. At a final workshop, participants chose the most plausible yet challenging set of driving forces and scenarios for Phase Two.

### *Phase Two (Nov 2012)*

6. The scenarios from Phase One will be interpreted through various art forms and presented to the public at the National Library Building from 8–14 November 2012. Local theatre group, Drama Box, will produce this immersive arts experience, using civic arts engagement processes, to evoke personal views and stories about how we govern ourselves over the next 10 years. The public will be invited to write their views and leave them at exhibits, join participatory theatre, and complete a survey. The performance will also be available online.

### *Phase Three (Jan 2013)*

7. The responses evoked through Phase Two will go towards developing a map of political attitudes in Singapore. The results will be presented at the Singapore Perspectives Conference on 21 January 2013.

## **Sector Workshops**

8. A series of seven workshops were conducted over June and July 2012. These workshops involved diverse groups and sought to identify deep and uncertain trends of change that would affect governance in Singapore from now till 2022. These trends were used to develop alternative scenarios of how we would govern ourselves in 2022.

9. A primer was created to aid the participants in the workshops. A video presenting the main ideas from the primer was also made and shown during the workshops.

### **Primer**

10. [The Primer](#) was written to provide an introduction to some of the issues in governance and the theoretical debates on these issues. It also introduced ideas from other countries about governance.

11. It started with a discussion of the possible internal and external challenges for Singapore over the next decade. These challenges might present themselves either singularly or in concert with each other. Among these possible challenges were social problems, Singapore's resource constraints, security issues, the emergence of "disruptive technologies" and geopolitical and development challenges.

12. Potential social challenges that Singapore might face in the next 10 years include an aging population, increasing social inequalities, and the emergence of divisive cultural fault lines.

13. Singapore could also problems securing a stable supply of food, water and energy, and in maintaining her supply chains.

14. Security issues that could affect Singapore include an epidemic or pandemic, terrorism – to both Singapore's physical and online infrastructure, and threats to Singapore's environmental sustainability. The increasing use of social media, a positive trend if used responsibly, can also make it easier for cyber-bullying, identity theft and fraud to be carried out. The same networks that allow civic interest groups to co-ordinate campaigns and plan events may also allow terrorist networks and anarchists to plan and carry out attacks.

15. "Disruptive technologies" are technological developments that displaces an earlier entrenched technology and creates a new market and a corresponding network of social and technological resources to support it. This tests a country's ability to successfully adapt to and if necessary, regulate these technologies.

16. Lastly, geopolitical tensions and non-state security challenges will have an implication on Singapore's international position, internal resilience and strategic interests.

17. Next, the primer it explored different governance systems and philosophies. It contrasted majoritarianism and proportional representation governance systems, and discussed how the civil service, civil society and business interacted. It also covered theories on the role of the media and a country's national identity in societies. It ended with a discussion of theories on the social compact and the welfare state.

## Primer Video

18. [The Primer Video](#) was created based on the information presented in the Primer. It aimed to represent some of the main arguments concerning the focal question of “How will we govern ourselves in 2022?”.

19. The video ends by highlighting that we all have a part in shaping Singapore’s governance

*The choices we make in the various roles we play will shape the kind of society we become – how policies are made, how our leaders are elected, and how we address challenges that Singapore faces.*

*What’s the Singapore you imagine?*

*Welcome to the conversation.*

20. The sector workshops featured the groups shown below. Click on the name of each sector workshop to view its notes.

- [Young Singaporeans \(21–22 June\)](#)
- [Civil Society \(25–26 June\)](#)
- [Arts, Culture and Media \(2–3 July\)](#)
- [Academics and Public Intellectuals \(5–6 July\)](#)
- [New Citizens \(16–17 July\)](#)
- [Business \(19–20 July\)](#)
- [Public Service \(23–24 July\)](#)

21. In each workshop, the participants were divided into teams that each created at least one set of scenarios based on at least two driving forces. Each set of scenarios comprised at least three different scenarios, with each scenario describing a separate and unique world. At the end of the workshop, the participants voted for the set of scenarios that was most plausible and challenging. The selected set of scenarios were then presented at the final workshop, which all the participants from the sector workshops were invited to attend.

## Final Workshop

22. At the [final workshop](#) held from 15–16 August, participants were asked to divide themselves into three work streams. The first work stream focused on writing scenarios; the second on identifying wild cards and the third on identifying orthodoxies (in thinking about governance in order to reassess them). Each workstream included members from the each of the sector workshops.

23. The Scenarios Group were further divided into three teams — Scenarios Teams A, B and C, and produced three sets of scenarios in total, two through the deductive approach and one using the inductive approach. In total, 40 sets of scenarios were created over all the workshops. For a quick overview of the scenarios, please [click here](#) .

## **Wild Cards**

24. A wild card is a low probability, unexpected event that would have a significant impact on the focal concern of how we govern ourselves in 2022. Scenario processes are oriented around plausible driving forces, but unexpected events can have a major impact on the future. A wild card exercise is therefore a useful complement to scenario planning.

25. The Wild Cards Group identified 21 wild cards. Among these wild cards, those that focused on social tensions, social movements and immigration were the most dominant. This was followed by wild cards about security, which dealt with external instability, cyber-attacks, global warming and Singapore's water supply. The third most dominant were the political wild cards, followed by the economic/financial wild cards.

## **Orthodoxies**

26. An orthodoxy is a theory, assumption, doctrine or practice that is widely shared or accepted or believed to be true by members of a community. Our understanding of the future is often based on orthodoxies and articulating these orthodoxies helps us question the assumptions used in our scenarios.

27. The Orthodoxies Group identified 11 orthodoxies. Among these orthodoxies, most were on Singapore's identity, politics and economic strategy. This was followed by orthodoxies that dealt with social policies and the values behind these policies.

28. At the end of this, workshop participants reconvened to share the output of the Scenarios, Wild Cards and Orthodoxies Groups. The participants then voted for the most challenging and plausible set of scenarios, which would then be presented at the Immersive Arts Experience held from 8–14 November.

29. There was a lot of discussion about whether only one set of scenarios should be presented, as some participants felt that at least two separate sets of scenarios should be used. However, the IPS Prism Team and the facilitators explained that it would only be practicable for the team to work on one set of scenarios, which itself would comprise three or four different worlds. The IPS Prism Team would also incorporate elements from the two other sets of scenarios that were produced at the final workshop into the set of scenarios presented to the public.

30. The output from the workshops would also be placed online, so that the public could see that there was a much richer discussion at the workshops which extended beyond the three scenarios presented at the Immersive Arts Experience.

## THE PRISM SCENARIOS

31. The IPS Prism Team has fleshed out the selected set of scenarios from the final workshop. Wild cards, orthodoxies and elements from the other sets of scenarios that were produced at the final workshop were included in the final set of scenarios — The Prism Scenarios. The Prism Scenarios are also available in [Malay](#) and [Mandarin](#).

### **Driving Forces**

32. With the completion of Phase One of IPS Prism, the following have emerged as the most plausible yet challenging set of driving forces and scenarios for Singapore in 2022.

33. These are driving forces that may shape how we govern ourselves over the next 10 years, the central question of the IPS Prism project. The IPS Prism team and participants identified three driving forces as bearing the greatest uncertainty yet the most potential influence on this question.

### **Credibility of the Government — Sense of Trust or Distrust**

34. The first driving force is the public's view of the credibility of government and its motives for governing. At one end of the spectrum, the population has a high level of trust in the government and national institutions, believing the government knows best and does its best for the people. At the other is uncertainty about its competence and distrust as to whether it acts for the common good. This trend affects the public's willingness to comply with the rules and policies of the government.

### **Society's Definition of Success — Material or Non-material Social Values**

35. The second driving force is the value system of society in Singapore — how it defines its goals and therefore, success. While there will always be different views in society at any one point in time, the question is what the dominant view is at the time. This is in turn determined by social, economic, political and cultural factors. At one extreme, success is defined by economic rewards and material wealth. At the other, success is defined by how well social and moral values such as justice, fairness, egalitarianism, liberty and self-reliance are given expression in society. This trend affects how people want the country to be governed and what they want it to achieve.

### **Distribution of Help and Rewards — “The Winners” or “The Rest”**

36. The third driving force is how or who public policy and the social compact are designed to benefit. At one extreme, policies are broad-based, address the concerns and needs of the man-in-the-street, developing the human potential of all. At the other extreme is a system that privileges a segment of the population — perhaps an elite or those considered to have the potential to make the most significant contribution to the community and the country. The argument is that providing more help to this special segment to realise their potential will create a multiplier effect to benefit the common good. This trend affects the design and implementation of public spending

and incentives as well as regulatory frameworks of the private sector enforced by the government.

### **Scenarios**

37. The Prism Scenarios are alternative stories of how we might govern ourselves over the next 10 years, built on the three key driving forces cited above. None are utopian or dystopian. Each can be viewed as a mix of positive and negative outcomes as the driving forces interact and precipitate change in governance in Singapore by 2022.

38. The starting point or context for all the scenarios are first, that the world is facing a global recession and the prospect of low growth or uncertain economic conditions for many years to come. This sort of uncertainty as well as its attending political and geopolitical effects is something Singapore has faced. Its ability to adapt to this has been built-up over the years. The working assumption here is that it is this internal, domestic capacity that will determine how the country will respond to the external conditions. The second aspect of the context for the scenarios is that there is a great deal of discussion about how the country is being governed among residents. The third is that the public is holding the Prime Minister of the day to the promise of focusing government efforts on developing Singapore as a “home”, with a “heart” and to “hope” of a better life for Singaporeans.



39. The first scenario is called “SingaStore.com”. Here, the public’s trust in the government strengthens as it prioritises economic growth and ensures that growth translates to better-paying jobs for all Singaporeans — from year to year, people see improvements in their material well-being. To do this, the government reinforces its influence over all state agencies, business and even community associations to make Singapore more pro-business in its economic and social policies than ever.

40. The country’s leaders are not only the best and the brightest scholars, civil servants and army officers but also former business titans who now seek a different form of fulfilment through public service after earning their millions.

41. Private entrepreneurship thrives on its links to big business and emerging multinational companies in new business fields, including those in which the government had previously invested. Singapore is “the store and more” for everything from clean technology and pills to stave off Alzheimer’s, to robotics and immersive 3D gaming.

42. Globally, Singapore scores a double first — the highest GDP per capita, and the highest Gini coefficient, reflecting both the highest wealth and the significant income inequality in the population. The government gives relatively generous assistance to households in the lowest income brackets

through their breadwinners. It does so through vouchers, surplus-sharing programmes and insurance schemes that reinforce the role of the private sector or more broadly, the market, rather than undermine it. The government's fiscal position is kept on an even keel by making personal income taxes more progressive and by the increased corporate tax revenues generated by what is considered healthy economic growth for a mature economy. The slight increases in taxes are worth it, say those in the higher income rungs, for "The Singapore Premium". Enormous incentives are given to scientific, business, creative and sporting endeavours that promise the greatest impact on Singapore's economic future. Critics have said that this is "Singapore of the 2000s on steroids".

43. Pragmatic and realistic Singaporeans are reconciled to having foreign labour at the two extremes of the skills ladder. All sorts of incentives from the private sector and newly corporatised state entities are provided, so that demand on the physical and social infrastructure emerging from the growing population is spread out rather than bunched up at certain locations or peak hours — work, recreation and even seeing the doctor or pet groomer are priced differently at different points of the 24-hour day. There are incentives galore to foster pro-social behaviour from philanthropists — each tycoon has his or her favourite cause. For example, the man on the street can garner points (exchangeable for cash) for separating trash or eating more vegetables. It appears we can buy "good society" in Singapore too.

44. In reality, as the clock ticks towards 2022, society becomes more stratified but there are enough "rental flat to Sentosa Cove" stories to keep "The Singapore Dream" alive. Singapore attracts those who hunger for economic success; people who want more out of what money can buy, and more money for what they want out of life.



45. The second scenario is called "SingaGives.gov". This is where the public's sense of trust in a new government — formed by a splinter group from the former ruling party, the People's Action Party — strengthens with the government's emphasis on developing an egalitarian policy framework. This means it guarantees that all citizens have an equal right to cheap, heavily subsidised goods that it defines as being critical for social development, such as healthcare, education and housing. Social safety nets for unemployment and retirement are strengthened and made accessible to all, rich or poor. This is possible by spending a larger percentage of the investment returns on the national reserves than the past.

46. Pro-social values like egalitarianism, solidarity and human development give proper meaning to the role of the market, say the leaders of the day. They look at all the models of the social compact that they consider inclusive as they design theirs with the people. The government nationalises



providers of important public goods as this is deemed the most meaningful, socially responsible, one-off way of spending the national reserves. All this is possible because a new president who is of the same mind is voted in and agrees to a new framework for the use of the reserves.

47. Shaken by the political change, foreign businesses adopt a wait-and-see attitude about further investment in Singapore. This, together with the long-term global economic recession, results in low but inclusive economic growth. All the local factors of production will be used and more productively, with social investments made by the new government.

48. For some, however, the jury is still out on the new equilibrium. They ask if this new compact is fiscally sustainable — and if and when the giving will translate to real pay-offs. They worry that there is poor risk management now that the size of state reserves is diminished.

49. Also, while there is more confidence about the Singaporean identity, the solidarity among citizens becomes jealously guarded. The circle of trust and giving cannot be expanded infinitely, and membership has its privileges and outsiders are excluded, especially if all, including foreigners working in Singapore, are to be treated with equal dignity. There are fewer foreigners and immigrants admitted because those residing in Singapore have become more self-reliant and productive, and also due to populist political pressure.

50. However, if the social investments of SingaGives.gov bring about that second wind of economic vibrancy, Singapore will achieve a new paradigm of low and inclusive growth through greater welfarism. There is a large government-initiated campaign to reinforce this value system because this is not an ideological matter but an ethical one, says the Prime Minister. This is to counter the criticism that it is a “benevolent nanny state”.






51. The third scenario is called “WikiCity.sg”. The reference is to Wikipedia where there is no editor and therefore no central power, but is most critically self-activating and self-correcting by its own user-community — its citizens. This is Singapore after several political convulsions arising from years of being governed by leaders who were disconnected from ground sentiment. It was an incompetent government that lacked integrity. “Corruption in CPIB” is the most memorable headline of the decade. Trust in a central government is so low among the people in WikiCity.sg that they will not let it regulate, manage or control their lives. A coalition government is elected but it is mired in policy gridlock, which further diminishes people’s trust in it. The broad political consensus is that the state should take care of foreign relations, trade relations, maintain law and order. It should also keep the other burdens on the people, such as taxes and regulations, as light as possible. Critics call it a “donut state”.

52. In this environment where there is low trust in the government, people turn to a system of community self-help around business interests, professions, religion, villages of origin, recreational pursuits and various other social causes to bring meaning to their lives and provide for their practical needs. The trust in their self-chosen circles of friendship, identities, networks and social production is therefore, high. These communities create organisations — from private profit-driven five-star providers to social enterprises and free services like charity hospitals — to meet the needs of their members' and even the public at large. It is a "groupon world" where group-buying to enjoy leverage and economies of scale is mainstream practice; so is group-bartering and many other forms of social innovation enabled by developments in information technology.

53. This is a place where people take things into their own hands within the minimum bounds of law and order. Who would have thought that the investments in education, re-skilling and the basic governance DNA of the disciplined People's Action Party government of the past have put the people in good stead to govern themselves? High net-worth individuals of the global Singapore diaspora return home to invest in promising enterprises, attracted by the bets in R&D and technological innovation that they can make. They are also attracted by the spare productive capacity that exists because many the traditional multinational corporations upped and left during the political transition.

54. Turning a virtue out of a vice, the people of WikiCity.sg enjoy the full expression of their identities, passion and potential — this is a venture capital and venture community city. It is, people say, finally a nation defining an exciting destiny for itself. Naysayers ask if this situation is sustainable. Will WikiCity.sg be plagued by mediocrity and in-fighting in the absence of a strong government? Is it merely a loose collection of walled cities and tribes, and if so, how then is it a nation? Or will the competition result in further innovation? The beauty of the situation is that all views are welcomed.

Table 1. Abridged Scenarios

 SingaStore.com	 SingaGives.gov	 WikiCity.sg
Pro-Singapore scenario	Pro-Singaporean scenario	Pro-active scenario
<p>The public trusts the pro-business government as it prioritises economic growth and ensures better-paying jobs for Singaporeans.</p>	<p>The public trusts a new government that emphasises an egalitarian policy framework, promoting pro-social values, egalitarianism, solidarity and human development.</p>	<p>A coalition government is elected but public trust in government is low; no one central power dictates; this is a self-activating and self-correcting community.</p>
<p>Government organises businesses, employees and even community organisations.</p> <p>Strong government support goes to scientific, business, creative and sporting endeavours that promise the highest contribution to the country's economic future, and good jobs for all.</p> <p>Big businesses, multinational corporations and businesses in emerging technologies boost growth.</p>	<p>The government nationalises providers of important public goods in one-off spending of the reserves. National reserves are also used to fund universal social support and public services. A new president supports these uses of the national reserves.</p> <p>Foreign businesses adopt a wait-and-see attitude about making further investments in Singapore.</p>	<p>By broad consensus, government focuses on foreign and trade relations, defence, and maintaining law and order.</p> <p>Traditional multinational corporations leave during this political transition.</p> <p>High net-worth members of the Singapore diaspora invest in promising enterprises, attracted by the spare productive capacity after multinational corporations flee during the political transition.</p>
<p>Services targeted at the affluent, integral to being a global city, thrive. Market-reinforcing social support is given to the working poor through state vouchers and insurance schemes.</p>	<p>Services targeted at developing the human potential of all, thrive. They are of world-class quality and highly subsidised for locals. Fee-paying foreigners are given some access</p>	<p>Communities create profit-driven as well as free, not-for-profit services like charity hospitals to meet members' and the public's needs. This is a venture capital and</p>

	to them.	venture community city.
<p>Economic growth is strong.</p> <p>Income taxes are more progressive and tax revenues are healthy.</p> <p>Singapore has the highest GDP per capita and the highest Gini coefficient, reflecting high wealth as well as income inequality.</p>	<p>There is low but inclusive growth.</p> <p>National factors of production are used innovatively, but with the emphasis on the services sectors, there is a limit in some, like healthcare and education, as to how far productivity improvements can go.</p>	<p>Economic potential is high, although the economy is in a state of flux.</p> <p>Tax burdens and regulations are kept light. Critics call it a “donut state”.</p>
<p>Society becomes more stratified although there are enough “rental flat to Sentosa Cove” stories to keep “The Singapore Dream” alive. How socially sustainable is SingaStore.com? How is it possible to keep people hopeful that their lives will improve?</p>	<p>If new social investments bring the promised second wind of economic vibrancy, the country will achieve a new paradigm of low but quality growth through welfarism. What if it does not? How will SingaGives.gov be fiscally sustainable? What are the risks the country is open to with the erosion of its reserves?</p>	<p>Resembles a loose collection of walled cities and tribes, rather than a nation. How politically sustainable WikiCity.sg? Will it be plagued by mediocrity and in-fighting or will it result in further innovation and adaptation, even in protecting its national sovereignty?</p>

### IPS Prism Immersive Arts Experience

55. The next step of the process will be the Immersive Arts Experience, held at the National Library Building from 8-14 November 2012. It will be produced by local theatre group [Drama Box](#) and will present the three selected scenarios from the final workshop to the public through various art forms in a civic arts engagement process. Its goal is to evoke personal views and stories about how we in Singapore would govern ourselves over the next 10 years. The public will be invited to write their views and leave them at exhibits, join participatory theatre, and complete a survey. The performance will also be available online at [www.ips.sg/prism](http://www.ips.sg/prism).

56. The IPS Prism Survey will be conducted by [Cognitive Edge](#) and is specifically designed to allow respondents to share their stories about how Singapore will be governed in 2022. The responses will go towards

developing a map of political attitudes in Singapore and the results will be presented at the Singapore Perspectives Conference on 21 January 2013.

## APPENDIX 1: ABOUT THE SCENARIO PLANNING PROCESS

57. Scenarios are a way of developing stories of alternative futures based on different combinations of assumptions, facts and trends. They begin with a key concern and a definition of the time horizon that we are interested in. In the case of IPS Prism, the focal question is how Singapore will govern itself in the time horizon, the 10 years to 2022.

58. Scenarios are not forecasts or fortune-telling, but a tool to help us think about how the future *could be different* from what we commonly expect it to be. So we do not say that our scenarios *will* happen, only that they *could* happen, and we only say that they are plausible in the light of existing trends.

59. As they challenge current assumptions about the future, they help us think differently about the future and prepare us to have the capacity to adapt to the eventualities. Some use it to plan strategies to avoid certain futures.

60. Once we see several scenarios at the same time, we better understand our options or possibilities. In the case of IPS Prism there were three driving forces on which three scenarios were written. A good set of scenarios should all be equally plausible, and yet challenging. They should force us to think more deeply; help us to uncover and test our mental models, and re-perceive the world we find ourselves in.

61. In summary, scenarios serve four main functions:

- Help us to **anticipate change** by charting the critical uncertainties in our operating environment.
- Provide a **common language** for our organisation or community to explore its strategic concerns and to come to a consensus on what is important for the future.
- Serve to **challenge our mindsets**. By exploring how the future could turn out differently in different scenarios; scenarios help us to break out of the one-track mindset. While scenarios explore the world of facts and events they are actually aimed at shifting mental maps and the world of perceptions inside our heads.

62. While scenarios talk about the future, the purpose of scenarios is really to **illuminate the present**, to help us make better decisions and to prompt us to act now so as to position ourselves to succeed in the future.

63. Adapted from: “Synopsis on Scenario Planning” by Sequoia Group.

64. Sequoia Group can be contacted at [www.sequoia.com.sg](http://www.sequoia.com.sg).