

# **Thinking About the Future**

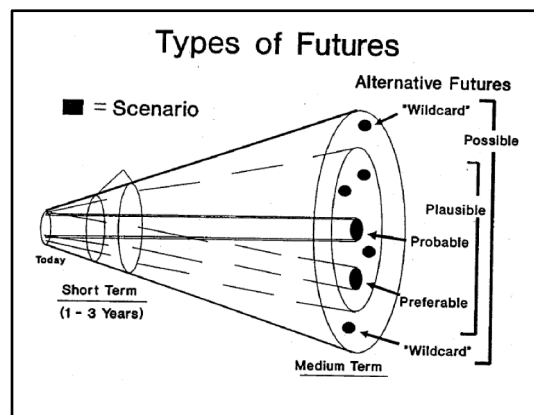
***"Thinking about the future is only useful and interesting if it affects what we do and how we live today." – James Robertson***

Good futures work is to some extent concerned with forecasting the future, but more importantly it is concerned with thinking about the future and in helping people to think and act more wisely about the future.

## Alternative futures

There is no such thing as THE future; communities face a range of alternative futures, many of which are shaped by our collective actions and the values that in turn shape our actions. Norman Henchey, a Canadian futurist, suggested that we think about four sorts of future:

- **Possible**, i.e., what may happen – can get pretty wild, shades of science fiction.
- **Plausible**, i.e., what could happen, given what we know about the way the world works.
- **Probable**, i.e., what we think will likely happen, often 'business as usual' but more so.
- **Preferable**, i.e., what we want to have happen – often quite different from what we think will probably happen.



## Imagining and designing a preferred future

Roy Amara, founder of the Institute for the Future, made two key points about the future: First, the futures field is concerned with creating new images of what is possible; second, good futures work increases people's participation in thinking about and creating their preferable future.

Clem Bezold, founder of the Institute for Alternative Futures, says "Vision is values projected into the future". So we should start by discussing what it is we value as a community: What sort of community do we want for ourselves, our children and their children? Then we need to start imagining or envisioning what such a community would be like - both physically and socially. Once we can imagine it, we can design and create it – together.

The preferable future is a liberating and empowering future, especially when it touches participants more creative capacities. It not only enables but encourages people to say this is the future that we value and that we want to create (the emphasis being on 'we'; this should be a collective process). The energy and creativity released in a "preferable futures" process can be quite astonishing.

***Welcome to thinking about the future of the Oaklands community***

**Trevor Hancock – [Thancock@uvic.ca](mailto:Thancock@uvic.ca)**