



Report

The Future of Sport and Recreation in New Zealand

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to encourage discussion among sport and recreation leaders in New Zealand about the need to engage futures thinking to adapt to a rapidly changing environment. The paper recognizes the generally risk adverse and conservative nature of the sport and recreation sector in New Zealand, the issue of 'presentism' and the paucity of international examples of futures thinking in sport and recreation, even though the landscape from within which it operates is rapidly evolving.

Recognising the sport and recreation sector may not be fit for the future, the Government agency for Sport and Recreation commissioned a futures process, hosting workshops involving a diverse representation of the sport and recreation sector. The workshops explored drivers of change, assumptions, and alternative futures, including a preferred future and the actions needed to move toward it. Discussions reflected a desire to change, but a difficulty with knowing how to. Identification of alternative futures, assumption challenge and examining worldviews assisted with broadening thinking. Five characteristics of a preferred future emerged from discussions, representing choices and decisions about who New Zealanders are and want to be as a society.

Working in partnership with Māori, empowering local decision-making, having a stronger relationship with the environment, building broader relationships, connections and networks, and building alignment around the preferred future were among the immediate actions the sport and recreation sector can take.

Keywords

Sport, recreation, three horizons, causal layered analysis, preferred future

Introduction

The sport and recreation sector in New Zealand (NZ) has typically reacted slowly to change. This is increasingly problematic given the speed and scale of change being experienced. Recognising this the Government Agency for Sport and Recreation, Sport NZ, commissioned a futures process to enable the sector to think about the future and better prepare for it, and in so doing, position it to be fit for purpose and regenerative.

The Futures process set aside space for longer term thinking about the drivers of change and implications for the sport and recreation sector. A collaborative multi-stakeholder process facilitated by Sport NZ occurred during the second half of 2020 to fast-track thinking about the future with others.

Environmental scans (Sport NZ, 2021) were used as the basis to explore drivers of change and people's assumptions, and different futures techniques were employed to create a baseline and alternative futures. This led to agreement on the desired characteristics of a preferred future and the challenges and opportunities for taking action to bring this future to life.

A 15-year horizon to 2035 was employed.

Literature Review

Futures-thinking activities, as reflected in futures-related reports or work programmes, appear rare in government sport and active recreation organisations.

The most recent futures reports were produced by or for:

- Sport England - Horizon scanning report (2021). This identifies the 15 trends thought to have the most impact on sport and physical activity to 2031, with the intent of informing Sport England’s 10-year strategy to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity.
- Sport Australia - The future of sport volunteering (2021). Consultation with a diverse collection of stakeholders identified a vision and resulting actions to improve the sustainability of volunteering in sport across Australia.
- French Inter-ministerial Directorate for Major Sports Events - French Sport Touch – Federating to win (2021). This is an analysis of the strategies of French sport actors on the international scene. It points out possible areas for improvement, particularly in the lead up to the 2024 Olympics.
- The Association of Summer Olympic International Federations - Future of global sport (2019). It identifies the global trends impacting the sports sector and the key challenges faced by sport and uses these and the viewpoints of a series of thought leaders to land on a vision for the future of sport to 2040.

Methodology

Four distinct phases were employed in this process (See Figure 1). The first phase focused on reviewing the environmental scans that identified the drivers of change and possible implications for sport and recreation. The second phase involved workshops to identify the most impactful drivers of change and explore some of the assumptions we hold about the emerging future. This helped craft a short narrative of a possible baseline future.

The third phase and set of workshops and associated reports explored alternative futures, before the final phase identified the preferred future and the actions needed to move toward it.

A wide diversity of stakeholders were engaged throughout the process to ensure a breadth and depth of view. This included thought leaders from across the sport and recreation sector, participants, and volunteers (age, ethnicity and gender diverse), and those from supporting sectors such as local and central government and academia. Specific focus was also given to the view of the indigenous Māori population recognising New Zealand’s commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its bi-cultural future.

There were two groups of workshop participants based on geographic convenience. These participants remained constant across all workshops. The workshops themselves were independently facilitated, involved significant discussion, and were 3-4 hours in duration.

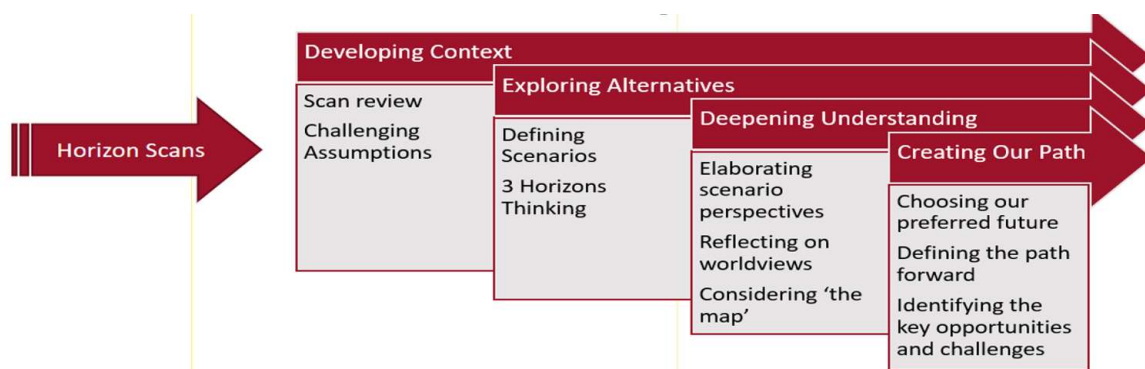


Fig. 1: Methodology

The Historical Importance of Sport and Recreation to New Zealand

Sport and recreation's perceived effectiveness in promoting health and instilling moral character has seen it endorsed by tribal, political, religious, educational, commercial, and sporting leaders throughout the past 150 years.

Central government initially had little involvement in sport and recreation, tending to adopt an arm's length relationship, and considering sport to be the responsibility of individuals and volunteer groups (Ryan, 2018). It was not until the election of the first Labour Government in 1935 that the State became actively involved with the passing of the Physical Welfare and Recreation Act 1937 - responding to concerns at the low level of fitness of young New Zealanders and implications this had for defence.

By contrast central government has been increasingly involved in sport and recreation since the 1970s, although support and philosophy fluctuated according to whether the government was led by the centre left or centre right. While the former supported strong involvement and sponsored the three key legislative milestones since the 1970s, the latter opposed any extension of government's welfare role within recreation and sport (although continued to support sport for the sport specific benefits).

The growing interest by government in sport and recreation was fuelled by its professionalisation, the growth of broadcast coverage, the weakening of physical education in schools and lifestyle changes such as increased trading hours and more women in the workforce.

More recently, physical, mental, and social cohesion challenges, and a desire to improve general wellbeing have focused government interest.

Creating A Baseline Future

Participants from a range of sector organisations developed a baseline future through looking at current trends from the environmental scans and the possible implications through to 2035. A Three Horizons approach (Sharpe, 2013) was used to look at what is dominant today, what seeds of the future are already present, and what other changes might occur that will influence the future.

This method was used as it seeks several perspectives on the future. It helps capture different "voices" about the future – those currently managing the here and now, those with different visions of the future, and those interested in trying new things.

Two strong themes emerged following participant discussion. These were about recognizing different mindsets and struggling with how to break away from business as usual. Discussions often reflected not only a desire to change, but a demand to change. The key themes are captured in Figure 2.

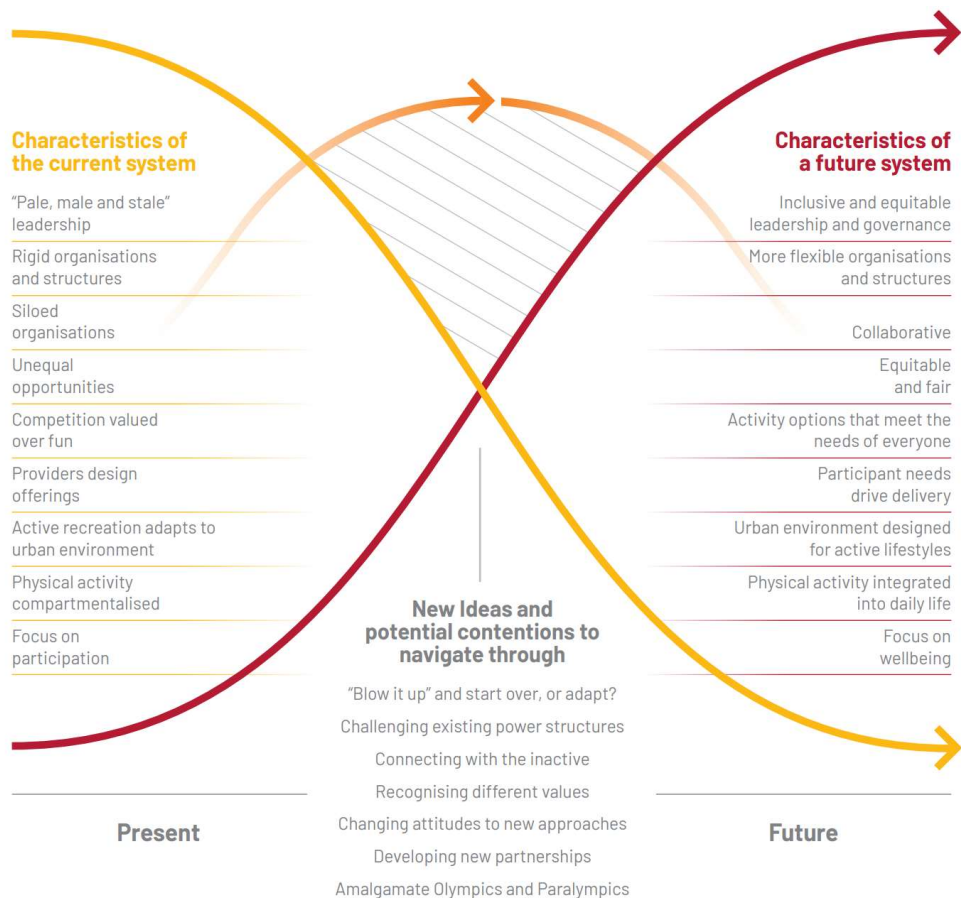


Fig. 2: Three Horizon key themes

Reflections from three horizon’s workshop

In the workshops there was often agreement about the present and the future but relatively few new ideas appeared in the transitional state, suggesting more entrepreneurial minds may have been needed. A valuable aspect of the Three Horizons method is to stimulate discussion about whether new ideas and signs of change help keep the existing system viable, or whether they will (with a bit more time and support) help the transition toward a desired future state (Sharpe, 2013). This wasn’t examined closely during the sessions. However, one participant subsequently reflected “How will change actually happen? There are many consistent themes, but most have been around for some time.” The contentions weren’t always explored either. For example, if it is better to “blow up the system and start over”, what are the benefits and risks of this? There often wasn’t time in the workshops to consider this, or other ideas, collectively.

The sport and recreation sector today – horizon 1

There is a consensus within the sector that it is currently struggling. This is due to declining participation numbers, funding constraints, demands on time, and a focus on competition rather than participation.

Low levels of participation in traditional sports

Levels of participation have tended to decline over the past few decades. There is a marked drop-off in participation when young people leave school, and some groups (such as girls, women, and members of some ethnic communities) have much lower levels of engagement with sport and recreation than others. Participation can increase later in life.

However, workshop discussions noted that some sports have seen increased participation in informal, non-membership-based activities. Other physical activities, such as Kapa Haka, have also grown in popularity but are often overlooked because they are considered “non-traditional” by European definitions of sport and recreation.

Changing lifestyles and motivations

Participation is also affected by lifestyle and motivation. Motivation or opportunities to be more physically active can be reduced by more sedentary lifestyles, fewer active transport options, health status, and less healthy diets.

Needing multiple jobs to provide the basics, pressures to work outside of office hours, and having to look after others can reduce the time available for active recreation.

Increased competition for leisure time can come from a growing focus on academic attainment, church, and community service, and from digital technologies.

Accessibility

Accessibility influences participation. Difficulties in getting to or accessing facilities, events, or places can lead to reduced levels of activity or enjoyment. This is exacerbated through poor or expensive public transport.

Monocultural design and delivery

Māori find that a monocultural view of sport and recreation leaves Māori activities unrecognised and unsupported.

Some find active recreation and sporting organisations are not as welcoming to people with different experiences and from different backgrounds and tend to be designed for and controlled by people with narrow interests. Workshop participants observed that organisations often had “hegemonic hierarchies where the pale, stale, male/female typically have the power, influence, and money”.

Governance

There is inconsistency in the quality of governance and oversight across the sector. Poor governance and oversight challenge the integrity of, and trust in, many local, national, and international organisations.

Current national sport and recreation organisations are based on structures designed for two to three generations ago. This suggests that a complete reset is required.

Organisations can also be too risk averse and less open to new ways of doing things. This leads to siloed systems lacking shared outcomes and anchored to tradition and inertia.

Economic

For some participants, the costs (fees, gear, travel, etc) can be too high. Funding and memberships are often not enough to keep some local organisations viable. This can lead to organisations placing too much focus on securing funding at the expense of meeting the needs and aspirations of their communities.

Costs for maintaining or building facilities are viewed as substantial.

Changes in the media environment, and business models have made securing sponsorships for many local and national competitions increasingly challenging.

Workforce

Many organisations depend on volunteers but, as much of the population ages, this base of support is declining. Other commitments also put pressure on volunteer involvement.

Opportunities for personal development and career progression in the sector can often be limited.

Baseline future

The “baseline future” showed a future of a sport and recreation sector and system that was struggling to cope with multiple changes and uncertain how to meet the challenges it is facing. A dominant theme is one of increasing diversity across a wide range of areas including:

- Leaders and people designing and delivering activities, particularly Te Ao Māori approaches
- Ethnicity
- Gender diversity and fluidity of participants and providers
- Time available, and timing, for sport and recreation
- Motivations to remain or become active. These include health and wellness, social and community connections, economic, and competitive motivations
- Range of sport and recreation activities.

Examples of some of the changes, lack of change, and consequences in the baseline future are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Baseline future changes and consequences

| Levels of activity and demand | Consequences |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater competition for leisure time • Disruption to traditional ways of working • Virtual sports become more popular • Welfare support requiring commitment to being active | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Continued increase in sedentary lifestyles</i> • <i>Inequalities of access, participation and representation remain</i> • <i>Limited improvement in wellbeing</i> • <i>Loss of many traditional clubs and organisations</i> • <i>Scaled back on-virtual international sporting events</i> • <i>Sector struggles to maintain integrity</i> • <i>Growing distrust in government through fear of becoming a “nanny state”</i> • <i>Individual and small group physical activities more popular</i> • <i>Greater locally led initiatives</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced central and local government funding • Other sources of funding actively being sought by organisations • More local design and delivery of activities | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer base continuing to decline | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More physical activity outside • More frequent disruptions due to weather events | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technologies improving some aspects of health but not others • Technologies continuing to improve and undermine social interactions • Sports struggling to keep pace with illegal performance enhancement | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More polarized political environment • Focus on short-term decision-making | |

There are probably no surprises in the baseline future scenario. It reflects what many people and organisations in the sector are contemplating now – how do they compete with virtual sports; how are they going to deal with climate change; how are they going to ensure they have adequate participants and funding levels going forward; how do they address current inequities in the system; and what the long-term effects of Covid-19 will be.

Going Deeper

The second set of workshops used a technique called “causal layered analysis” (Inayatullah, 1998) to examine what is below the outcomes and experiences that were identified.

The method starts with the current state and works downward, using an iceberg model, to identify the systems that shape the sector. Groups did this starting from a range of perspectives including women and girls, young people (see Figure 3), and sector leaders (see Figure 4). This identified a variety of issues and led to robust discussions about the current challenges identified in earlier discussions and what created them.

Two examples are illustrated below.

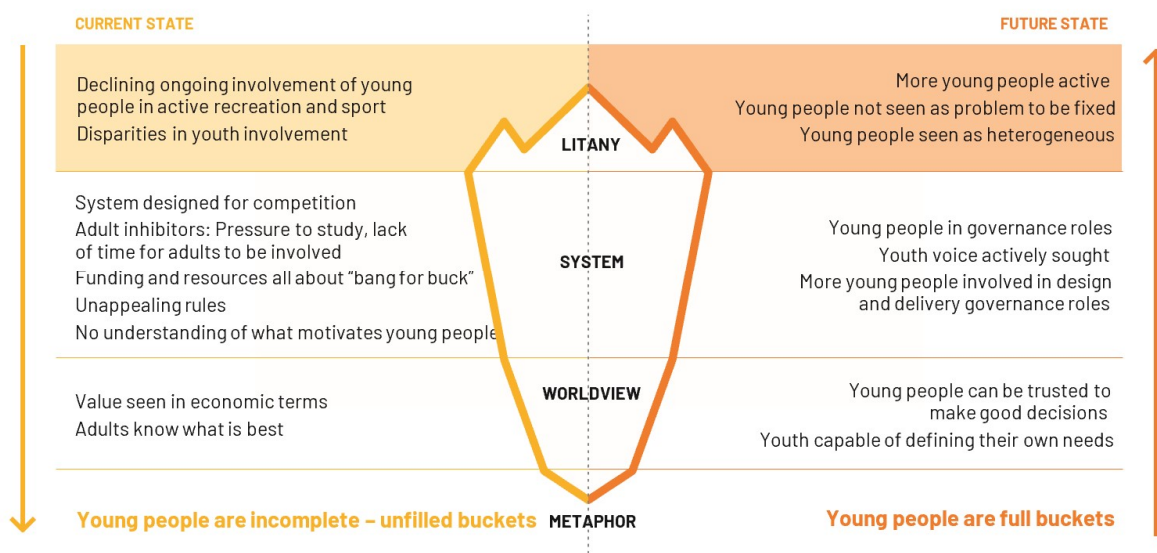


Fig. 3: Perspective on young people

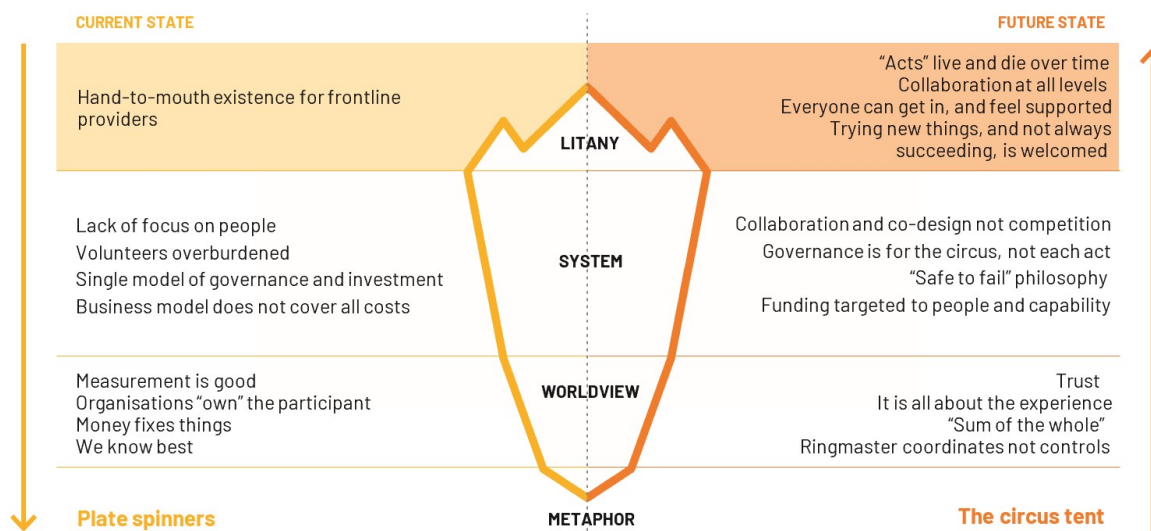


Fig. 4: Sector leader perspective on capacity of sector organisations

These discussions identified critical issues that need to be addressed to create a more resilient, agile, innovative, and inclusive sport and recreation system. They identified systemic issues and the need to incorporate other views to address these.

All the groups described the current sport and recreation system as neither inclusive nor equitable. Common themes about the current state were the dominance of traditional hierarchical power structures, poor representation of diversity in leadership, and competition or excellence being favoured over participation.

Some organisations reported struggling to deliver with the funding they receive, having a precarious “hand to mouth” existence.

In the future all groups want to see greater participation and inclusion, through all levels of involvement. This includes being more accepting and supportive of different people and activities, sharing power and decision making, and being more accepting of uncertainties and of doing things differently.

There is agreement of the need to move past mindsets like “white men make better leaders” and “command and control” to ensure there is a more responsive, diverse, and inclusive sector.

- The common themes that emerged in the discussions were the need:
- for greater trust
- for a common purpose
- for better defined roles and responsibilities
- to challenge embedded mindsets based on tradition and identity
- to introduce different power structures and decision-making to genuinely embrace inclusion and diversity.

Assumptions

The third set of workshops explored the assumptions people hold about the future. It was acknowledged that for all assumed futures, there are several plausible alternatives. Using key drivers of change, Table 2 contrasts the assumptions from the baseline future with an alternative future.

Table 2: Contrast of baseline assumptions with an alternative future

| <i>Driver</i> | <i>Assumed future</i> | <i>Alternative future</i> |
|--|---|---|
| Pandemic recovery | As vaccines become more widely distributed and border restrictions ease, people will regain confidence and international travel will revert to pre-pandemic levels within 2-3 years. | Financial stress on travel sector becomes unsustainable as pandemic lingers and airlines fail. New variants emerged that undermined vaccination programme, businesses aggressively adopt remote operations, and fuel prices climb as economic demand returns. |
| Human enhancement | Technology will accelerate to provide solutions to most of the challenges of human limitation, particularly those of old age. Current integrity management frameworks will adapt to emergent technology challenges. | Disillusionment sets in as promise of many of the more radical technologies fail to live up to the initial hype. More tangible interventions like augmented biomechanics are freely available to those who can afford them but are primarily used for extending working life. |
| Growing mental health challenges | Diabetes, obesity, mental health trends continue to worsen as lifespans continue to increase and individuals make inappropriate dietary choices and maintain sedentary lifestyles. | A failure to return to post Covid normal further impacts mental health that is now widely regarded as the country's biggest issue. Young people are presenting in increasing numbers and Māori continue to be over-represented. |
| Understanding and response to the changing climate | Climate impacts will have only moderate impact on sport and recreation in the medium term. Broader concerns remain focused on carbon-intensive industries like fossil-fuel extraction. | Publication of Climate Change Commission recommendations (2021) is the turning point for climate awareness and action. Every sector is now under scrutiny for its environmental performance. |
| An ageing population | Reduction of participation/volunteer support, particularly regionally. Government seeks solutions to the growing cost of keeping the ageing population healthy. | Skill shortages is an issue as the number of new workforce entrants fails to match retirees leaving. Government struggles to deal with the changing financial balance between taxation of the employed and demands of elderly pension, health, and care provision. |
| Growing individualism | Some sports failure to adapt to the increasingly non-binary self-identity of younger people. This and self-organised physical activities, impacts participation in traditional sports. | NZ's diverse future and bi-cultural foundation enables new forms of dialogue and understanding to emerge. A deeper recognition that dominant historical perspectives can be adapted has led to greater resilience. |

Going Wider

Alternate futures

The fourth set of workshops endeavoured to employ the Manoa Method inspired scenarios (Schultz, 1993) by first exploring the implications of, and interconnections between, trends. Table 3 shows how the drivers of change can be combined to create a variety of different futures.

Table 3: Combining implications to create alternate future

| <i>Driver</i> | <i>Potentially different outcomes, that in combination create alternate futures.</i> | |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Education | Remains largely collegial / physical | Distributed learning through technology support |
| Population distribution | Concentrates and grows in cities. | A regional renaissance ('Zoom towns') |
| Modes of transport | Switch to active transport as car ownership drops. | High vehicle ownership remains (though electric). |
| Employment profile | The majority have multiple insecure jobs. | Secure employment available to all. |
| Data connectedness | Data tracking is ubiquitous. | Data strictly controlled and managed. |
| Climate change | Effective policy and relatively benign impacts. | Major disruption occurring with societal dislocation. |
| Financial support | Low economic growth constrains finance. | New economic ideas replace current deficit models. |
| Sport technologies | High performance sport reliant on new technologies. | Competitions based on human physical attributes. |
| Biotechnology development | Routine genetic engineering of humans. | Strict control of biotechnology remains. |
| Global connectedness | Global travel reverts to pre-COVID patterns. | As international travel becomes more difficult and expensive. |

For example, a future can be imagined where:

- There is a new model of education, heavily reliant on technology, that supports remote learning from childhood upwards in the home environment.
- International travel becomes more difficult and expensive, resulting in more competitions becoming virtual or remote, with audiences online rather than in-person.
- International sport is much more commercially focussed and much less about national representation. Top athletes are aligned to sponsors and compete in sports and leagues designed for digital distribution.

Four scenarios

Building on the workshop discussions, four short Manoa method inspired scenarios (Schultz, 1993) were developed looking ahead to the year 2035 (see Figure 5: Sport and recreation in 2035 – four scenarios).

The four scenarios differ in terms of the extent of change to the sector, and whether that change is driven from the top down or from the bottom up. They then focus on how the sector might respond.

Figure 5: Sport and recreation in 2035 – four scenarios

| Scenario 1 | Scenario 2 | Scenario 3 | Scenario 4 |
|---|---|---|--|
| Scenario 1 considers limited reform and increased influence of a central agency with a broader mandate. | Scenario 2 sees the sector being destabilized by more funding but lack of coordination. | Scenario 3 involves a constrained sector with a central agency being more of a coordinator than a controller. | Scenario 4 describes change driven from the bottom up, based on a strong set of shared values and purpose. |
| Headline | | | |
| A focus on the basics | Too much innovation | Winding back growth | A holistic approach |
| Driving forces | | | |
| Economic recovery Wellbeing Technologies | New economic model Increased funding Innovation | New political model Economic constraints Climate impacts | Values Culture Economics |
| Priorities | | | |
| Funding and policies are targeted to reducing inequalities in physical activity and health | Increase innovation to improve participation | Constrained growth, more careful management | Integrating physical activity with education, culture and environment |
| Governance response | | | |
| Centralised control, bureaucratic New community partnerships | Centralised funding, decentralised control Fragmented and uncoordinated regional organisations | Central coordination, decentralised decision-making Technocratic | No central control Distributed participatory decision-making |
| Physical activity impacts | | | |
| Self-organised activities increase Traditional sports in decline | Moderate but unequal increases DIY physical activity common Traditional sports in decline | Participation improves Sports depend more greatly on sponsorships or patronage | Physical activity significantly increased, and integrated with education, culture and environment |
| Quality of life | | | |
| Some still struggle, while others doing well | Angst and inequalities common due to pace of change | Stronger sense of community connection | Wellbeing improved |
| Challenges or tensions | | | |
| Building trust and partnerships Overcoming bureaucracies Changes deferred | Adapting to rapid change Coordination | Coordinating rather than controlling Over quantifying | Dismantling old structures Building trust and partnerships Developing a common vision |

Scenario 1 – A focus on the basics

New Zealand is still a country of haves and have nots. Socio-economic inequalities have reduced somewhat, thanks to a greater focus over the last decade on regional economic development. However, a series of crises over the last decade has forced successive governments into a more reactive and incremental state, rather than creating substantive change.

Physical activity has increased mainly through walking and cycling due in part to improved track and trail networks created by job creation schemes. Private vehicle numbers are also declining, stimulating urban redesign, and enhancing active transport.

Technological advances are enhancing elite performance, but the costs introduce greater barriers. International regulation and enforcement of technologies in sports is inconsistent, but selected performance enhancing drugs have been legalised. Digital technologies are a double-edged sword for other physical activities too, helping some remain active or improve their activity, while for others they reduce activity. Data privacy laws give control of most personal information to individuals or whānau.

Climate change has not yet had a great impact in Aotearoa New Zealand. Pollution is declining due to improved agricultural practices, urban renewal, and the reduction in private vehicles. National and local initiatives are improving, or at least maintaining, many natural environments.

Implications for the sector:

- What is going to define “success” for the sector in the future?
- What functions does a central agency need to focus on to help the sector improve both adaptability and levels of physical activity?
- How can trust and partnership be built with non-traditional providers?

Scenario 2 – Too much innovation

New monetary policies have increased spending, with government debt less of a constraint. This has led to greater decentralisation and a rush of new investments and initiatives that have often been poorly coordinated and monitored.

Inequities have often increased as systems struggle to adapt.

The sector has responded in two ways. Some organisations doubled down on what they knew. They upgraded their facilities, increased marketing, and boosted salaries and their workforce.

Others became more entrepreneurial, taking more risks. As a result, novel practices blossomed, and more individuals have set up their own physical activity consultancies or start-ups.

The sector has fragmented because more people are choosing to organise physical activities by themselves or are using personalised on demand “physical activity as a service” providers.

Technologies have had significant effects on competitive and high-performance sport. New training methods, materials and devices have enhanced performances, with international regulatory oversight improving but not perfect. Athlete performances are continually monitored to detect use of unapproved enhancements.

Some technological enhancements have caused a shift towards entertainment and spectacle rather than physical athleticism as sports strive to attract participants, audiences, and sponsorships.

eSports attract those seeking more traditional athletic skills and competition.

Implications for the sector:

- What roles could “creative destruction” play in the sector’s future?
- How could greater funding or innovation best be used to improve outcomes for all?

Scenario 3 – Winding back growth

A sustainable “green economy” has not emerged. Instead, consumption and CO2 emissions have continued to increase.

As a result, there is now strong public and political will to rapidly slow economic growth and environmental harm.

Consolidation, circular economies (which aim to eliminate waste and continual use of resources), and

accountability are the dominant themes. This has led to governance by technical experts and data.

Nearly everything gets measured, modelled, and modified. Therefore, socio-economic inequities have been greatly reduced.

Climate impacts are not yet severe, but proactive managed retreats and improved urban infrastructure is underway. This has reduced access to some places but opened others for active recreation and sport.

Regional and community recreation and sports organisation have continued to consolidate and work together. Old malls and parking buildings have been repurposed to house many sport, recreation, and community organisations.

Implications for the sector:

- How could organisations adapt to a more constrained future?
- In what ways could more technological approaches improve or undermine participation and experiences?
- How can trust and partnerships be improved when more decisions are data driven?

Scenario 4 – A holistic approach

A series of periodic crises that hit Taranaki over the last three decades created a regional economic slump. Combined with increasingly frequent subtropical storms, this led many in the region to increasingly value their surroundings, both the physical and cultural dimensions.

It energised a plan to integrate education, health, culture, and physical activities with the environment. A system based not around clubs and codes but place and values.

This was a grass roots movement driven by vision and inspiration, rather than data or something forced upon people and communities by those in power

Early signs of success through changes in attitudes and achievements built the momentum locally and nationally.

Many other regions are developing their own “environmental and cultural anchors” that physical activities and communities reorient around.

The philosophy centres around breaking down traditional power structures and ways of working.

Uses of technologies in sport and other physical activities are approved if they support the principles of the holistic approach.

Implications for the sector:

- How can values-based approaches be nurtured at local levels?
- Should organisations be planning for their own demise?

Preferred Future

After considering the “going deeper” results and alternative futures and what these might mean, participants turned their attention to what future they would like to see.

Five characteristics emerged from discussions and refinement across all the workshop teams, representing a consensus about what matters most to New Zealanders. They were identified through deep consideration of the alternative futures, and consideration of the characteristics of each that were attractive, and those that were to be avoided.

They are represented in Figure 5 below as pou – signposts to the future. They include:

- Mana Taurite – building a just society that is inclusive, equitable and safe
- Mana Tangata – empowering communities and devolving decision-making to community providers
- Mana Māori – Honouring Te Tiriti by working in genuine partnership, protecting Māori culture, and promoting culturally distinctive ways of being active
- Oranga Taiao/Oranga Tangata – improving the relationship of people with their environment by safeguarding natural resources, enabling universal access, and mitigating and adapting for climate change
- Mauri ora – promoting the wellbeing of New Zealander’s by acknowledging the value that physical activity brings to our wellbeing and nation’s identity.

These pou represent choices and decisions about who New Zealanders are and want to be as a society – recognising that while they cannot know the future, they can choose how they want to be and respond to what comes at them.

These pou were extensively tested and agreed. This involved returning to the participants involved in the process and extending consultation and discussion to the wider sport and recreation community.

The pou are now being used within the sector to guide decision making and strategy development. This will continue to be encouraged by Sport NZ.

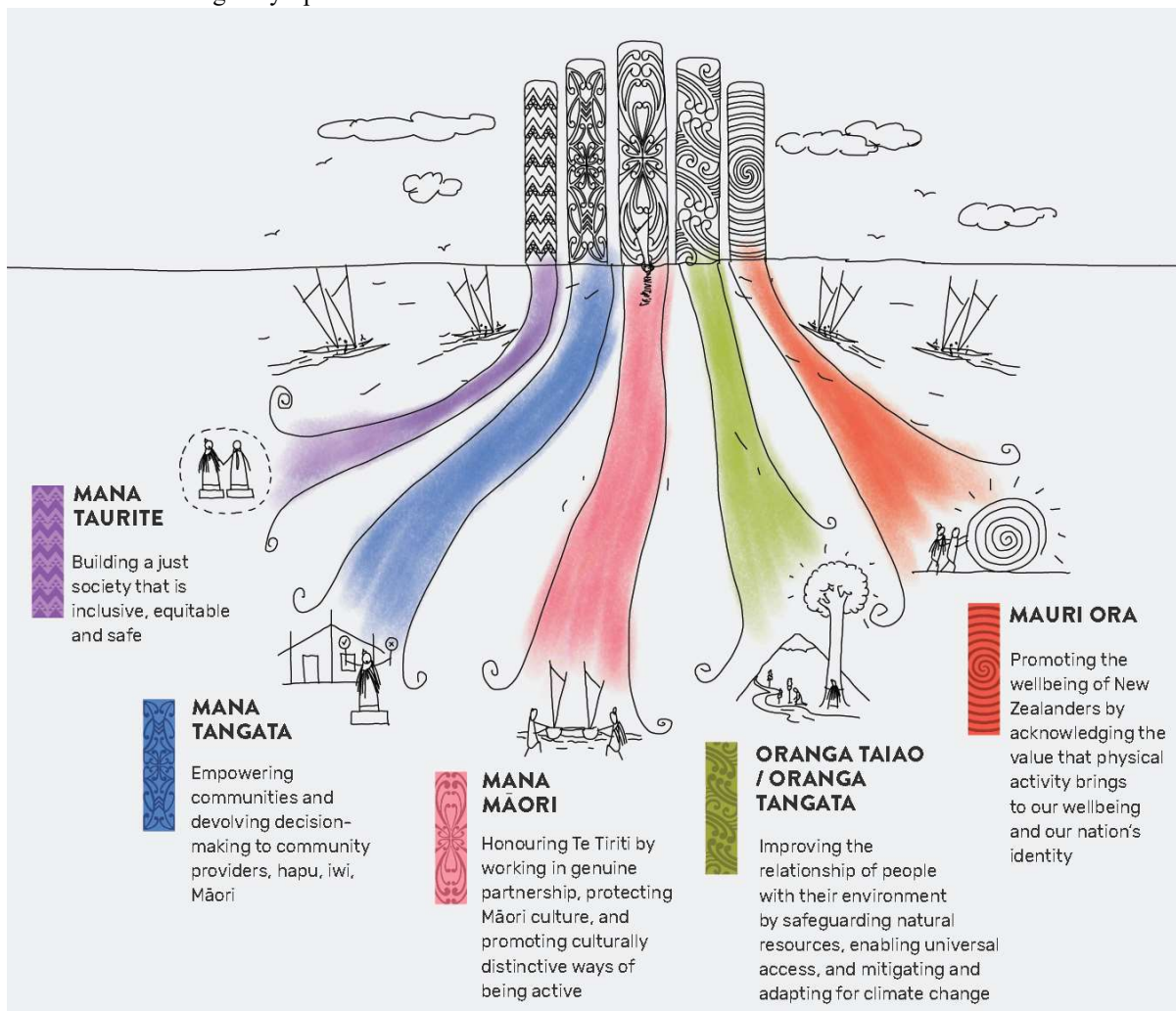


Fig. 5: Characteristics of preferred future

Strategies used to realise preferred future

The overall aim of allowing all New Zealanders to focus more on their wellbeing through sport and recreation is critical in both the current environment and in the future.

However, achieving inclusion, openness, and redistribution of power through a wider network has profound implications. It requires deep structural and cultural changes, and not solely in the sport and recreation sector.

How the sport and recreation sector might respond

Several key steps emerge for the sector to take to address the current challenges and future opportunities:

- **Mana Ōrite** - The sector must deliver on the Treaty Partnership to ensure Māori are engaged in all decision making across the sector to ensure the integrity of the partnership.
- **Mana Taurite** - There is equitable access to resource to ensure this reaches those currently excluded from the mainstream allocation. This will be challenging as it requires leadership courage from those who may need to relinquish power to people with the knowledge, relationships and skills to engage more broadly with New Zealand's diverse communities.
- **Overhaul Governance** - Current sport and recreational organisations are based on structures designed for two to three generations ago. A complete reset is required if the current low levels of trust are to be lifted.
- **Devolve Decisions** – Related to the points above is the need to move decision-making closer to those it affects. To achieve this effectively will require significant investment in distributed leadership and capacity building for some, and guidance from non- government organisations and community groups who are already proficient.
- **Adopt the perspective that physical activity is a human right** - The sector should aim to achieve the same understanding of its criticality as the health sector enjoys today. In a future world of uncertainty, wellbeing will be a key factor of resilience.
- **Recognise physical wellbeing as a fundamental component of daily life** - to ensure more holistic approaches are adopted across related sectors (e.g. transport policy; urban and rural planning, food policy, education etc).
- **Understand and overcome barriers** - Access to space, limitations of finance and ability, and pressures from a changing working world are conspiring to reduce physical activity for key population groups. The dynamic of this change is not well understood though, and research is required to ensure better targeting of resources.

How Sport NZ might respond

As the Crown agency for sport and recreation, Sport NZ has a significant role in responding to the current challenges and future opportunities. That said, it should not think it has to act alone or have all the answers. The futures workshops demonstrated that bringing people together from a range of organisations leads to deeper conversations about what needs to change and draws together the expertise needed to recommend collective action.

This is as much about what Sport NZ wants to become, as the actions it might take. Currently, Sport NZ might metaphorically be described as a bank - with an emphasis on growing funding and achieving a return on investment. It is commonly described as the Government funding agency for sport.

While this function is important, it currently overshadows Sport NZ's potential role as connector, facilitator, innovator, catalyst, advocate, enabler, learner, storyteller, and communicator. Sport NZ can reimagine and realise what it becomes and is known for.

The following actions should therefore be viewed as components toward Sport NZ realising this reimagined role:

- **Understanding the motivations and influences of being physically active** - A system's perspective would suggest physical inactivity is not the failing of an individual but rather that it is only through understanding inactivity as part of a larger set of influences – systemic structures - that people's inactivity can begin to be addressed. This will require Sport NZ to partner with experts in the field to advise, challenge and support our research agenda and messaging.
- **Understand where it can have greater leverage within our system** - Sport NZ's mandate means it is well placed to promote a system wide view, how its system interacts with other systems, and to identify common points of leverage. This could involve a greater emphasis on facilitating the flow of information, learning from innovating, influencing the rules that shape the system, promoting the big picture, facilitating alignment, building high trust relationships, and opening the boundaries of the system it wishes to impact – in addition to the current predominant focus on investing.
- **Working in partnership with Māori** - There is significant momentum across New Zealand toward

understanding and connecting with Te Tiriti o Waitangi Te o Māori. Sport NZ can continue to lead in its approach to partnering with Māori. This might include influencing governance models to ensure Māori are engaged in key decision making across the sector, establishing direct relationships with iwi, giving effect to a for Māori by Māori approach, and continuing to strengthen cultural competency.

- Build broader relationships, connections and networks - There is an opportunity for Sport NZ to broaden the physical activity conversation to better reflect New Zealanders' diverse ways and motivations for being physically active. This includes hearing from voices it might not normally hear from and connecting with entities we historically have not had a relationship with.
- Building alignment around common purpose and the bigger picture - Helping the sector see the larger system and promoting a common purpose is essential to building a shared understanding of the many complex problems faced, and in so doing, build collaboration and trust. The national focus on and promotion of wellbeing provides a strong point of potential alignment. Usefully, people, agencies, and sectors have been adapting themselves to align to wellbeing since the Government introduced it as a critical focal point in 2017.
- Empower local decision-making - By putting the community first and working with rather than on it, the approach encourages the building of local networks, leadership and ultimately ownership, and builds a common purpose for engaging. This approach will challenge Sport NZ's assumption that it cannot effectively engage at a local level given the volume of entities involved and will require a rethink of its engagement models.
- Greater innovation/experimentation/piloting of new ideas - Environments that encourage interactive communication and create new thinking and innovative ideas are also important for impacting systems. Solutions often emerge from innovating or trying things. This is about 'probing' the system and observing how it responds.
- Advocate for policies across the system - As a policy agency Sport NZ can better understand and influence 'rules' that inhibit its aspirations. Notably, this includes influencing policy that positions physical wellbeing as a fundamental component of daily life through more holistic approaches across related sectors. This is a meaningful way it could influence the system, and through it, behaviour change.
- Build understanding of intra and intergenerational views - Sport NZ can bring generations together to look at things from each other's perspectives. It will not succeed with thinking based solely on experience or over-weighting the voices of current incumbents for whom the system 'worked'.
- Provide platforms for diverse role models - Aligned to the principle of physical activity as a human right, there was feedback during the process of Sport NZ providing more platforms for role models from minority groups, such as tangata whenua, Muslim women, and people with experiences of gender and ability diversity.

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