



The Future of Services to the Public

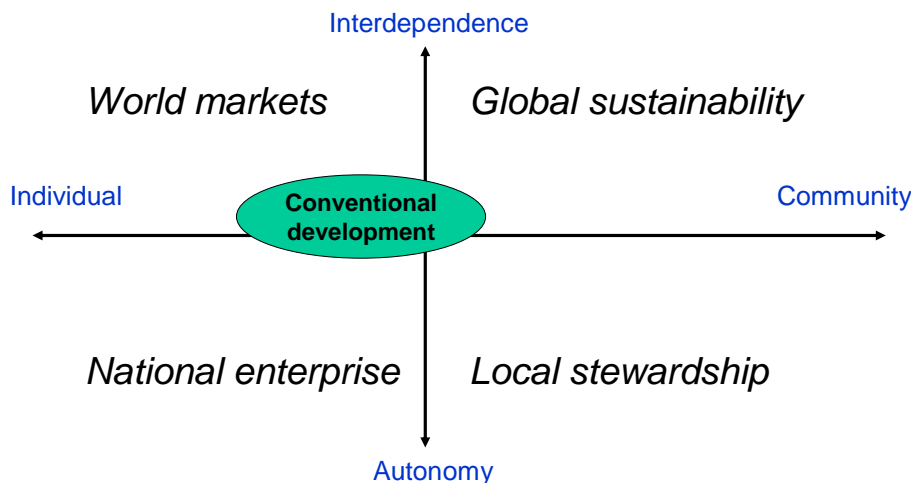
What does provision of public services look like over the next two decades to 2030? This is the daunting question which an ambitious cross-sector project was set up to examine and which was managed by SAMI Consulting for the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

Other sponsors included the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, Local Government Analysis and Research, the Learning and Skills Council, the National Housing Federation, the NHS Confederation and the Trades Union Council.

SAMI's role: defining the debate

The first stage was to decide which 'services to the public' should be part of the project. Those chosen included health, education and housing. SAMI decided to use the existing government-developed Foresight Futures Vision 2020 scenarios as a basis for the project since they explore the nature of UK society and economy from 2010 to 2030.

Scenarios for the UK



SAMI Consulting
St Andrews Management Institute


robust decisions in uncertain times

www.samiconsulting.co.uk

With these scenarios, the two axes are the nature of government - interdependence vs. autonomy –and the nature of society – individually-focused vs. community-focused. The four scenarios are:

- **World Markets** (like the US)
- **Global Sustainability** (like the Netherlands)
- **National Enterprise** (like Switzerland)
- **Local Stewardship** (like Denmark)

SAMI Consulting

+44 0207 630 1104

info@samiconsulting.co.uk

VAT registration: 811 6226 61

Company number: 3756030

Registered address and accounts office: 2b Northbrook Court, Park Street, Newbury, RG14 1EA, UK
Directors: Christopher Smith (St Andrews), AHT Davies, Michael Owen, John Reynolds, Gill Ringland



A series of themed workshops, each representing subjects relevant to the different sponsors, were then run by SAMI and encompassed housing, health, learning and skills, employment, business and local government.

Following the workshops, a well-attended one-day conference was held with a wide range of people from the public and private sectors, along with representatives of NGOs, to share, test and challenge the findings emerging from the workshops and bring out topics for further research. Four keynote speakers each explored one of the scenarios, while other speakers discussed different topics based on the existing themes.

The outcome: taking a view of the future

The project has laid the foundation for further explorations of what are very complex issues. For example, while the discussions in both the workshops and the conference initially singled out **Global Sustainability** as the more desirable future, the consensus was that the **World Markets** scenario was where the UK was actually heading, so it would be sensible to design public services with this in mind.

One overall conclusion was that it is vital to re-assess the role of globalisation in public services, particularly since globalisation and demographics will constrain the UK's options and that a welfare state on current lines seems unlikely. Globalisation means that the standard of public services becomes a factor in competitiveness; it also means that many of the suppliers of public services are not based in the UK and so are subject to different pressures from those of the historic suppliers.

Another conclusion related to the demographic time bomb in many public service workforces. While there is a shortage of engineers and nurses world-wide, with many employees over the age of 50 and replacements scarce, the public sector has specific demographic challenges in areas such as accountancy.

As the report based on the project concluded, "We feel that by posing these questions in the context of the UK to 2030, and the global trends to 2050, we have presented an envelope for more informed discussions. Services to the public may well become an international battleground: we have aimed to delineate some of the rules."