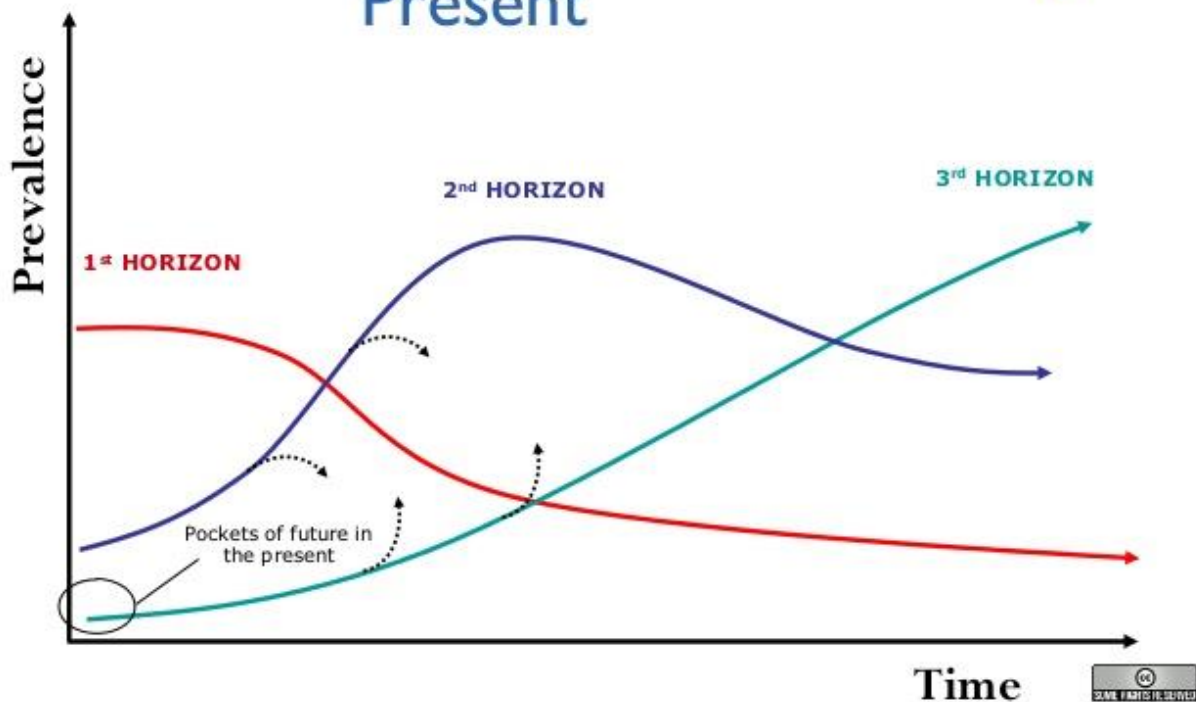# Three Horizons in the Present

The future is something we all think and talk about. It is a real, undeniable part of our daily lives. However, the practice of futures studies is difficult for many to wrap their head around. It remains an impenetrable abstract concept.

As any educator can tell you that there are verbal learners and there are visual learners. I am definitely in the latter category. The illustration of the three horizons really helped me to concretely understand the concepts I was being introduced to as a graduate student in Foresight at the University of Houston. For students like myself, who learn best when a new concept is both shown and told, [*Three Horizons*](): *The Patterning of Hope* (2012, £12) could be an epiphany.

The first section of the book thoroughly explains the three horizons concept, visually and verbally. The First Horizon is the current, dominant system or "business as usual". The Third Horizon represents the long-term successor to business as usual. In today's system only weak signals, fringe ideas, or seemingly laughable hints of the Third Horizon exist. The Second Horizon is the path away from the old system towards the new. It is not so absurd as to make the

current First Horizon dismiss it outright, but neither does it go as far as the Third Horizon. It is the tolerated medium that is necessary for transformation.

The second section of the book tells the reader how to use the three horizons tool to see the world differently and communicate the future more effectively to one another. The third section is dedicated to case studies showing real-world applications of the three horizons tool. It may only be necessary to skim this section, selecting an example or two to help drive the message home for students. The last section has Sharpe describing his goal for a better tomorrow; one where we've realized the potential for our shared future consciousness in order to live better, together.

Overall, the book is a straightforward and useful introduction to futures thinking. I wouldn't necessarily recommend the book be read in its entirety by students, but it is an excellent resource for educators to add to their futures toolkit in order to communicate the process of transformation using a visual language.

Author Bill Sharpe is an independent researcher and consultant based in the UK. Before branching out on his own, he worked for 15 years as a lab director for Hewlett Packard Laboratories where he spearheaded the use of scenario methods to aid in long-term research and innovation.

Today he specializes in science, technology, and policy research for business strategy and public policy foresight. He is a visiting professor at the University of the West of England, Digital Cultures Research Centre and a member of the International Futures Forum, an organization that is devoted to "developing a body of ideas and philosophy about how to make sense of today's complex world."