

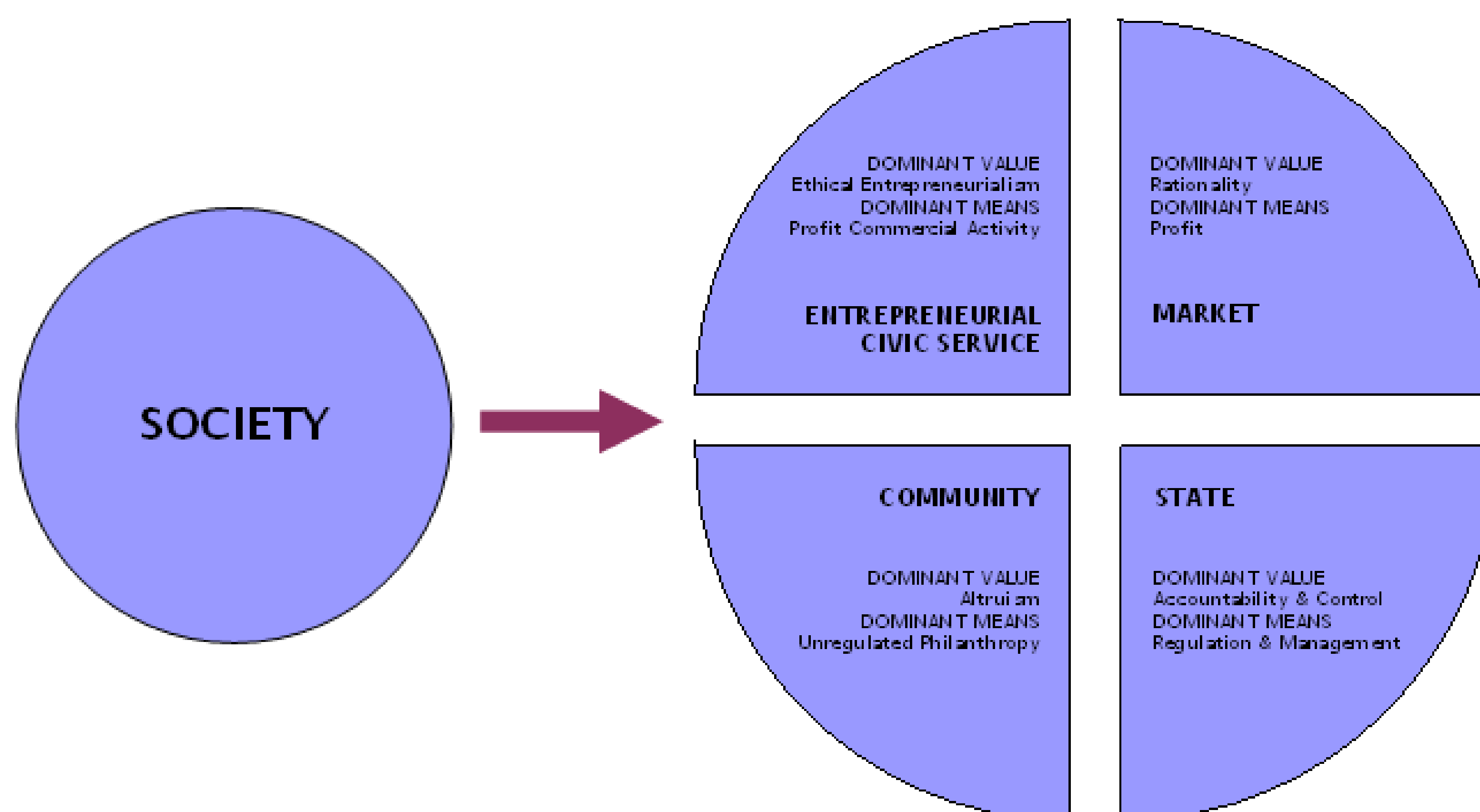
EVIDENCE OF A FOURTH SECTOR OF SOCIETY IN AUSTRALIA

Research conducted in 1998 as a component of a PhD project (Alessandrini, 2001) in the human services sector in Tasmania Australia indicated that dramatic sectoral change was afoot. This was particularly apparent when viewed in comparison to human service organisations in Texas, USA.

Increasingly Tasmanian organisations were coming to resemble organisations in Texas engaged in similar activities of service delivery, largely as a result of dramatic change in the nature of arrangements between these organisations and government. In 1998 it was possible only to theorise on how far this convergence between the two sites would proceed. Ten years later in 2008, it is apparent that indeed there has been considerable change in the Tasmanian human services sector and a review of the seven original research subject organisations was conducted to ascertain the extent of this.

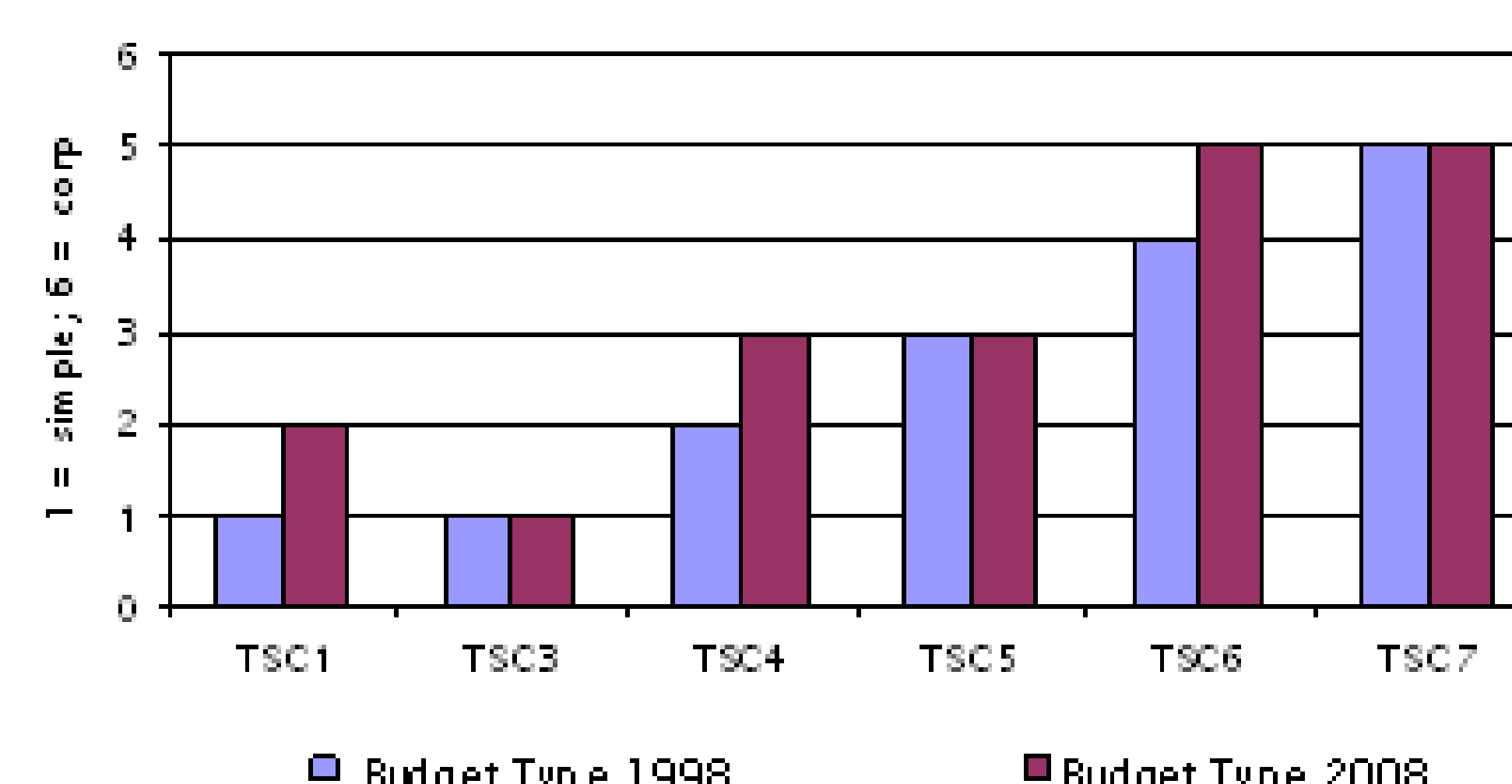
It can be argued that a simple tripartite division between government, market and civil society is limited, both theoretically and as base for empirical research on community organisations. The thesis proposes a 'fourth pillar' to the traditional tripartite separation (see figure 1). Research conducted in 1998 supports the proposition that a fourth pillar existed: that of the 'entrepreneurial civic service sector'. Organisations engaged in one or a number of formal legally based arrangements with government and other funding sources are now indistinguishable in many respects from market-based organisations. They cannot however be categorised as market organisations because they are not focussed on profit or capital accumulation. These organisations' underlying goals are survival, growth and compliance with appropriate values.

In pursuit of these goals, organisations are achieving greater independence through funding diversity and the implementation of managerial strategic plans and processes. It is apparent that an additional 'pillar' provides a theoretical base to contemporary societal structure, and more accurately reflects society and the relationship between government and human service organisations.



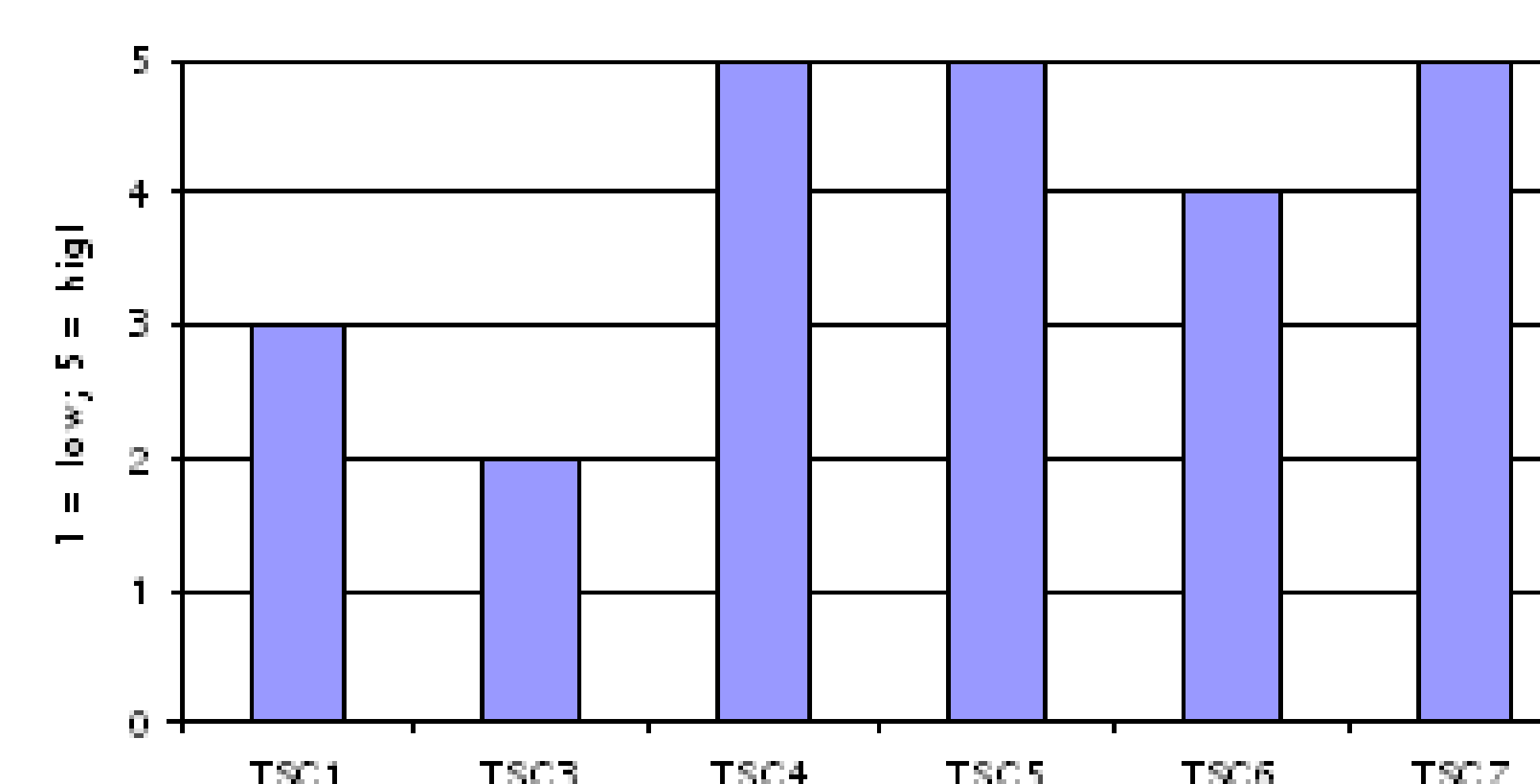
Demographic data collected indicated there had been some gradual change in some organizations surveyed. The nature and extent of these changes appeared to be related to levels of funding, and their success in integrating new management practices and entrepreneurial approaches into their governance.

HGO Budget Type (1998 and 2008)



For TSC6 and TSC7, collaboration is considered advantageous both to their respective organisations in their program delivery and strategic awareness, and to the sector as a whole. All organisations contacted in 2008 noted that they enjoyed some level of collaborative relations with other organisations, with somewhat fewer disclosing that they had other informal co-operative arrangements with other organisations. The more complex and more functionally independent the organisation, the higher they scaled their collaboration and co-operation activities. One organisation had some mild reservations about the benefits of collaborative to practice to their organisation, but all agreed or strongly agreed that collaboration was a valuable practice of great benefit to the human services sector.

Level of Collaboration with Other HGOs



Interviewees in organisations have an enhanced awareness of the role of government and their position. In cases where management processes have become or remained rigorous, it is clear that much greater resilience has been achieved. The greater insights that are possible when there is a more informed perspective equip organisations to be innovative in their approach, and entrepreneurial in their operations. The extent of collaboration indicates that the 'Entrepreneurial Civic Service' sector predicted in 1998 has arrived as anticipated with a particular variation on this: one in which a crude market focus does not dominate but market techniques are utilised to improve efficiency and effectiveness without detriment to clients. Communitarian principles espoused by 'Entrepreneurial Civic Service' organisations are retained.

How Advantageous is Collaborating with Other HGOs to your Organisation?

