

Scanning Our Future:

Diverse global views on the decades ahead



PROJECT OVERVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION: the present is already so intense and demanding that most of us don't want to consider the future. But surely the rapid changes and pressures we face now are likely to continue, and increase? Where is all this leading to? The aim of *Scanning Our Future* is to gather insights from diverse experts around the world on the outlook for the next 15-35 years, i.e. the period 2030 to 2050.

2. PROJECT AIMS: We aim to assess realistic possibilities based on the state of the world now, likely situations in coming decades, along with the possible range of options, direction of travel, potential complications, and available assets facing us in the years ahead. Our aim is not specifically to advocate beliefs, policy options or scenarios we would prefer, though some may be included.

Whereas most existing assessments derive from scientific, governmental, think-tank and business sources, our approach is non-institutional in style, and wider and deeper in scope, to serve ordinary thinking people and progressive decision-makers. This will include well-presented out-of-the-box thinking. Our main aim is to provide a whole picture, to help readers envision possibilities and grapple with an enormous, multiplex and rather indigestible outlook. Most future forecasts, even if attempting objectivity, tend to be sectoral, excluding factors outside their domain. One aim of this report is to attempt an all-round picture – an almost impossible task, but nevertheless worth attempting.

3. APPROACH: the basic plan is to rely mainly on web searches, and to focus on identifying think tanks, research/forecasting institutes, or individual experts with both depth of expertise and diverse viewpoints. The project is envisaged in three phases:

Phase 1: Initial research and a rough draft report due for completion in March 2017.

Phase 2: Augmenting and polishing the report plus graphic design inputs, and linking with one or more partner/umbrella organisations.

Phase 3: Publication of the report, launch of the related website and a related event/promotional programme. Target early 2018.

The Phase 1 work will mostly be done by Palden Jenkins, a freelance researcher based in the UK, who has a range of international contacts, and experience of several complex research and writing projects, such as the Kingfisher Encyclopedia of World History which won a Smithsonian Award. A small steering group has been formed to help with Phase 2.

4. OUTPUT: The output in phase 3 is expected to come in several formats:

1. a concise PDF summary report (around 40 pages);

2. a more substantial PDF report, giving details, discussion and references;
3. a website containing the contents of the full report, with more extensive explanations, details, links and references;
4. Powerpoint material to accompany talks (tables, maps and graphs).

The first two formats will be linear (with a beginning and end), and the website will be more fractal, serving as an online resource that is easily accessible globally. The concise report could be published as a booklet, coordinated with the website, and the longer report could be published as a book if a publisher or organisation is interested. Several versions of the summary report could be produced, tailored to different audiences. We hope that these outputs in Phase 3 will provide a stimulus and ingredients for a Phase 4, in which others pick up and use our material for wider propagation. The intention is to make the outcomes of the project available to all, free of charge.

5. **OVERALL TONE:** The future is rather daunting, and a majority of people prefer not to look. For campaigning purposes, many organisations focus on specific issues and positions, or they can lean toward pessimistic or optimistic scenarios, or positions reinforcing particular political, institutional or philosophical outlooks. We tend also to judge the future in the past's terms.

So in this report we must square with daunting possibilities without turning readers off, and point out positive potentials without glossing over the tough stuff. Our aim is to inform and stimulate, helping readers form widened perspectives and perceive options and alternatives, without ourselves adopting strong policy positions. We aim to show underlying patterns and trends which can give us better perspective on an apparent deluge of often worrying facts. We want to widen readers' sense of possibilities by drawing on unusual forecasting sources, not just the usual (European and US) suspects. We aim to balance the 'what' (factual content) with the 'how' of responding constructively to it. And we hope to engage readers' hearts and hopes, not just their minds.

6. **OWNERSHIP AND DIRECTION:** the initiator of the project is Alan Heeks. Alan is a social entrepreneur and writer with a long-standing interest in resilience, sustainability and wellbeing. He has founded two educational charities in the UK: see more at www.alanheeks.com and www.naturalhappiness.net. The project is organised in association with Schumacher Institute. Currently Alan is funding the project and directing it with Palden: however, they are interested in exploring other funding inputs and working with additional partner organisations.

7. CONTACT INFORMATION

If you are involved with a project or organisation interested to collaborate on this, please contact Alan Heeks: progress@workingvision.com or 07976 602787.

If you'd like to assist in the project, or have information sources which could help the research, please contact Palden Jenkins: palden.jenkins@btopenworld.com.