

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 the 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. The intention is to show where opinions converge and trends emerge, and to highlight differences and the value sets underlying them, not to provide a definitive forecast.

2. **APPROACH:** the current 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 December 2016.

Phase 2: Augmenting and polishing the report plus graphic design inputs, and linking with one or more partner/umbrella organisations, leading to publication of the report, launch of the related website and a related event/promotional programme. Target to complete this phase end of June 2017.

Phase 3: More speculatively, the idea of a book, TV programme, or other larger-scale treatment of this material. There is no timetable for this, but the aim would be to explore it in the first half of 2017.

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.

Three key challenges with the project are already emerging:

1. Which topics and sources to prioritise in the research, as the potential number of both is almost endless.
2. How to organise and present the report itself to entice readers into it. We are painfully aware that a complex report spanning numerous topics, with often challenging outlooks, for the medium term future, is just the kind of document many people will avoid. We may need to invest in specialist expertise and design help to mitigate this.
3. It would help to evolve a clearer sense of what changes we hope this report will engender, and who is our target audience.

3. **OWNERSHIP AND DIRECTION:** the initiator and primary client for 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 current plan is for Alan to fund the project and direct it with Palden: they have been friends and colleagues for many years. Both are open to this becoming part of a larger project. The intention is to make the outcomes of the project available to all, free of charge – see more below.

4. **STEERING AND CONSULTATIVE GROUPS:** Alan and Palden intend to set up two informal groups to help the shaping and outcomes of the project:
 - a) **Steering Group:** this could also be called the vision community – 6 to 8 people who will be periodically briefed and consulted in the direction of the project, including how outcomes are presented and what sources are used.
 - b) **Briefing Group:** this could be 20 to 50 people, hopefully diverse in location and expertise, who receive occasional briefings and can give feedback and offer contacts to help progress the project.

Both groups would operate mostly by email, and approaches from people interested in joining either group are very welcome.

5. CONTENTS AND OUTCOMES

The outcome of the project will be a report and website content, which give an overview from a range of future outlooks. In particular, the aim is to explore different geographical, cultural and political viewpoints, including:

Geographical: if possible, views from each continent.

Political: conservative, progressive and others

Cultural: a range of key standpoints, including Islamic, tribal, spiritual, permaculture.

For each viewpoint, the aim is to find a futures report by a respected think tank, research or forecasting institution or expert. Where possible, these reports will be accessible in full via the website.

6. CONTACT INFORMATION

If you'd like to join the steering or consultative groups, or 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 have information sources which could help the research, please contact Palden Jenkins: palden.jenkins@btopenworld.com