# Megatrends: a tool for understanding societal change

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## Abstract

The concept of megatrends refers to long-term trends that cut across society and can shape the future. Major consulting firms and international institutions have developed their own classifications and methods for monitoring them. Leading research centres in the field – including the Italian Institute for the Future – have also made megatrends a central reference point in the analysis of global transformations. Megatrends have several distinctive features: they are multidimensional and wide-ranging, unfold over long periods, and have transformative and disruptive effects. A distinction can be drawn between "structural" megatrends, which are already well established, and "emerging" or "open" megatrends, whose evolution remains uncertain. Megatrend analysis helps reduce uncertainty and is essential to so-called anticipatory governance. In Italy, megatrend analysis is not yet systematically used in national policymaking. However, it provides an essential basis for understanding and managing the major processes of change that continually reshape global society.

## Keywords

MEGATRENDS, IMPACT ANALYSIS, ANTICIPATION, TRANSFORMATION, FORESIGHT

*This Future Brief is part of **Tools**, a collection of texts exploring definitions, methodologies and strategies for applying foresight in practice within an organisation, a business or a public administration.*

# 1. Origins of the concept

The concept of megatrends was coined by John Naisbitt, who brought it to prominence in his 1982 book *Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives*. Naisbitt's idea was to identify and succinctly describe the complex processes already under way, which he termed megatrends. He drew inspiration from works of history that looked beyond the mere chronicle of events to identify the long-term trends behind major historical turning points. Naisbitt decided to apply the same approach in reverse: to study the present in an attempt to anticipate these dynamics and project them into the future. His starting point was to gather information from news reports, identify connections between events and detect what we now call "weak signals": indications of potentially radical changes that may soon emerge. This method, known as content analysis, involved collecting reports submitted by collaborators around the world, who monitored as many as 6,000 local publications each month. Today, megatrend analysis has become an essential foundation for any foresight study. It helps reduce uncertainty surrounding the range of possible futures and thus narrow the range of probabilities associated with particular scenarios. It also represents the first step in a process of strategic transformation for businesses, institutions and entire countries.

# 2. Definition of megatrends

In this brief, we take as our starting point Teh and Pandit's (2023) definition of megatrends as "long-term (>10 years) global changes in individual, social, and technological structures that are expected to have a significant impact in the future. Megatrends are known in the present day, but their future path may be unknown. They differ from trends, which are unlikely to last as long, and disruptors, which are singular occurrences that cause radical change on a global scale."

Megatrends, therefore, are not forecasts of the future, but trends that have been at work for many years and whose scale has long been apparent. They are multidimensional and wide-ranging, unfold over long periods, and have transformative and disruptive effects. They are not static: new megatrends may emerge, while others may lose relevance or, conversely, intensify. Some megatrends can be clearly defined in quantitative terms, while in other cases qualitative aspects are crucial. Megatrend analysis is conducted at the global or macro-regional level, although their effects may differ depending on the geographical context. Megatrends are essential for placing an issue in its temporal context, considering both its present and future dimensions, and beginning to develop possible future scenarios. As in any field of analysis, there is a risk of cognitive bias: an analyst's cultural framework and body of knowledge may lead them to prioritise certain trends over others or even overlook some altogether. The less an analysis is affected by these biases, the more effectively it can help us "understand" the present as it evolves, and the sounder the analysis will be.

# 3. Which megatrends?

The literature contains a variety of classifications. This brief considers only a selection of them, while highlighting their gradual convergence. As early as 1982, Naisbitt identified ten megatrends[1]:

1. From Industrial Society to Information Society
2. From Forced Technology to High Tech/High Touch
3. From National Economy to World Economy
4. From Short Term to Long Term
5. From Centralisation to Decentralisation
6. From Institutional Help to Self-Help
7. From Representative Democracy to Participatory Democracy
8. From Hierarchies to Networking
9. From North to South
10. From Either/Or to Multiple Options

1 In 1990, together with Patricia Aburdene, he would add ten more: the boom of the global economy, the renaissance of the arts thanks to the information society, the emergence of free market socialism in eastern Europe, the former USSR and China, the clash between global lifestyles and cultural nationalism, the privatisation of the welfare state, the rise of the Pacific Rim, the decade of women in leadership, the age of biology and biotechnology, the religious revival of the New Millennium, the triumph of individualism.

## 3.1. Megatrend classifications developed by leading consulting firms

Compared with Naisbitt's original list, the megatrend classifications most widely used today often encompass different types of phenomena, as shown in the following table, which presents the categories identified by some of the world's leading consulting firms.

| KPMG, 2013[2] | KMPG, 2014[3] | PwC, 2022[4] | Deloitte[5] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Demographics | Demographics | Climate change | Geopolitical tensions |
| Rise of the individual | Technology | Technological disruption | Climate change and nature |
| Enabling technology | Environment | Demographic shifts | Persistent inequity |
| Economic interconnectedness | Social values, behaviour and ethics | Fracturing world | Polarised perspectives |
| Public debt | | Social instability | An ageing and changing population |
| Economic power shift | | | Accelerating technology landscape |
| Climate change | | | Scarcity[6] |
| Resource stress | | | Hyperconnectivity |
| Urbanization | | | Systems thinking |

**Table 1 –** Example of how megatrends are classified by some of the world's leading consulting firms.

The differences between Naisbitt's megatrends and those listed above also call for a distinction between two types of megatrend:

- **Structural megatrends**, which shape global structures and whose trajectory is unlikely to change over a medium- to long-term time horizon of 10–20 years.
- **Emerging megatrends**, which remain largely indeterminate and whose evolution over time is difficult to predict. These correspond to Naisbitt's original categorisation[7].

Another way of distinguishing between these types of phenomena is provided by EY's analytical framework, which identifies four types of forces (EY, 2020):

- **Primary forces**, which are the root causes of disruption: technology, globalization, demographics and the environment.
- **Megatrends**, which arise from the interaction between waves of primary forces. Examples include *Decarbonization, Techonomic cold war, Behavioral economy, Synthetic media, Future of thinking* and *Synthetic biology*.
- **Future working worlds**, which describe how the combined effect of megatrends reshapes different systems within the political and economic landscape, including the global order, societies and economies, firms and markets, and households and individuals.
- **Weak signals**, whose greatest impact lies further in the future, such as quantum computing and passenger drones, and whose likelihood and scale of impact remain highly uncertain.

2 KPMG (2013). Future State 2030: The Global Megatrends Shaping Governments: utoronto.scholaris.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/acc95a26-257e-48e0-a37c-9eb132031829/content

3 KPMG (2014). Investing in the Future: How Megatrends Are Reshaping the Future of the Investment Management Industry: assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/pdf/2015/04/investing-in-the-future.pdf

4 PwC (2022). Megatrends: Five Global Shifts Reshaping the World We Live In: www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/assets/pdf/pwc-megatrends-october-2022.pdf

5 Teh, A., & Pandit, A. (2023). The Power of Megatrends for Strategists and Decision Makers: Why All Organisations Need to Consider Megatrends. Deloitte: www.deloitte.com/nz/en/Industries/government-public/perspectives/the-power-of-megatrends-for-strategists-and-decision-makers.html

6 Added by Deloitte NZ.

7 The definition of an emerging megatrend is also reflected in other recent reports, such as Our Future World (2024) by Australia's national science agency.

## 3.2. Megatrend classifications developed by international organisations

Over time, public-sector bodies and international organisations have also begun conducting megatrend analyses. In 2009, the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS) was established within the European Commission with the aim of creating "an inter-institutional system identifying long-term trends on major policy issues facing the EU" (ESPAS, 2012). In 2018, the Competence Centre on Foresight was established within the Commission's Joint Research Centre to support the integration of strategic foresight into EU policymaking. The centre also created a Megatrends Hub, making megatrends, for the first time, a central pillar of European strategic foresight methodologies. The classification introduced at the time, and still in use today, comprises 14 megatrends[8]. At the OECD, the Strategic Foresight Unit was established in 2013. One of its objectives was to "explore and review over time large-scale challenges in the economy and society at the intersection of multiple policy domains, in order to anticipate complex and multidimensional impacts in the future"[9].

The United Nations has not developed its own classification of megatrends. However, it drew on the concept in Shaping the Trends of Our Time, a report published to mark the UN's 75th anniversary. The report suggests a possible link between megatrends and the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda and identifies five megatrends to be monitored: climate change, demographic shifts – particularly population ageing – urbanisation, the emergence of digital technologies and inequalities (UN, 2020).

| **JRC European Commission**[10] |
|---|
| Accelerating technological change and hyperconnectivity |
| Aggravating resource scarcity |
| Changing nature of work |
| Changing security paradigm |
| **Climate change and environmental degradation** |
| Continuing urbanisation |
| Diversification of education and learning |
| Widening inequalities |
| Expanding influence of East and South |
| Growing consumption |
| Increasing demographic imbalances |
| Increasing influence of new governing systems |
| Increasing significance of migration |
| Shifting health challenges |

| **OECD**[11] |
|---|
| **Growing, migrating and ageing**: the 21st-century human population, covering demographics, international migration and urbanisation |
| **The water–energy–food–climate nexus**, with particular focus on water, energy and food security, and climate change |
| **The changing geo-economic and geopolitical landscape**, covering globalisation, the roles of states, localisation and global power shifts |
| **A moving frontier:** how digitalisation will drive economies and transform the way we work, covering technological change, the economy, productivity and employment, and financialisation |
| **Wealth, health and knowledge:** the great global divide, covering wealth and inequality, health and well-being, access to knowledge and societal change |

**Table 2 –** Example of how megatrends are classified by the EU and the OECD.

## 3.3. Megatrend classifications developed by leading research centres

Think tanks have also recently begun to engage extensively with megatrends. This is particularly true of research centres specialising in futures studies around the world, which began incorporating megatrends into their work during the 2000s:

In 2011, Germany's Zukunftsinstitut published the first "megatrend map", which visually illustrates the connections among the many global megatrends analysed by the institute. In subsequent years, the map was incorporated into the Megatrend Documentation, a comprehensive collection on processes of global change (Zukunftsinstitut, 2025)[12].

8 To support megatrend analysis, the Hub also developed a participatory method initially designed to support policymaking at the European level, but subsequently adapted for use in other decision-making contexts: the Megatrends Assessment Tool (European Commission, 2024).

9 www.oecd.org/en/about/programmes/strategic-foresight.html

10 knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/foresight/tool/megatrends-hub_en

11 An OECD Horizon Scan of Megatrends and Technology Trends in the Context of Future Research Policy (2016).

12 www.zukunftsinstitut.de/das-zukunftsinstitut

The 20 megatrends identified by the Italian Institute for the Future (see table) are classified as "structural" to distinguish them from "emerging" megatrends, which describe phenomena expected to influence the future evolution of society. Structural megatrends are defined as "trends that have been under way for some time and will continue to shape our future throughout at least this century". They are considered the product of five drivers of change: society, technology, the economy, the environment and politics. Each megatrend results from the interaction, combination and mutual influence of two or more drivers (IIF, 2020). Emerging megatrends, by contrast, are examined annually in the Emerging Long-Term Megatrends reports.

| Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies (CIFS) | Zukunftsinstitut[13]: | Italian Institute for the Future (IIF) | Dubai Future Foundation |
|---|---|---|---|
| **World**<br>1. Globalisation<br>2. Population growth<br>3. Environmental change and sustainability<br><br>**People and society**<br>1. An ageing world<br>2. Individualism and empowerment<br>3.Focus on health<br>4. Urbanisation<br><br>**Technology and science**<br>1. AI and automation<br>2. Biotech revolution<br>3. Greater interconnectedness<br>4. Engineering advances<br><br>**Economy**<br>1. Network economy<br>2. Service economy<br>3. Economic growth<br>4. Concentration of wealth | 1. Gender Shift<br>2. Health<br>3. Globalisation<br>4. Connectivity<br>5. Individualisation<br>6. Mobility<br>7. Security<br>8. New Work<br>9. Neo-ecology<br>10. Knowledge Culture<br>11. Silver Society (ageing)<br>12. Urbanisation | 1. Anthropocene<br>2. Demographic transition<br>3. Longevity<br>4. Urbanisation<br>5. Transport<br>6. International order<br>7. European integration<br>8. Inequalities<br>9. Food<br>10. Tourism<br>11. Energy<br>12. Virtual reality<br>13. Digitalisation<br>14. Artificial intelligence<br>15. Automation<br>16. Cybersecurity<br>17. Space economy<br>18. Empowerment<br>19. Religions<br>20. Existential risks | 1. Materials Revolution<br>2. Devaluation of Raw Data<br>3. Technological Vulnerabilities<br>4. Energy Limits<br>5. Saving Ecosystems<br>6. Borderless World – Fluid Economies<br>7. Digital Realities – Digital, Virtual and Immersive Spaces<br>8. Living with Autonomous Robots<br>9. Future Humanity<br>10. Advanced Health and Nutrition |

**Table 3 –** Example of how megatrends are classified by some of the leading research centres in the field.

# 4. Properties of megatrends[14]

Megatrends:

- are multidimensional, meaning that they affect multiple domains, particularly the economy, technology, the environment, society, politics and culture[15];
- drive transformation and are therefore themselves drivers of change;
- are wide-ranging and generally operate at a global or regional level. Their scope invariably extends beyond the national level;
- unfold over long periods, spanning several decades;
- are future-oriented, as their greatest effects are expected to occur in the future and their consequences have therefore not yet fully materialised;
- often follow an exponential trajectory, as illustrated by population growth or Moore's "law", which describes technological acceleration. Exponential phenomena are particularly difficult to address because they initially progress almost imperceptibly, creating the impression of slow growth. However, because their value doubles with each unit of time, it may already be too late to contain the phenomenon by the time it becomes apparent. It is therefore important to identify new emerging megatrends at an early stage, given that the trajectory of those already under way cannot be altered, at least in the short to medium term;
- are disruptive.

Megatrends create both risks and opportunities. Analysing them is essential to anticipating and mitigating risks and seizing opportunities.

13 www.zukunftsinstitut.de/zukunftsthemen/dossier/megatrends-en

14 Naughtin *et al*. (2024)

15 These categories are often summarised using acronyms such as STEEP (social, technological, economic, environmental and political), PESTLE (political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental) and GEEST (geopolitical, economic, environmental, social and technological).

## Measuring megatrends

Megatrends operate according to the principles of systems thinking: analysing them requires, above all, the ability to identify their interrelationships, while their evolution does not follow linear patterns. This does not mean, however, that there is no factual basis from which to begin measuring them. According to Bertrand de Jouvenel's proposition that futura can be conjectured through the analysis of facta (de Jouvenel, 1967), understanding megatrends requires the identification of the quantitative variables that define them.

In the example below, which concerns the "Great Acceleration" (Steffen et al., 2015), the megatrend is broken down into a set of time series that define its structure. Breaking a megatrend down into quantitative trends supports its measurement by making it possible to identify the relevant time series.

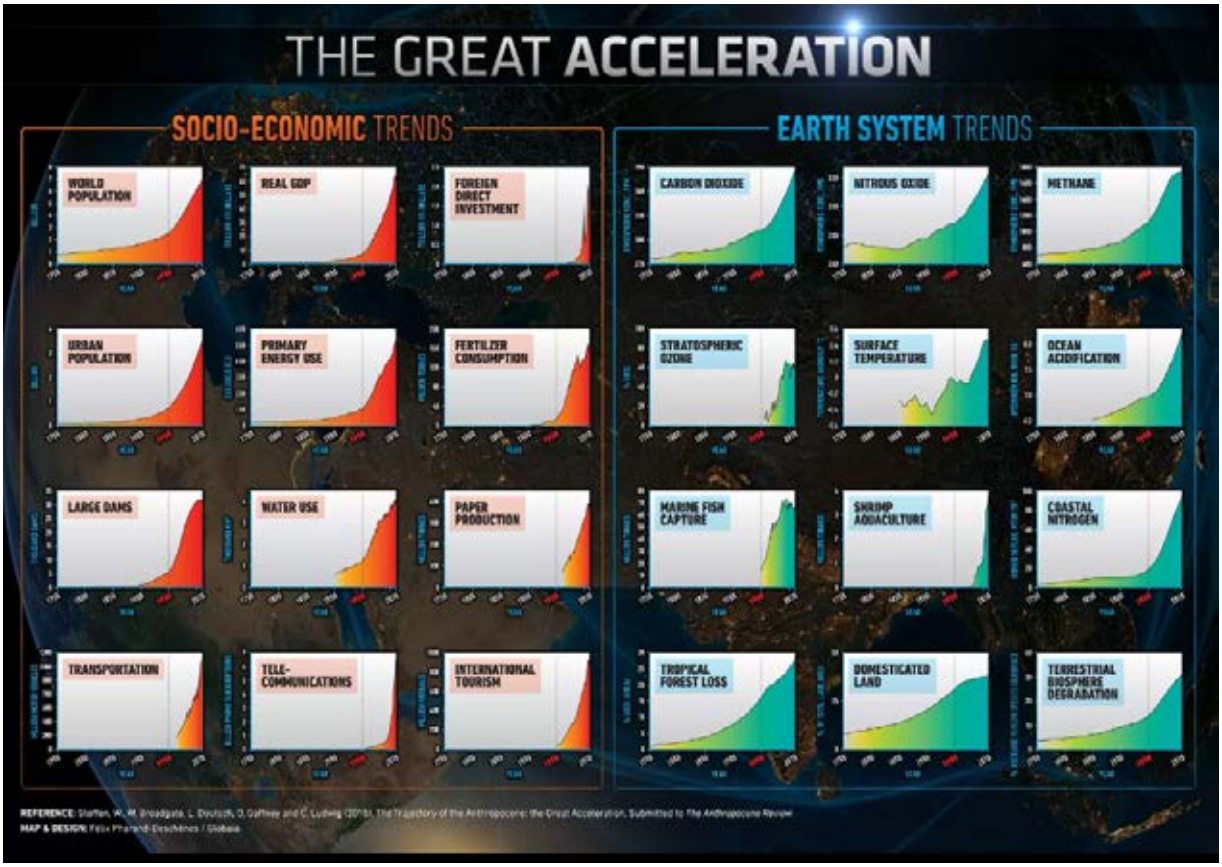


**Figure 1 –** "The Great Acceleration", adapted from Steffen, W., Broadgate, W., Gaffney, O. and Ludwig, C. (2015), The Anthropocene Review. The graphs illustrate the rapid and far-reaching changes caused by human activities in the Earth system.

Examples include the statistical indicators identified by the United Nations for each of the Sustainable Development Goals and those developed by the Millennium Project for each of the 15 global challenges it monitors, some of which partly overlap with global megatrends (Glenn, Florescu et al., 2025).

Examining time series and the possible evolution of megatrends over the coming years is therefore essential for decision-makers whose choices will have long-term consequences.

Consider, for example, the evolution of the global population structure across its different macro-regional phases, and the implications of this megatrend for future generations.

Quantifying the interactions within and among megatrends – including positive and negative feedback loops – is more difficult, but represents a crucial area of inquiry. Examples include the effects of a warmer and more unstable climate on an increasingly ageing society, and those of an ageing society on a country's fiscal capacity and levels of inequality[17].

16 www.un-ilibrary.org/content/databases/25202804

17 Among the various attempts to quantify interactions between different megatrends within a system is the work of the System Dynamics Society: systemdynamics.org

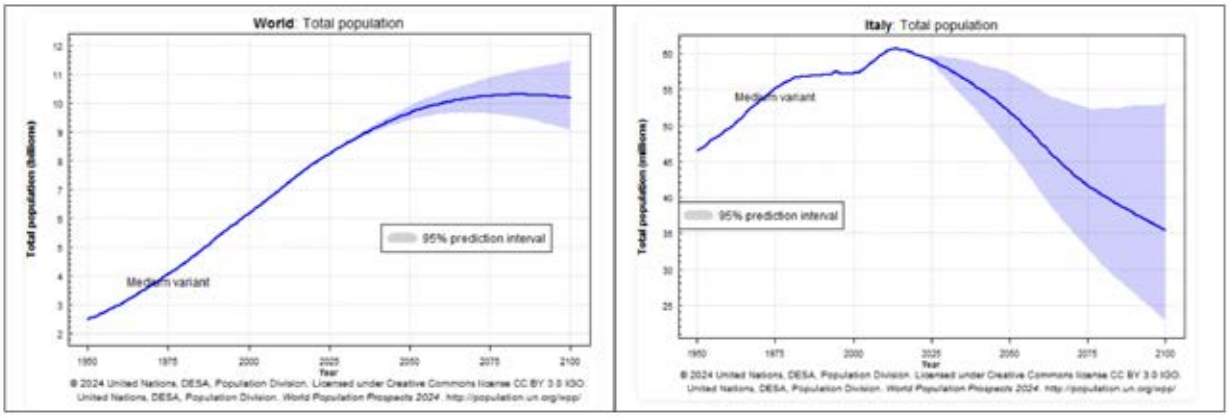


**Figura 2 –** The graphs, taken from UN DESA's World Population Prospects 2024, show population trends from 1950 to 2024 and projections to 2100, both worldwide and in Italy. Demographic trends are also subject to significant fluctuations.

Moreover, the more complex the megatrend under analysis, the greater the uncertainty and the more difficult – if not impossible – it becomes to extrapolate the time series into the future. In such cases, it is essential to develop alternative scenarios based on the evolution of critical variables.

Identifying time series for each challenge makes it possible to perform a sensitivity analysis and assess their possible long-term trajectories. In particular, Trend Impact Analysis (Gordon, 1994) allows alternative projections of a time series to be evaluated under specified qualitative conditions, such as the occurrence of wild cards or reinforcing trends. These are generally identified through horizon scanning or the Delphi method; see section 5. Trend Impact Analysis also reminds us that megatrend analysis should be viewed neither as a forecasting exercise nor as a purely quantitative analysis, but must always incorporate qualitative variables.

Identifying the variables that define a megatrend also allows megatrends to be understood in terms of Popper's concept of "conditional trends" (Popper, 1944). Even so-called "structural megatrends" should not be mistaken for "absolute trends" and therefore regarded as immutable. However long they may persist, their evolution always depends on the continuation of the initial conditions. Identifying these conditions therefore helps in formulating assumptions about a megatrend's future evolution. In the case of population growth, for example, the conditional variables are the ratio of births to deaths and the fertility rate. A change in these variables – such as the fertility rate falling below replacement level – will eventually reverse the trend, albeit after a delay. It is therefore necessary to understand how the initial conditions change over time and what causes those changes.

## Terminological distinctions

It is useful to clarify the distinction between megatrends and other concepts used in social forecasting with which they are often confused: driving forces, trends and countertrends.

In the World Economic Forum's *Global Risks Report 2026*, the risks identified are presented as the result of "structural forces" that operate globally and significantly amplify the effects of trends in technology, climate, international relations and demographics (WEF, 2026). The report identifies four structural forces, first introduced in its 2024 edition: technological acceleration, geostrategic shifts, climate change and demographic bifurcation. These largely overlap with the megatrends described above, suggesting that the terminology adopted by the WEF essentially refers to the same concept.

This terminological ambiguity has a long history. Alvin Toffler used the concept of "driving forces" in his book *The Third Wave* (1981) to identify the waves of change that had shaped the preceding centuries. The driving forces identified by Toffler include standardisation, the concentration of resources and populations, the specialisation of labour and the synchronisation of industrial society (Toffler, 1981). These are deeper processes that shape the evolution of megatrends. The well-known scenario-planning method pioneered by Shell and later refined by Peter Schwartz distinguishes between driving forces and predetermined elements, thereby adding to the terminological ambiguity (Schwartz, 1996).

One way of establishing a hierarchy between drivers and megatrends is to use a STEEP matrix, in which driving forces can be classified into five domains[18]:

- Social (S)
- Technological (T)
- Environmental (E)
- Economic (E)
- Political (P)

The STEEP categories are not themselves drivers. Rather, each domain may contain systemic driving forces that generate large-scale change, such as the acceleration of social change, technological acceleration, cycles of capital accumulation, shifts in centres of political power and anthropogenic pressure on the biosphere. The matrix helps a foresight working group avoid focusing exclusively on a single domain.

As discussed in the previous section, a megatrend can be broken down into units with a shorter duration and a more limited impact: trends. A trend may constitute a weak signal of a more far-reaching change that could develop into a megatrend in the future. For example, the trend towards genderless fashion can be regarded as an indication of a broader and more established megatrend involving changes in gender roles.

Countertrends are "trends that move in the opposite direction and are far smaller in scale than the megatrend" (Poli, 2023). One example is the movement of people away from large, long-urbanised cities in many European countries. This is a countertrend to the megatrend of urbanisation, which continues to characterise most emerging countries.

# 5. Working with megatrends to understand and act more effectively

Megatrend analysis now lies at the heart of futures studies. It begins with the identification of megatrends and the emerging dynamics within them, using horizon scanning tools to gather information from a range of sources and detect patterns of transformation, much as Naisbitt's team did.

Megatrends can be monitored in many different ways. The World Economic Forum, for example, gathers information through interviews with executives and business leaders, focusing particularly on changes in their perceptions. The European Commission's Megatrends Hub, by contrast, identified its megatrends through a lexicographical analysis of a large body of articles.

The purposes of megatrend analysis can vary considerably. For example, the European Union has identified certain megatrends as input for public discussions on policy issues, while PwC's classification is intended to support the consulting services it provides to clients. These different purposes also explain why the megatrends identified vary from one organisation to another. When selecting a megatrend classification for a sectoral analysis, it is therefore important to take these differences into account and choose the classification best aligned with the objectives of the analysis.

"Choosing" a megatrend classification means that, within a business or public administration, megatrend analysis is concerned less with identifying the megatrends themselves than with determining their potential impact on the sector under review. For example, an analysis of the impact of megatrends on Italy might use the EU classification – because it operates at a more "macro" level and is designed for decision-makers – to assess the implications for the country as a whole over a defined time horizon, such as ten years.

This approach enables any organisation to conduct a megatrend analysis using classifications and periodically updated data provided by think tanks, consulting firms or institutions. These bodies provide the starting point – the megatrend categories and the relevant data – while the impact analysis must be carried out internally by the organisation seeking to assess their implications. For this purpose, the Megatrends Assessment Tool developed by the JRC's Competence Centre on Foresight (Whyte, 2024) provides a highly effective participatory method organised into five main stages:

18 See the useful guide produced by the Politecnico di Milano, available at: www.foresight.polimi.it/steep/steep.html

- **Prioritise the 14 EU megatrends** in relation to the subject of the analysis – for example, a country, city or business – using a two-axis matrix based on relevance and awareness/knowledge. This makes it possible to identify megatrends that score highly for relevance but only medium to low for awareness/knowledge.
- **Define the consequences of these megatrends** for the area under analysis over the selected time horizon.
- **Identify possible connections and mutual interactions** between the priority megatrends and all the others. This also helps identify potential "leverage" megatrends: those that exert the greatest influence on other megatrends and through which the priority megatrends can be more readily changed.
- **Develop an action plan**, including the relevant policy implications, to adapt the organisation to the consequences of these megatrends or steer their evolution in a positive direction. The plan should also identify the different decision-making levels of the actors involved. For example, an organisation may not be able to alter the evolution of the climate megatrend directly, but it can seek to influence the appropriate level of decision-making and thereby contribute to that outcome.
- Use a participatory method throughout the preceding stages, drawing both on the classic Delphi method (Helmer, 1967), which uses collective intelligence to gather views on two variables for each megatrend – relevance and awareness – and on scenario planning, in which scenarios are developed separately on the basis of a prior relevance–uncertainty matrix. Unlike the Delphi method, however, in which participants must not interact because doing so would compromise the requirement that they not influence one another, this method involves direct interaction among participants.

One example of megatrend analysis in Italy is the *Future Scenarios Concept* developed by the Italian Defence General Staff, which states:

"By examining developments that have been observable for years across several global domains – social, economic, political and technological – it is possible to identify specific directions of change, known as megatrends, that will continue to play a significant role in the future. Examples include the progressive ageing of the population, digitalisation, globalisation and urbanisation. Identifying tomorrow's megatrends is also a difficult but necessary challenge, despite the risk of error" (Stato Maggiore della Difesa, 2021).

The Defence General Staff's analysis makes particular use of a "trends–implications matrix". For each of the four domains examined – geopolitical, socio-economic, technological and environmental – the matrix identifies a set of trends and their implications for security and defence.

More generally, however, megatrend analysis is still used only to a limited extent in national anticipatory governance. One possible explanation is the absence of an analytical framework centred on megatrends. This may help explain why foresight tools remain only modestly integrated into national public policymaking.

In Fuerth's model (2011), foresight supports a process of "visualisation" intended to facilitate the imagining of alternative futures. This necessarily includes horizon scanning, since the model involves "monitoring prospective events, providing early warning of major events on the horizon, and alerting policymakers to their potential consequences". Fuerth also specifies that the foresight system "should be designed to identify and track 'weak signals' of potential major long-term trends and events" (Fuerth, 2011).

However, the model provides neither a precise methodology for achieving these results nor a clear definition of major long-term trends or of how weak signals should be recognised. On the one hand, this openness is intended to give those implementing the foresight process as much freedom as possible in their operational choices, allowing the process to be adapted to policymakers' objectives. On the other hand, it often results in excessive abstraction, discouraging decision-makers from investing in anticipatory governance.

# Conclusions

Megatrend analysis is central to futures studies. Popper (1944), followed by Bell (1996), identified "trends" as a key object of analysis in the study of the future. The shift from trends to megatrends responds to two needs: to adopt a long-term perspective, as Fernand Braudel had already proposed in the field of historiography, and to use a global unit of analysis capable of capturing the complexity of the world-system as a whole. Indeed, the ambition to develop global analytical models was present from the origins of futures studies (Barbieri Masini, 2000).

Today, megatrends provide an essential tool for understanding the changes that are reshaping society, despite the absence of a single methodological framework. In Italy, the use of megatrend analysis in national anticipatory governance remains limited, particularly when compared with the emphasis placed on it by international organisations. This undermines the ability of institutions and the private sector to anticipate the risks and seize the opportunities associated with megatrends.

This future brief also shows that the concept of megatrends continues to evolve. Outstanding challenges include improving our ability to analyse interactions among megatrends, integrating quantitative and qualitative data more effectively, and understanding the relationship between megatrends and disruptive changes, or "wild cards", which are becoming increasingly relevant in an era of systemic uncertainty.

19 Among recent contributions on this last point, Roger Spitz has proposed the concept of "metaruption" alongside that of megatrends: londonspeakerbureau.com/5-ways-prepare-systemic-disruption/

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