

Review of: "The Role of Think Tanks in Megatrends Analysis and Future Research"

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First of all, I have not reviewed papers for Qeios before so I am not sure what the outcome of this review should be. If this were a typical process of reviewing for a journal with editors who make a publication decisions, I would say that the paper does not add much to the discussion of futures thinking or literacy. I am not as familiar with any literature about think tanks so I don't know whether it makes a contribution to that subject.

On the face of it, however, there are two stated objectives for the paper –

1. "The main objective of this paper is to improve the understanding of the dynamic discussion around megatrends, as well as the essential characteristics of future research.
2. Additionally, the paper seeks to highlight the contributions of think tanks in fostering future literacy and conceptual frameworks addressing major challenges for humanity."

First of all, the terms used in these objectives is not clearly specified – think tanks, megatrends, futures literacy. We all have ideas about these terms mean, but they should be more specifically defined in an academic paper.

Secondly, the assertion that megatrends, whatever they are, are now being studied in think tanks seems incorrect on the face of it. The RAND Corporation, founded in the late 1940s, is presumably an example of a think tank, and it was focusing on megatrends from the start – mostly military and nuclear technology, to be sure, but those are megatrends in those days as well. Futuribles, a French think tank, was founded by Bertrand de Jouvenel in 1960. The U.S. Institute for the Future was founded in 1968. I could go on. Think tanks have been focusing on the future and presumably on megatrends for more than 50 years now.

Finally, the paper makes assertions with little evidence. Some of these are noted below.

Finally, here are some specific examples of issues that need to be dealt with --

- "Naisbitt accurately predicted the change from industrialized to information societies." – Yes, he did, but he wasn't the first. While his *Megatrends* was the blockbuster futures book of the 80s, Alvin Toffler described the same scenario in his 1970 classic *Future Shock* and Daniel Bell did so in 1973 with *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*.
- "While the authors' own observations and exchanges with experts suggest that most established think tanks, are not much affected by the burgeoning megatrends discourse and analysis of future scenarios,..." – Bertelsman is not the only think tank to deal in megatrends and scenarios. Almost all of them do so to some extent. Or I don't understand

the author's criteria or evidence for this statement.

- "...non-profit organisations engaged in policy-oriented work prefer to work under the label of think tank rather than advocacy-organisations because advocacy work, especially involvement in campaign work, has become under scrutiny from government administration and courts in some countries, especially in the Global South and when it involved foreign funding." – Is there evidence for this assertion? I don't know the rules for non-profit organizations in France or Germany, but in the United States, non-profits are explicitly prohibited from engaging in political activity. First of all, France, Germany and the U.S. are 'the Global South,' and the rule for the U.S. has been in place all along.
- "The Association of Professional Futurists (APF) was founded in 2002 and has more than 500 members. It emerged as a network of practicing futurists who act as analysts, consultants, and speakers." – The APF is a member organization, not a think tank.
- "The number and diversity of organisations engaging in megatrends and future research is increasing." – Is there evidence for this assertion?

As a result, I would not recommend this paper for most of the journals I know about. It could be improved by defining the terms used and by providing more evidence for its assertions.