

Megatrends Author Foresees the Millennium

At a recent symposium in Chicago, Naisbitt discussed what he concludes will be the 10 major trends in the 1990s.



"Helicopter" painting by Alex S. Tremulis photographed by Joe A. Goulait

John Naisbitt, who earned his fortune-telling reputation with his prescient best-seller, *Megatrends*, recently completed a book with the working title "Millennium Trends: The Megatrends for the 1990s," which is due out by the end of this year. At a Chicago symposium hosted by the Illinois Association of School Boards in April 1989, Naisbitt shared his predictions of the 10 most important trends that will characterize the coming decade.

1. *"The big story of the 1990s will not be high-tech, but a renaissance in the arts, in literature, and in spirituality."* According to Naisbitt, the accelerating pace and complexity of modern life is upsetting our balance. We'll seek to regain a sense of meaning by reexamining our humanity. "Science and technology don't tell us what it means to be human. The arts and literature and religion do that."

2. *The coming decade will witness the end of the welfare state and the death of socialism.* "In all industrialized countries this is happening," commented Naisbitt. "It will continue for the rest of the century." He sees the worldwide privatization trend as most important: "More than 80 countries are engaged in it. Over half of Britain's work force has been shifted from public to private employment." In the U.S., he added, the postal system will be privatized. And, in the Soviet Union: "A year ago there were 60,000 private enterprises. There are now over one million."

3. *English is emerging as the world-wide language.* More than a billion people worldwide speak English, two-thirds of all scientific papers are published initially in English, and more than one-fourth of all Chinese are studying English.

4. *Also on the horizon is the emergence of the Age of Biology.* Naisbitt

elaborated, "All biological systems are information-feedback systems. Physics was the communications model before. Now we are increasingly using the language of biology." For example, farmers will soon spend less money on chemicals and more on genetically engineered seeds, which will carry their own frost and drought resistance. The alarming aspect of this trend is in the area of human genetic engineering, Naisbitt warned. "The ethics of biotechnology will be among the great debates of the 1990s. To paraphrase Darwin, the debate will center on unnatural selection."

5. *We'll see a shift from the dominance of the Atlantic culture to the dominance of a Pacific culture.* According to Naisbitt, "A new world culture is rising on the Pacific rim. The Atlantic is the ocean of the present, the Pacific is the ocean of the future."

6. *Also ahead is "the decline of cities and the growth of the electronic heart-*

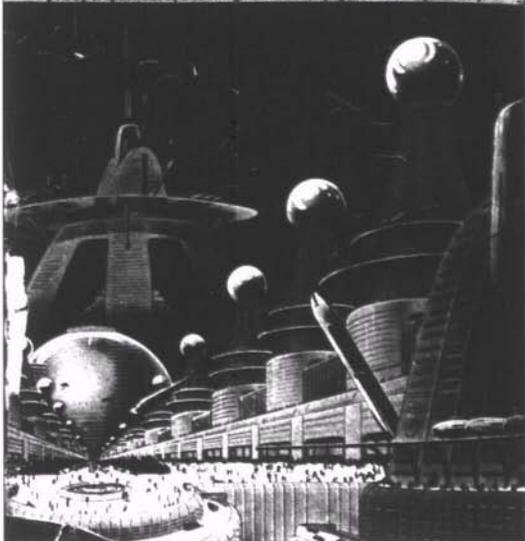


Future New York—drawing by William Eummel photographed by Lorie H. Aceto

Past visions of the future have been uncannily prophetic or sometimes ludicrously inaccurate, as these illustrations demonstrate. From Yesterday's Tomorrow, Joseph J. Corn and Brian Horrigan (New York: Summit Books, 1984).

CITY OF THE FUTURE

What will the city of tomorrow be like? Here is the giant plastic, metal, and unbreakable glass city of the 21st century. A city of science, of atomic power, of space travel, and of high culture. See page 242 for complete story.



City of the Future—illustration by Julian Krupa photographed by Joe A. Gouliatt

land." The industrial revolution created great cities in which workers lived their whole lives within walking distance of their workplaces. Today electronic technology allows an unbroken link between work and home, permitting people to move to more livable rural areas. "If cities did not exist," remarked Naisbitt, "it now would not be necessary to invent them."

7. "Worldwide free trade" will also characterize the 1990s. Underneath this development is a counter-trend of protectionism, but we are nevertheless moving toward a unitary global economy. "Agreements between countries are increasing," Naisbitt observed. "Brazil and Argentina are negotiating what may become a South American

common market." The global economic boom of the next decade will lead to "a period of accelerating competition," Naisbitt elaborated. "Interest rates will be contained because there is plenty of capital in the world today."

8. "There is no limit to growth." All things that come out of the ground are in permanent oversupply. Taxes are coming down everywhere. We are beginning to attend to our global environment." That is, we are attending to every condition that might limit future growth, from shortages of raw materials to overtaxation and environmental costs.

9. "The era of globalization has begun." Naisbitt explained, "There have been no wars among the 44 wealthiest nations since 1945. The

Cold War is clearly over. The post-war era is clearly over."

10. "Our human resources are our competitive edge," Naisbitt continued. "In this regard, no country in the world is better positioned for the future than the U.S. We have the richest mix of racial, ethnic, and global experience, which yields creativity. The U.S. has produced 160 Nobel Prize winners; Japan has produced 4. That is not an accident."

Concluding his address at the symposium, Naisbitt pronounced: "A millennium is a powerful thing. The last time, in the 990s, as we moved toward it, people went a little nuts. . . . Priests thought it would signal the end of the world. So the year 2000 will exaggerate everything we are doing. . . . The 1990s," Naisbitt said, "will be the most exciting decade of our lives." □

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