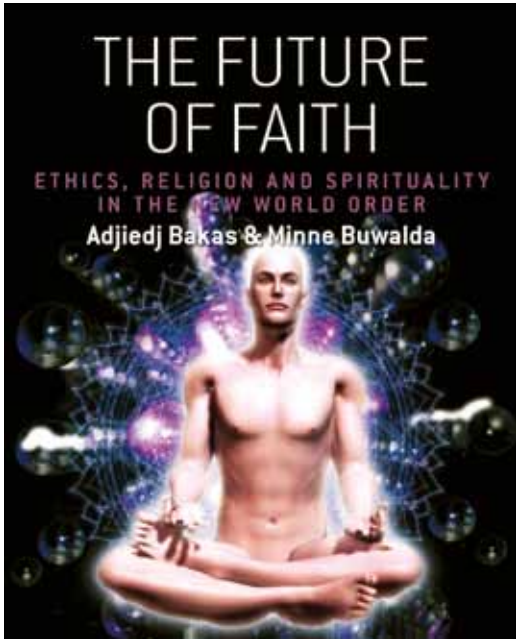


Two views on **Trendwatching**

Dossier Supertrends and *The Future of Faith* got published recently, two books that both have been written by a TrendWatcher Of The Year (TWOTY): Carl Rhode (TWOTY 2010) is co-author of *Dossier Supertrends* and Adjiedj Bakas (TWOTY 2009) worked on *The Future of Faith*. The differences between both books are grand, but because of this they provide great insight in the various ways in which professionals look at trends and the future.



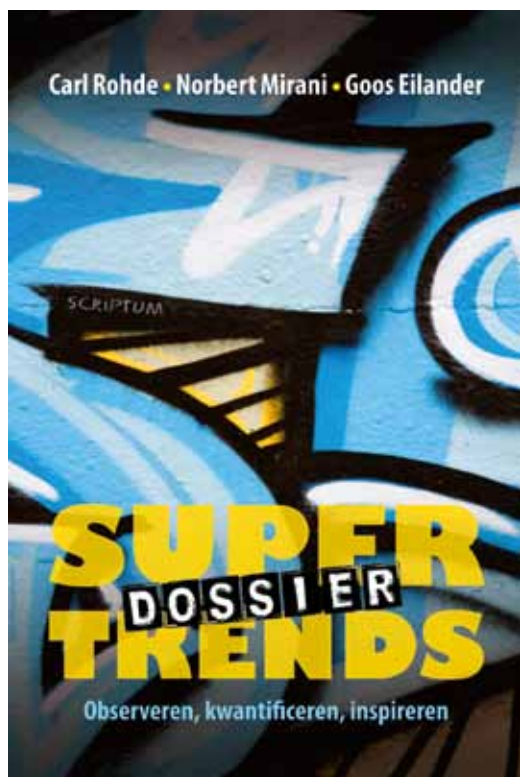
“Anyone who has walked through New York for a week can call himself a trendwatcher.” That’s the start of *Dossier Supertrends* by trendwatcher Carl Rhode (Science of the Time, TrendWatcher Of The Year 2010), Goos Eilander (market research agency Trendbox) and Norbert Mirani (founder of the knowledge center of Sanoma Publishers, Science of the Time and BrandFuel). In their book, they try to achieve a ‘deeper professionalization’. They represent a thorough approach, on a higher level than that of the ‘would be’ trendwatcher that has just spent a week in New York. They seem convinced that trendwatching can offer a higher added value. In innovation projects, for instance. In the last chapter of the book, the authors advocate the necessity of combining trendwatching and innovation. “Trendwatching is fascinating and inspiring, but it can be trivial. Innovation is never trivial, but innovating

without a solid knowledge of trends is innovating in the dark.” Professional trendwatching begins with trend spotting trends, according to the authors. A lot of trendwatchers stick to spotting trends, but the authors of *Dossier Supertrends* want to dig deeper. They want to expose the various ‘layers of meaning’ that are hidden within a trend and thus analyse trends on future potential. Based on observations – a lot of observations, they emphasize – they try to place trends within a wider social and cultural context, with the help of other trendwatchers (including the ‘cool hunters’ of Carl Rhode’s Science of the Time) and academic trend researchers. Finally, they strive to study every trend on the ‘extent to which it manifests itself in the present and can manifest itself in the future’. They do this by supporting their findings with information from Trendbox’s market research. Even when we’re talking about a small, emerging trend. Although in that case, they’ll need to make some ‘circling movements’ in their research.

Green scooter

“Observing, quantifying, inspiring”, is the subtitle of *Dossier Supertrends*. It is safe to say that they’ve mastered the ‘observation’ part. The chapter ‘Sustainability in the city’ teaches us that the scooter was the only motorized vehicle that sold particularly well in 2009. Especially the (‘green’) scooter is gaining popularity.

The quantification is mainly expressed in the statistical reports of Trendbox, in which each chapter maps the trends for the coming 20 years. A welcome addition! However, the figures do not always speak for themselves. The authors note that it is hard to determine how deeply rooted the desire for a better environment is, but figures from Trendbox show that the number of Dutch people that are willing to



pay a little extra for environmentally friendly products has declined in the past few years. There is, however, great appreciation for companies that operate in a socially responsible way. "In short, eco is a trend", the authors observe. But also: "Where is it all going?" And finally, the 'inspiring': that mainly succeeds due to the many striking examples of existing, but often relatively unknown social developments and new products and services.

Other way

A very different approach to the trendwatch profession is the one of Adjiedj Bakas (Trend-

office Bakas, TrendWatcher Of The Year 2009). Where Rhode and his colleagues base their conclusions on observations (or at least claim to do so), Bakas works the other way around. He has his conclusions mostly completed already, and then searches for what he calls 'evidence'. How he gets to his conclusions? They are often based on discussions with experts (like Minne Buwalda, the co-author of *The Future of Faith*), or based on his earlier findings or his own beliefs.

The differences between the inductive method of the authors of *Dossier Supertrends* and the deductive method of Bakas shouldn't be exaggerated. Bakas will surely have gotten one of his ideas from an interesting study, and the scientific style of Rhode's hypotheses must've come from somewhere as well. Nonetheless, Bakas his method makes an entirely different book. A much wilder book, in which one bold statement after another is fired your way.

Where the responsible approach of the authors of *Dossier Supertrends* prevents them from elaborating on the Eco trend any further, Bakas has no trouble at all with answering the question about 'where it is all going'. The rise of the 'Green Church' is inevitable, he states. "It elevates nature to its meaningful context once again and predicts stewardship of the Earth. The movement that wants mankind to develop a radically different economic model for reasons of climate change and sustainability, will bring unbelievers and members of all existing churches together under the umbrella of a 'green religion' in which Mother Earth is the star."

Jan Bletz