

# The Future of Business Negotiations: How Megatrends Influence Negotiation Behavior

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## Abstract

Megatrends, affecting multiple aspects of future society, economy, and technology, drive today's business world. They are expected to impact all areas in companies and will, therefore, most likely occur in business negotiations. Although several studies address future developments of different business divisions, the megatrends' impact on negotiations has, thus far, not been analyzed. We designed a model including the three megatrends: globalization and economic shift, digitalization and new technologies, and demographic and social change, which have main effects on specific negotiation aspects. Our study combined an online survey and expert interviews with negotiation practitioners to provide a first broad view of how megatrends affect future business negotiations. The results confirm our model and reveal a close connection of megatrends and single negotiation aspects. Among others, we examine an orientation toward global partners, an increased interconnection through various electronic systems, as well as two opposite relationship directions — long-term and integrative through strategic cooperation vs. short-term and distributive through competition and new technologies.

## Introduction

Today's business world is surrounded by new inventions, technologies, changing processes, innovations, and further developments, which rapidly lead to social changes. These social changes are driven by few, but tremendously important *megatrends*, which are macroeconomic forces affecting multiple aspects of future society, economy, politics, environment, and technology (Naisbitt, 1982). Through the emergence of megatrends, businesses are induced to adapt or handle new trends to cope with the pressure of increasing global operations (Atkin & Rinehart, 2006) and remaining competitive in interconnected markets (Deloitte, 2017; Lerch & Gotsch, 2015). Especially globalization and digitalization as two of those trends, have led to multiple changes in economy (Singh et al., 2009). Mobile technologies alter how and where people work. Co-creation and external partnerships gain importance as companies seek for advantages in new markets, like the collaboration between Fiat and Chrysler, and Google focusing on self-driving vehicles (Kiley, 2016). These vast market changes, furthermore, evoke a rising complexity of internal processes, and the technological progress enhances power changes, as well as altered communication patterns.

As the megatrends' impacts can be expected to affect all areas within companies, they will most likely also influence business negotiations (e.g., Bughin et al., 2017; Cuevas, 2018). Since negotiations take place in every company and have a substantial influence on the improvement of a company's performance (Graham, 1986; Patton & Balakrishnan, 2010), the observation and analysis of influencing factors coming along with megatrends are crucial not only for negotiation practice but also for deriving future research topics. To further enhance and optimize the achievement of company goals through improved negotiation processes, efficiency, and satisfaction (Borbély & Caputo, 2017; Patton & Balakrishnan, 2010), it is of high relevance to consider environmental influences, identify negotiation trends, and implement updated processes, technologies, and inventions. Therefore, negotiations should not be understood as single interactions (Neale & Northcraft, 1991), but as exchange processes impacted by other companies and the business environment (Borbély & Caputo, 2017).

Interestingly, although several studies have addressed future developments of different business divisions, such as sales and purchasing (e.g., Carter & Narasimhan, 1996; Cuevas, 2018; Janssens et al., 2019; KPMG, 2016; Oxford Economics, 2015; Spina et al., 2013; Zheng et al., 2007), the impact of future trends on negotiations has, thus far, not been analyzed, as trends fill a rather subordinate role and do not represent a functional area by itself. Moreover, recent studies showed that negotiation research topics are only barely oriented on new trends and remained within the same fields of research over the last years (Agndal et al., 2017; Knöpfle, 2019). If negotiation research wants to further support negotiation practice, studies among negotiation practitioners are needed to gain realistic insights and embed negotiating in a strategic environment (Fells et al., 2015). The paper, therefore, aims to provide a first broad view of different relevant negotiation issues and how current megatrends influence their future development in practice. Against this background, the research question arises how megatrends will influence business negotiations in the future.

We, therefore, conduct two empirical studies surveying practitioners. The objective of this paper is to provide a first broad view of how megatrends impact business negotiations. After a review of relevant literature on megatrends and the analysis of future-oriented negotiation factors we determine main megatrends and important negotiation aspects for our examination. The first study focuses on the broad range of negotiation aspects to investigate trends and future developments in negotiations. To gain deeper insights and identify underlying reasons for certain developments, we conduct a complementary second study by interviewing negotiation experts who have a high understanding of current challenges and trends. Based on the results, we discuss how megatrends influence negotiations, and provide implications negotiators need to consider to improve their performance in the future. Lastly, we conclude by identifying limitations of the studies and derive directions for future research.

## Theoretical Background

### Interdisciplinary Literature Analysis on Megatrends

In the megatrend literature, various approaches have examined the main global forces that have a long-term, serious, and powerful impact on the future. Since there is no universal definition or set of phenomena that defines specific megatrends, diverse research designs and methods, such as quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods designs, have been used to enable prospective studies. Thus far, however, no emphasis has been put on megatrends in negotiation science. Furthermore, foresight studies are mainly of great interest to organizations due to the practical relevance and strategic importance for future decisions. Therefore, predominantly business consultancies and research organizations have analyzed major trends and their developments. Considering the comparatively small selection of scientific literature on megatrends, we also considered studies of international organizations to derive the main global trends.

Reviewing the identified sources, it is striking that megatrends can describe not only more general developments, such as globalization and demographic change (e.g., Adolph et al., 2014; KPMG, 2014), but also particular progressions, such as smart technology and aging society (e.g., PIA, 2016; Vielmetter & Sell, 2014). At the same time, particular progressions can vary the number of trends determined from three up to 20 or more per study, and vary the terms, constellations, and the exact specification used. However, the many specific sub-trends predominantly mirror the fewer superordinate developments and, therefore, we use in this paper the superordinate developments as the main global drivers affecting the future. Moreover, each megatrend should already have—and must very probably continue to have—a significant influence on the future, which the subordinated future trends do not always assure (Allianz Partners, 2019).

The following literature review narrowed the publications to relevant papers published over a decade from 2009 to 2019, to provide a comprehensive but current overview of research identifying global megatrends. Specifically, we searched Google Scholar using the following search terms: megatrends, global trends, future trends, and trends and complemented our results with published white papers of consultancy websites. For a higher transparency, we combined subordinated trends and assigned them to a superordinate driver.

Four major trends to shape the future developments evolved from the analysis. These four trends are globalization and economic shift, digitalization and new technologies, demographic and social change, and climate change and resource scarcity (see Table 1). In order to concentrate on the global business environment with a special emphasis on the accompanying business negotiations, we take into consideration only the megatrends with an immediate influence, and disregard the megatrend climate change and resource scarcity. Although the climate change and resource scarcity trend might impact management decisions, it can be assigned to a different level as the prior choice of business partners.

The first megatrend *globalization and economic shift* is characterized by an increasing global interconnectedness and rise of networks and by the changing global patterns with a power shift from west to east. Technological advancements, innovations, and the general digitalization describe the second megatrend, *digitalization and new technologies*. Defined by a rapid urbanization, individualization, diversity, health, and aging population, the third megatrend constitutes the *demographic and social change*.

**Table 1**  
*Overview of Interdisciplinary Literature Analysis*

	Year	Authors	I. Globaliza- tion & economic shift	II. Digitalization & new technologies	III. Demo- graphic & social change	IV. Climate change & resource scarcity	Others
Scientific scholars	2009	Singh et al.	✓	✓			
	2011	Ferris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2012	Schiele et al.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2013	Rekettye & Rekettye	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2014	Adolph et al.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2014	Allahar	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2016	Retief et al.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	2018	Esposito & Tse			✓	✓	✓
Organizational studies	2010	McKinsey	✓		✓	✓	✓
	2012	Hajkowicz	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	2012	National Intelligence Council	✓		✓	✓	
	2013	Gore	✓	✓		✓	
	2014	GCB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2014	KPMG	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2014	PWC	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	2014	Vielmetter & Sell	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	2015	EEA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2015	EY	✓		✓	✓	✓
	2016	EY	✓	✓	✓		
	2016	PIA	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	2016	PWC	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	2017	Boumphry & Brehmer	✓		✓	✓	
	2017	Deloitte	✓		✓	✓	✓
	2017	PRI & Willis Towers Watson	✓		✓	✓	
	2018	EY	✓	✓	✓		
	2018	Roland Berger	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2019	Allianz Partners	✓	✓	✓	✓		
2021	Zukunftsinstitut	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

**Micro-Macro Model**

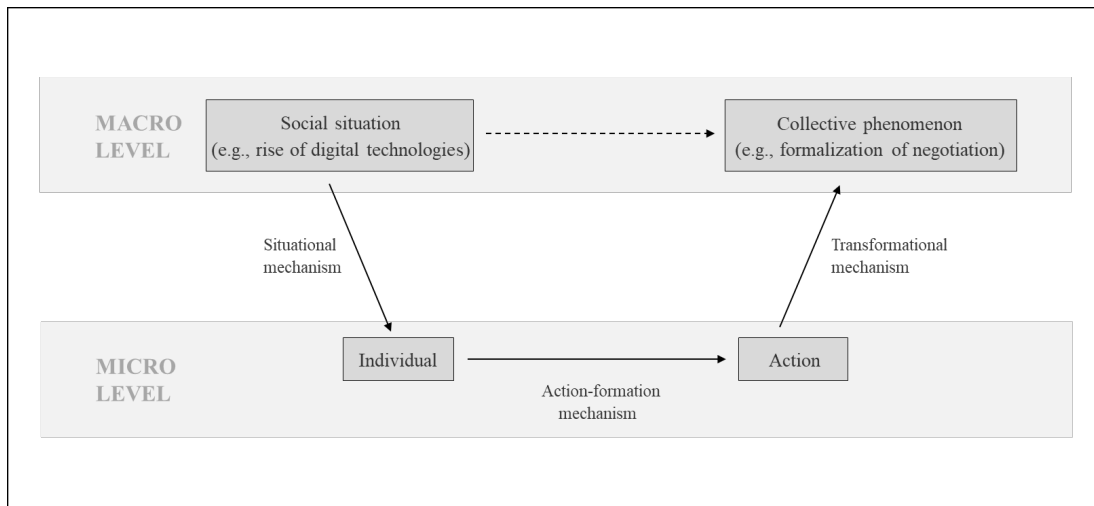
To describe the influence of megatrends on the global business environment and especially on negotiations, we apply a theory of sociology. The *micro-macro model* (Coleman, 1986) explains collective phenomena based on the behavior of individual actors. The *macro social reality* refers, thereby, to social situations and structures in the form of communities, institutions, and networks. The *micro social reality* describes, instead, the individuals themselves and their interactions, whereas the individuals may also refer

to corporate actors, departments, or whole organizations. Within the model, the explanation of macro trends as collective phenomena contains three basic steps (see Figure 1; Coleman, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Esser, 1999; Hedström & Swedberg, 1996). First, a specific social context on the macro level influences the individual on the micro level by affecting the individual's perceptions, beliefs, and decision-making process. The second step constitutes the specific actions individuals take due to their information or perceptions of—for them—possible actions and social conditions. Individuals will always choose the action that satisfies their interests and needs best. The third step links back to the macro level and aggregates the individual actions and interactions to phenomena on the macro level.

One can easily transfer the model to the influence of megatrends on negotiations. Starting at the macro level with step one, certain megatrends, such as digitalization and new technologies, influence the micro level and, therefore, negotiation experts as individuals, or whole negotiation departments. The individuals' willingness to communicate via electronic media in order to negotiate more efficiently and effectively could, for instance, be affected. Step two transforms those beliefs and needs into actions and implementations that have been changed accordingly in negotiations, like the usage of electronic negotiation support systems. The aggregated actions within the negotiations then transform in step three into collective phenomena on the macro level, such as a digitalization of the working environment and an increasing formalization of negotiations.

**Figure 1**

*Coleman's Micro-Macro Model.*



*Note.* Adapted from J. S. Coleman, 1986 (pp. 347).

## **Negotiation Framework**

To provide a holistic overview of negotiations, one requires a comprehensive framework to unite the individual elements. A few authors have classified the various individual findings and combined them into predominantly similar structures (e.g., Ghauri & Usunier, 2003; Neale & Northcraft, 1991; Rahim, 1983). Owing to its simplicity, we applied Neale and Northcraft's (1991) model consisting of negotiators' interaction processes (dynamic factors) and contextual characteristics (static factors). To narrow the scope of the empirical study, we disregarded certain negotiation aspects that could not be quantified or would have consisted of numerous items, such as the different negotiating styles (Rahim, 1983).

On the basis of the model of Neale and Northcraft (1991), we combined the influencing aspects into six essential and future-oriented factors. *Dynamic factors*, influencing the negotiators' cognitions and interactions, are summarized in the negotiation process. *Static context factors* include negotiation elements that the megatrends can influence directly or that could only evolve based on new developments. Therefore, in our framework, the static context factors cover the virtual interconnectedness through electronic media, negotiation support by digital systems, the relationships between the negotiating parties, negotiating with an international orientation, and the formation of the negotiating teams. Note that static and dynamic factors are closely linked. When a static factor, such as power structures in the relationship, changes, dynamic factors inevitably adjust, too. In the following, we briefly explain each factor.

### ***Negotiation Process***

By characterizing negotiations as a process (Peterson & Lucas, 2001; Weingart & Olekalns, 2004), one can identify three stages: the negotiation preparation, the actual negotiation, and the negotiation controlling (Ghauri & Usunier, 2003; Goering, 1997; Peterson & Lucas, 2001). The negotiation preparation creates the basis for the subsequent face-to-face negotiation, and its great importance has already been demonstrated many times in theory (Saunders, 1985; Thompson, 2012). The main task of the negotiation preparation is to plan the negotiator's and the counterpart's negotiation behavior in detail in advance, and to define motives, goals, and strategies. The negotiating parties pursue the different motives, goals, and strategies during the negotiation and realize them with the use of negotiation tactics. The controlling takes place after the actual negotiation and serves as a support for subsequent negotiations. It includes the analysis of goal achievements and discrepancies to optimize and improve future negotiations (Voeth & Herbst, 2015). Instead of considering the large amount of interaction parameters, such as proper planning and the use of certain tactics, we concentrate on the overall high relevance that should be assigned to each of the three phases to optimize negotiations and their results.

### ***Virtual Connectivity***

Nowadays, every negotiation phase can be supported by various electronic and non-electronic media. These include traditional media like telephones, but also relatively new media, such as systems for video conferences and e-mail messages. Above all, the systems contribute to bridge distances and, thus, facilitate the connection of negotiating partners around the world. The media use corresponds to effort reductions accompanied by cost and time savings, which basically lead to an increase in the efficiency of processes and the effectiveness of the actual negotiation such as faster contract conclusions (Bichler et al., 2003; Schoop et al., 2003). Despite the numerous advantages, one should not underestimate that in virtual negotiations, voice and gestures can only be transmitted to a limited extent or sometimes not at all, which could result in

communication problems and a more frequent occurrence of ambiguities (Schoop et al., 2003). Accordingly, a combination of different media and tools can be crucial.

### ***Digital Support***

Depending on the difficulty or importance of the particular negotiation, the involvement of digital support systems can be very helpful. Electronic systems enable companies not only to assess their own and the counterparts' position in detail, but also to plan suitable steps in order to be prepared for all contingencies in the actual negotiation. Electronic systems can support the negotiators by searching for the right business partner and by defining the contract conditions, the contract fulfilment, and the negotiation itself (e-negotiation) (Schmid & Lindemann, 1998, Schoop et al., 2001). E-negotiations enable to negotiate via electronic media (Bichler et al., 2003) and are primarily divided into electronic auctions (bidders make bids and algorithms choose the best bids), negotiation agents (digital agents take over the entire or parts of the negotiation for the client), and negotiation support systems (IT-supported negotiation, with a human remaining in control over the negotiation process) (Schoop et al., 2003). Negotiators should use digital support systems to ease the everyday work by simplifying and automating processes, and increase the overall efficiency and effectiveness (Bichler et al., 2003; Schoop et al., 2003).

### ***Relationship***

The relationship with the negotiating partner is a fundamental component of the overall negotiation. Over time, the development of long-term and personal business relationships instead of single actions and short-term relationships has increasingly become the focus of negotiation research and practice. Accordingly, both the relationship history and its future prospects are of high importance (Curhan et al., 2010; Dwyer et al., 1987; Patton & Balakrishnan, 2010). In addition to the duration, the business relationships are further determined by the degree of distributivity and integrativity (Walton & McKersie, 1965). In distributive negotiations, negotiating parties interact competitively, trying to maximize the outcome for themselves and, thus, creating a win/lose situation (Kersten, 2001). In contrast, integrative negotiations place greater emphasis on achieving the interests of both sides, thereby realizing the highest possible joint outcome (Pruitt & Lewis, 1975). Integrative negotiations are, therefore, better suited for long-term business relationships in which the negotiating parties try to achieve mutual goals (Lax & Sebenius, 1986; Sebenius, 1992; Thompson, 2012) and should, therefore, be further established and extended in the future.

The power structure determines to what extent a negotiating party can assert its interests in a negotiation at the other party's expense (Dahl, 1957) and, therefore, constitutes a key characteristic of business relationships (Tangpong et al., 2008). In the body of literature, four types have been formed (Bensaou, 1999; Cox, 2001; Heide, 1994; Tangpong et al., 2008) to describe the power positions: the relationship position (strategic/bilateral partnership), the adjustment or dominant position (captive-buyer/supplier-dominant or captive-supplier/buyer-dominant relationship), and the battle position (market/discrete relationship).

Within the relationship position, both negotiating partners are involved with specific investments, which enlarges switching costs and further deepens the connection with a long-term and cooperative partnership. In the adjustment position, one negotiating party is strongly dependent on the other because there are, for example, only a few suppliers with specialized knowledge in the market, but at the same time many buyers. The dominant position is the exact opposite, and one negotiating party dominates the other. In both cases, which are the adjustment position and the dominant position, the duration of the business relationship depends on the extent to which one party adapts to the other's conditions or changes the

relationship. In the battle position, buyer and supplier are very independent of each other and focus on single transactions, with low switching costs making it easy to change partners. (Bensaou, 1999; Cox, 2001; Dwyer et al., 1987; Heide, 1994).

Consequently, negotiators should strive for relationship positions to take advantage of the benefits for both parties and establish long-term relationships.

### ***International Orientation***

International negotiations are particularly of great importance when the best price and quality or unique resources are not available on the national market. Therefore, it becomes crucial for companies to identify their international partners' methods and behavioral patterns, to adapt to them, and to achieve mutual profitable results (Lax & Sebenius, 1986), as the number and relevance of international negotiations increase (Weiss, 2006). Moreover, in these pre-negotiation analyses it is necessary to consider the impact of cultural differences (Graham, 1985; Tung, 1982), which can occur on the company's organizational level and also on the individual level concerning the different negotiators. By carefully examining the differences between the cultures involved, the negotiating parties can interpret different actions and avoid misunderstandings and conflicts (Ghauri & Usunier, 2003; Salacuse, 1999).

### ***Negotiating Team***

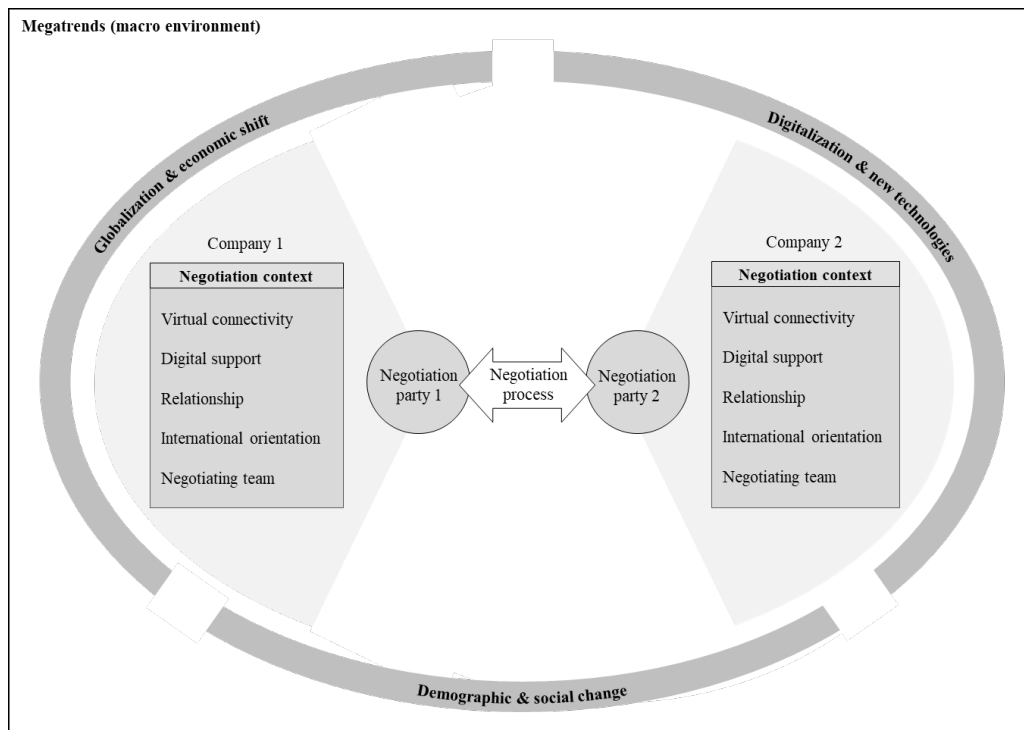
When forming the negotiating team, companies should consider the individual team members' competences, experiences, information, and sociodemographic characteristics, such as gender, age, and cultural background, since all of these aspects influence the entire negotiation process (Levi, 2001). Particularly against the background of more complex and international negotiations, the composition of teams and the mutual complementation of their members gain additional relevance (Bright & Parkin, 1998). Teams that bundle their various competences and knowledge, negotiate better and reach more integrative results through the development of creative and flexible solutions (Morgan & Tindale, 2002; Polzer, 1996).

## **Conceptual Model**

To demonstrate the possible impacts of megatrends on negotiations, we designed a model building on the prior identified megatrends: *digitalization and new technologies*, *globalization and economic shift*, and *demographic and social change*. We expect these megatrends to have main impacts on specific negotiation aspects (see Figure 2). Essentially, the superordinate megatrends influence the negotiation context (static factors) of the negotiating parties and the underlying bargaining process (dynamic factor).



**Figure 2**  
*Determinants Influencing Future Business Negotiations.*



The first megatrend, the ongoing *globalization and economic shift*, shapes the future, with fast changing competitors leading to anonymous markets and an *international orientation* (Lerch & Gotsch, 2015; Singh et al., 2009). The link with digitalization results in increasing competition and a rearrangement of power structures (EY, 2016; Weiss, 2006). We believe a structural change could, in turn, affect the *relationship* between negotiating parties. With new and international partners, it becomes necessary to re-explore the relationships and power distributions (Cox, 2001; Tangpong et al., 2008). We, therefore, expect the importance of each phase of the *negotiation process*—negotiation preparation, actual negotiation, negotiation controlling (Goering, 1997; Peterson & Lucas, 2001)—to rise too, as the process constitutes the connection between negotiating parties. As the multiplicity of technological communication systems and anonymized markets expand, it is likely that more distributive negotiations will occur. Moreover, new and cooperative business models, and the further development of existing relationships into long-term *relationships* can lead to powerful individual connections and an increased integrativity in future negotiations (Cannon et al., 2010; Prajogo & Olhager, 2012).

The second megatrend, *digitalization and new technologies*, leads to new inventions, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and virtual reality (EY, 2016; Loebbecke & Picot, 2015). In the context of business negotiations, we assume that digitalization particularly impacts the development of *digital negotiation support systems* and is cause for a growing *virtual connectivity* via various electronic channels, allowing a disengagement due to geographic dispersion (Bughin et al., 2017; Oliveira & Camarinha-Matos, 2012).

The third megatrend describes *demographic and social change*, manifesting itself in an older, but more diverse society involving an increasing war for talent (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; PWC, 2014). With a more heterogeneous—referring to age, gender, and culture—workforce, we expect a rise in the diversity of *negotiating teams*, leading to higher performances. Furthermore, new innovative training methods might contend with the war for high potentials by strengthening the companies' own workforce.

## Methodology

### Study 1: Quantitative Online Questionnaire

The first study examined the general trends and future developments in negotiations within the next five to 10 years by focusing on a broad range of aspects. These aspects include relationships, different communication characteristics, such as types of media or an integrative nature, negotiation support systems, and the use of digitalization within all phases of the negotiation process (see Figure 2). Following a review of relevant literature, we designed the study based on a quantitative approach and three survey periods starting in June 2018, December 2018, and January 2019. Managers pretested the questionnaires to ensure the coverage of all relevant topics and to gain insights into additional considerations on specific issues. To further improve the questionnaire, we adjusted each survey period by further items of interest to gain deeper insights.

### Sample

Five-hundred and eighty-four German managers engaged in standardized questionnaires through online surveys. To ensure a representative panel and qualified answers, using a proper understanding of market trends and visions for the company or department, only persons in leading positions were recruited through either a market research institute or personal contacts. The managers' companies were strongly internationally oriented providing a broad understanding of general current developments which are not restricted to a single country. We incentivized the participants with a management summary of the results. The extensive study examined cross-industry (retail, industrial goods, high technology, automotive, logistics/transportation, etc.) and cross-functional (purchasing, sales, IT, finance, marketing, mergers and acquisitions [M&A], managing directors, etc.) developments by questioning current circumstances and their future expectations to ensure a personal reference point and proper estimations.

Overall, the sample consisted of 72.3% males and 27.7% females. Most of the participants work in the management board (21.5%) or are head of a corporate function (18.5%). The other participants vary from division manager (17.8%) and department manager (16.0%) to team manager (15.8%). Most of the managers have more than 10 years of professional experience (59.2%) and work in companies with over 250 employees (53.5%).

### Analysis

The majority of the survey was analyzed descriptively due to the large amount of data. After assessing all results, it became apparent that certain aspects did not show any changes or interesting effects, but others clearly did. The most important results are, therefore, outlined in the following and were additionally analyzed and tested with a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) or t-test to determine the statistical significance ( $\alpha = .05$ ).

## Study 2: Semi-structured Interviews

The second study complemented the first study with qualitative, semi-structured interviews. The objective of the mixed method design was to gain deeper insights and specific experiences from managers who have an understanding of current challenges and trends in negotiations. Study 2 should further clarify not only the impact of megatrends on business negotiations but also especially the underlying reasons for changes in negotiation practice due to those megatrends.

### Sample

We conducted 28 semi-structured interviews with an average duration of 36 minutes by telephone and face-to-face meetings in April and May 2019. For confidentiality, we anonymized all information that could lead to an identification of the participants or their companies. The recruitment of all experts resulted from personal contacts. Furthermore, the experts had a deep understanding of negotiations by negotiating daily or at least several times a week, with negotiation experience of between one and 32 years. To obtain variance in the data, we again chose different industries and functions for the interviews. To provide a broad insight into negotiation practice, we focused mainly on the leading positions. Table 2 provides a detailed overview of the sample.

### Interview Guide and Procedure

The interviews were conducted based on a semi-structured guide. All questions were, therefore, posed with enough openness to provide the interviewees opportunities to mention aspects that were not considered within the questions asked. The interview guide aimed to further deepen the knowledge based on the online survey and was, therefore, structured to approach each megatrend directly. After the introduction and record of demographic data, questions concerning the findings about the megatrends *globalization and economic shift*, *digitalization and new technologies*, and *demographic and social change* were asked. The interviews concluded with any further comments the respondents wished to make.

### Analysis

We audiotaped and transcribed all conversations, and then we encoded and analyzed them with MAXQDA software. To ensure consistency of content and reliability of results, we chose a deductive-inductive formation of categories within a twofold process. After deriving the main categories from the existing systematization following the guide, we further developed and differentiated the categories by means of an inductive procedure in a second review. To guarantee reliability of the results, two persons encoded the interviews. The encoders again examined codes that did not coincide, and adjusted or described those codes in more detail. In addition, various negotiation researchers discussed and revised the results accordingly to ensure communicative validation.

**Table 2**  
*Overview of Negotiation Experts Participating in Interviews*

Negotiation function and position	Industry	Negotiation experience (years)
<b>Sales</b>		
Sales director (B19)	Metal industry	10
Head of sales (B26)	Textile industry	32
Team manager sales (B8)	Automotive	10
Team manager sales (B21)	Automotive	30
Key account manager (B2)	Software	20
Sales manager (B4)	Craft industry	4
Sales manager (B15)	Automotive	10
<b>Purchasing</b>		
Head of purchasing (B5)	Automotive	30
Head of purchasing (B11)	Construction industry	10
Head of purchasing (B12)	Mechanical engineering	14
Head of purchasing (B20)	Industrial technology	11
Head of purchasing (B27)	Textile industry	x
Head of international purchasing (B13)	Furniture	20
Purchasing manager interior (B7)	Automotive	4
Purchasing manager interior (B22)	Automotive	3
Purchasing manager exterieur (B23)	Automotive	7
Purchasing manager strategy (B24)	Automotive	6
Project manager purchasing (B25)	Automotive	3
Purchasing manager (B3)	Automotive	18
Purchasing manager (B28)	Automotive	x
<b>Business owner</b>		
CEO (B6)		
CEO (B10)	Beverage	20
CEO (B14)	Software	1
Business owner (B17)	Metal & electrical industry	x
Member executive board, head of HR (B1)	Industrial technology	10
	Software	x
<b>Other</b>		
IT account manager (B9)	Information technology	x
IT account manager (B18)	Internet service	8
HR manager (B12)	Automotive	30

## Results

Based on the data of the online survey and expert interviews, we derived several trends and changes that will influence negotiations in the next five to 10 years. The megatrends thereby influence individuals' actions with regard to negotiations and add up to collective changes within the six future-oriented negotiation aspects of our model, which are outlined in the following.

### Negotiation Process

Since the negotiation process is often described within the scope of three phases (e.g., Peterson & Lucas, 2001), the importance of negotiation preparation (p), actual negotiation (n), and controlling (c) today versus in the future was one focus of the survey. According to the respondents, a repeated measures ANOVA (rmANOVA) showed that a high relevance is currently assigned to all negotiation phases, but with significant differences ( $F[2,512] = 45.25, p < .001, \eta^2 = .15, n = 257$ ). The negotiation controlling is significantly less important ( $M_c = 3.89, SD_c = 0.89$ ) compared to the negotiation preparation ( $M_p = 4.30, SD_p = 0.77$ ) and the actual negotiation ( $M_n = 4.33, SD_n = 0.71$ ). The conspicuity stays present in the next five to 10 years as well ( $F[2,512] = 12.41, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05, n = 257$ ), since the respondents again consider the preparation and negotiation phases more important than the controlling phase ( $M_p = 4.09, SD_p = 0.86; M_n = 3.96, SD_n = 0.91; M_c = 3.83, SD_c = 0.89$ ).

Using an rmANOVA, significant differences can also be noticed in the general role of digitalization in the different negotiation phases ( $F[1.87,351.52] = 6.33, p < .01, \eta^2 = .03, n = 189$ ). Digitalization is of high importance in all phases. However, digitalization is assigned a significantly more important role in the negotiation preparation phase ( $M = 4.01, SD = 0.81$ ) than in the actual negotiation phase ( $M = 3.80, SD = 1.06$ ) or the controlling phase ( $M = 3.86, SD = 0.93$ ).

With regard to the support through electronic systems, 54.4% ( $n = 425$ ) of the respondents understood the systems' helpfulness in the negotiation preparation, whereas only 35.8% ( $n = 425$ ) considered the support of digital systems within the actual negotiation phase and 28.7% ( $n = 425$ ) would let digital systems assist in their controlling. Interviewed experts who mentioned the use of digital support systems within their negotiation process, viewed the advantages mainly in increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of every phase. Moreover, the negotiators are not disinclined from the use of further developed systems as virtual agents for the negotiation preparation. Half of the respondents (50.4%,  $n = 278$ ) imagined an increase in performance through the use of electronic systems.

### Virtual Connectivity

Given the existence of various media options for negotiations, the rmANOVA showed significant differences among the use of all specific channels ( $F[1.86,668.96] = 226.58, p < .001, \eta^2 = .38, n = 36$ ). More than half of the negotiations ( $M = 51.97, SD = 29.42$ ) currently take place via face-to-face meetings. According to the respondents, only 18.0% of their negotiations took place via electronic channels, such as email, video support systems, or actual negotiation support systems ( $M = 17.75, SD = 18.10$ ). Twenty-three percent of the negotiations took place over the phone ( $M = 22.95, SD = 20.12$ ) and 7.0% in written form ( $M = 7.39, SD = 11.87$ ). There is, however, a significant difference in the future use of media ( $t = -6.33, p < .001, n = 252$ ), as the importance of electronically supported negotiations is significantly higher ( $M = 3.87, SD = 0.80$ ) than that of face-to-face negotiations ( $M = 3.32, SD = 0.99$ ). For experts, the variety of media offers the negotiating partners the possibility to simplify their networking, which leads to global connections and, thus, an increase in negotiation opportunities. However, an increasing virtual connectivity does not only facilitate negotiations

and the communication with partners but can also lead to an anonymization of relationships and negotiation processes in general, as well as a greater dependence on each other regarding the protection of sensitive data.

### Digital Support

In 63.0% ( $n = 421$ ) of the questioned companies, the digitalization of negotiations has not taken place—not even partially. Therefore, only a minority used digital or electronic negotiation support systems. Although digitalization is associated with great uncertainty among the respondents, it is of high importance for companies in the future ( $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ,  $n = 250$ ). If used (37.1%,  $n = 156$ ), electronic systems provide process support by collecting data of or with the negotiating partner and transmitting the data collected (65.1%), serve as communication channels (63.4%)—negotiation experts mainly name Skype—function as a tool for the negotiation preparation (66.0%), or analyze and evaluate negotiations (52.0%). Besides the specific use of electronic systems in different stages of the negotiation process, the interviewed experts also mentioned the use of more comprehensive solutions, such as online negotiation systems and e-bidding (14.3%), in highly formalized negotiation processes.

The experts regarded an increase in the negotiations' efficiency and effectiveness as the systems' main advantages. Certain experts refused, however, to use any electronic support, mainly due to the need to establish individual and strong relationships, bad prior experiences with electronic support systems, or great challenges by investing and using the new systems. Furthermore, the acceptance rate was rather low because the creative and flexible reactions, development of strategies, and consideration of individual experiences are clearly assigned to human abilities, which systems cannot satisfactorily meet. The electronic support was, therefore, mostly appreciated for the automation of processes and the analyses of tasks within formalized negotiations, but for most experts (57.1%) a more powerful combination of the capabilities of man and machine is clearly conceivable in the future.

Although digitalization has a high priority in companies, the respondents agreed that new technologies like artificial intelligence and virtual or augmented reality did not play a great role yet ( $M = 3.74$ ;  $SD = 1.18$ ,  $n = 256$ ). Only 20.3% ( $n = 400$ ) of the respondents used such new technologies in negotiations. Nevertheless, according to 55.0% ( $n = 80$ ) of the respondents, new technologies are expected to increase in importance in the future. Generally, most experts believe that the development of new systems based on artificial intelligence is not that advanced yet and it will take several years to implement them in their businesses. About one third of the experts (35.7%) could not imagine the use of electronic support based on artificial intelligence for their negotiations at all, which further illustrates the uncertainty and lack of knowledge with these systems.

### Relationship

The experts predicted a significant difference within the development of integrative and distributive relationships ( $t = 12.70$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $n = 247$ ) in the future. The respondents expected the importance of integrative negotiations ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ,  $n = 247$ ) to increase by 74.3%, whereas distributive negotiations are judged to be significantly less relevant ( $M = 2.90$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) with an increase in importance of only 27.5%. Supporting an integrative trend, personal contacts between negotiating parties ( $M = 3.85$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ,  $n = 253$ ) and an early involvement of partners to promote product developments or innovations ( $M = 4.02$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ,  $n = 253$ ) gain importance in the future. The experts explained the increase against the background of intensive networking among the negotiating partners, the partner's confidence with innovative products or services in new business fields, and the sharing of resources and cost minimization through economies of scale. The results relate to the significant differences in current ( $t = -6.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $n = 175$ ) and future

relationships ( $t = -5.31, p < .001, n = 167$ ) as well. Within the next five to 10 years, long-term relationships (currently:  $M = 64.25, SD = 28.45$ ; future:  $M = 61.32, SD = 27.55$ ) will remain significantly more used than short-term relationships (currently:  $M = 35.75, SD = 28.45$ ; future:  $M = 38.68, SD = 27.55$ ). According to the experts, long-term relationships are mostly established due to two reasons: a sense of security, trust, and reliability, as well as strategic alliances and their competitive advantage.

However, according to the respondents, 38.7% ( $SD = 27.55$ ) of the relationships will continue to be short-term oriented in the future. The experts agreed that short-term relationships currently exist and will be built owing to the following reasons: fast changing of contacts, anonymous processes due to the digitalization and connection via electronic media, as well as increased competition and intensified pressure among companies due to changing market conditions and new market players. Accordingly, companies need to defend their power position and search for distributive solutions within negotiations. Supporting the distributive trend, experts furthermore named the lasting importance of strategic and economic factors, such as the necessity of the continuous use of machines and the possibility of getting a foot in the door of companies with a bigger market power. Therefore, 28.6% of the experts believed that distributive negotiations are occasionally necessary, but not in fact future oriented.

Closely connected to integrative and distributive results, is the power structure that defines the relationship and negotiation position among the partners. Based on the power structures derived from literature, the rmANOVA's results showed significant differences in the existence of the different positions ( $F[2.60, 548.83] = 21.86, p < .001, \eta^2 = .09, n = 212$ ). A significant majority of the negotiating parties cooperated on the relationship level ( $M = 35.67, SD = 24.90$ ) in which both parties are equally dependent on each other. The building of relationships was, therefore, most important to respondents. There were no significant differences between the battle ( $M = 22.66, SD = 23.17$ ) and adjustment ( $M = 24.84, SD = 20.26$ ) positions, but the dominant position was significantly least used ( $M = 16.83, SD = 15.37$ ) by the negotiating parties. However, it became apparent that all forms of power distributions take place within business negotiations.

When asked about the advantages of relationship positions, 35.7% of the interviewees mentioned integrative or at least better and fair results. The implementation of ethical behaviors in negotiations referred to social changes concerning individual values. We have already stated the advantages of integrative negotiations in the previous paragraph. Nevertheless, the specific support between the negotiating partners (i.e., emergency support during weekends), which is often not necessarily contractually bound, should be emphasized. The experts further highlighted that being in a relationship position is more likely if none of the negotiating partners has a monopoly position in the market.

### International Orientation

A significant difference in the internationalization of markets was clearly noticeable ( $t = -5.24, p < .001, n = 249$ ). The respondents attributed a significantly higher importance to prospective international negotiations ( $M = 3.79, SD = 0.90$ ) than national negotiations ( $M = 3.37, SD = 0.91$ ). For the interviewed experts, this result was independent from the company size or the operating sector. The reason for a trend toward an international orientation and, therefore, international negotiation relationships was the globalization and the related possibility of access to qualitatively better or innovative products, lower prices, special know-how, and other resources. The interviewed experts (75.1%) named price pressure as a reason for more international negotiations, which becomes particularly important for standardized products with no need of high quality. A further essential reason was the connectivity enabled by electronic media, which facilitated the networking between negotiating partners placed in different parts of the world. Moreover, according to the experts, political stability as well as economic power shift in developing countries should not be neglected in international markets, as they can both promote or restrict negotiations, depending on the circumstances.

## Negotiating Team

Considering how certain external and internal developments affect negotiating teams, it is possible to determine future changes. Internally, experts and respondents defined significant differences comparing the development of simple and complex negotiations ( $t = 8.84, p < .001, n = 256$ ). The majority of the respondents attached a higher increase in importance, over the next five to 10 years, to complex negotiations ( $M = 3.85, SD = 0.84$ ) instead of simple negotiations ( $M = 3.09, SD = 1.04$ ). Furthermore, this trend aligned with the enhanced focus of negotiations as a diverse and increasingly strategic task.

Experts required an increase in diverse team compositions and a diversity in the matching skills, referring to the war for talents, to counter the external demographic and social changes. According to the experts, team diversity in negotiations is mainly noticeable in terms of age and gender, and as the emergence of a new and younger generation with an increasing share of women. In every case, one can view a diversity of team members positively and link such diversity to effects as mutual learning processes, higher flexibility, and generally better negotiation results. Certain experts (10.7%) especially pointed out the need for international team members against the background of specialists in their own countries, who are not qualified enough, or who are lacking the cultural competencies for negotiations with specific international partners. The need for internationality aligns with the growing war for talents and the need to provide specific trainings for the negotiating team members to concentrate on their individual personality, experiences, and skills, better manage the cultural differences and complexity, and increase the overall negotiation success. The companies have recognized this need, and 71.4% of the experts stated that they regularly participate in training courses to improve their negotiation skills, their personal skills, and their product-related skills.

## Discussion

The goal of this study is to provide a first broad view on how megatrends affect future business negotiations, with the objective of encouraging further investigation into this new research field, gaining valuable insights for practice, and contributing to the development of new methods and topics. A broad range of literature already examines trends and developments of certain business functions, but lacks negotiation context, which is of high relevance for companies and their performance. We, therefore, conducted two studies with negotiation practitioners—a quantitative online survey and qualitative expert interviews—to address the research gap and structure this highly complex thematic area. Overall, it must be considered that the large number of examined items characterizing negotiations show a continuity, but interesting findings, future developments, and tendencies can be identified in detail.

The negotiation process is closely connected to the megatrends *digitalization and new technologies*. Digitalization and new technologies can be used to accelerate every negotiation phase, increasing the effectiveness and diminishing the relevance of national boundaries or long distances. When it comes to the digitalization and electronic systems support, the negotiation preparation has a more prominent role. The importance occurs due to a predominant use of automation for analyzing and training tasks during the negotiation preparation phase. Besides, all phases are assigned a high relevance today and in the future, although the negotiation controlling is significantly less important. Companies should, therefore, especially address negotiation controlling, as reflecting on mistakes and experiences can improve the negotiators' competencies.

The virtual connectivity, which is based on the megatrend *globalization and economic shift*, bridges the increasing international distances between negotiators and facilitates their contact without the necessity of face-to-face meetings and contributes to a worldwide network of negotiating partners. Due to the



megatrend *digitalization and new technologies*, electronic communication (mail, video support or actual negotiation support systems) gradually replaces face-to-face negotiations, leading to a virtual connection among business partners. The virtuality further enhances impersonal relationships and a stronger distributive behavior as a consequence of the missing connection between the individuals. In most cases, the distributive behavior should be minimized to optimize the overall negotiation outcome. Moreover, the megatrend *demographic and social change* leads to an improved work-life balance, as negotiators become independent in their negotiation venue choice through new technologies. Further, negotiators retrieve knowledge, gather information, and stay connected through new media as part of the new knowledge society.

The digital support results indicate that negotiation practitioners are generally hesitant to use digital systems and have limited experience with them, which manifests itself in a general uncertainty with regard to all aspects considering *digitalization and new technologies*. Digitalization has an overall high priority, but systems are not matured yet or have a low acceptance rate because of their difficulty, and therefore most of the work steps still take place offline. In the future, however, the importance of digital systems and the use of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and augmented reality will increase. Thus far, systems are accepted if they support negotiators with the analysis or information transmissions and, thus, increase the efficiency and effectiveness. Negotiators should, therefore, proactively enhance the implementation of electronic negotiation support systems to formalize negotiations, save costs, save time, and simplify and shorten the negotiation process itself. The use of digital systems enables negotiators to keep up with emerging developing countries intensive technological progress with regard to the megatrend *globalization and economic shift*.

Within the scope of negotiation relationships, it is possible to distinguish between two important future directions: integrative negotiations focused on long-term and personal relationships, and distributive negotiations based on short-term and rather impersonal relationships. Within the megatrend *globalization and economic shift*, integrative negotiations as well as building personal long-term relationships become increasingly important in the upcoming years, due to the early involvement and stronger networking among the negotiating partners. Moreover, the specific and complex requirements of innovative or individualized products and services, which only certain business partners can meet, can result in strategic cooperations with competitive advantages. Furthermore, the strategic partnerships are mirrored in the current power structure according to which all power relations are of relevance, but the relationship position clearly determines business negotiations. In the partnerships strong ethical values belonging to the megatrend *demographic and social change* lead to fair, honest, and trusting negotiation behaviors. Considering the partners' priorities and needs results in transparent communication and high interaction, while partners focus less on allocating resources, such as the negotiation price and more on process goals, such as long-lasting relations. Through the megatrend *digitalization and new technologies*, companies and their customers are strongly networked, and, thus, external influences such as cyberattacks would affect both sides, which leads to a higher importance of reliable partnerships that involve an understanding for security and trust. However, due to the megatrend *globalization and economic shift*, markets develop, grow, and change very fast. The volatility of certain business models and a strategically broader base of companies, therefore, push the negotiating partners toward short-term and distributive relationships, and promote their low commitments and flexibility. A dynamic environment makes it necessary to clarify the power position within a negotiation and consolidate the dependence of the partners to enforce own goals as well as adapt the degree of openness and transparency towards the partner. Especially through the megatrend *digitalization and new technologies*, certain digital negotiation systems such as e-auctions are accordingly used to aim for profitable and the best possible distributive results, while disclosing as little information as possible. Overall, to further enhance existing and develop new partnerships it is crucial for negotiators to analyze their specific market position and interests to select the optimal strategical orientation.

In the future, international negotiations and partnerships will be significantly more important than national relationships. Based on the megatrend *globalization and economic shift*, it is possible to provide access to better qualities, prices, know-how, and resources than those on the national market. Larger markets with a more intensive competition are, therefore, chosen, increasing the importance of profitability and the need for *digitalization and new technologies* to optimize and facilitate negotiations for practitioners. Moreover, it is possible to use specific competencies of people from different nationalities to create new ideas and innovations, but simultaneously cultural competences need to be integrated or trained in international negotiating teams to handle *demographic and social changes*.

With the increasing relevance of complex and integrative negotiations, the negotiating team becomes particularly important. Teams need a diverse setup to be able to meet the varying requirements of different negotiation tasks. By facing the megatrend *demographic and social change* along with the war for talent and increasing personal demands, it is crucial for companies to tie talents and experts to their negotiating teams and further support negotiators' skills and competencies with regular trainings (Fisher & Fisher-Yoshida, 2017). The offer of non-monetary compensations, to increase the work-life balance, can additionally strengthen the motivation against the background of value transformation. Through the megatrend *digitalization and new technologies*, demands change, requiring technical knowledge and the management of different systems to complement negotiation skills used in the past. By restructuring former teams to distribute competencies and characteristics, such as gender, age, personality, and expertise, and by providing intensive, subject-specific, and individual skill trainings, it is possible to achieve higher negotiation performances.

### Limitations and Future Research

Although our studies contribute important value toward the new research field of negotiation trends, certain limitations should be considered for future analysis to broaden our first findings.

To gather a broad range of information regarding negotiations, we designed the quantitative study with the objective to include all relevant aspects characterizing negotiations. Since the studies' structure excludes deeper insights into more complex negotiation dimensions and limits the number of items examined, further research is needed. Future studies could investigate more specific negotiation aspects, such as the influence of megatrends on individual parts of the negotiation process and negotiation personalities. The expert interviews are a first step to gain a deeper knowledge. These interviews are, however, semi-structured and therefore led the participants in a certain direction. Consequently, the participants predominantly remain in their previous thinking patterns and hardly manage to relate individual aspects to one another. To identify and explore new developments and structures, a stronger emphasis on a stricter exploratory approach would allow greater opportunities to detect new aspects and trends.

It might be possible that sensitive data, for example, the participants' use of electronic negotiation systems and new technological developments or the number of national and international business relationships, is not accurately shared due to confidentiality concerns. Furthermore, specific results require an estimation as the assessment of relationship types or certain future developments, and are, thus, solely based on the participants' subjective evaluations. A longitudinal study with several survey periods could enhance more precise predictions and lead to more objective results. Moreover, aspects in connection with digitalization were in particular emphasized in the studies by the managers. It is nevertheless important to examine other trends' impacts and focus areas to reveal interdependencies and gain a better understanding of future developments. The research field of futures studies apply approaches, such as the scenario technique to guarantee a highly structured and systematic methodology. Scenario analyses can, thus, enable the interconnectedness of individual negotiation aspects and trends by visualizing hidden connections and simultaneously reducing the complexity of results, which is hardly possible for individual negotiation experts

(e.g., Schnaars, 1987; Varum & Melo, 2010). A combination of various qualitative and quantitative methods such as consistency analysis and workshops can be used to observe and identify future developments and link the influences of different factors to overcome isolated and linear future images. Scenarios, therefore, describe alternative futures, instead of unstable predictions to fully cover the possible future space and can be used to assist in decision making and provide a strategic orientation (Mannermaa, 1991).

The study is based on a wide range of industries and business units across Germany, which provides great insights into the varying negotiation characteristics. Further research, however, could focus on future assessments of negotiations from a wider variety of divisions and industries for more detailed information, and address how an international context as the influence of culture and other countries might affect changes.

### Conclusion

In summary, our findings show a current and ongoing change in negotiations. The megatrends *globalization and economic shift*, *digitalization and new technologies*, and *demographic and social change* have a noticeable and ongoing impact on negotiations. In several parts, the future developments are clearly noticeable (i.e., international relations), but others still need additional in-depth analysis (i.e., team structure). Overall, the global orientation and interconnectedness of negotiations will further increase, thus negotiators need diverse competencies to manage the rising complexity. On the one hand long-term partnerships, strategic cooperations and an integrative negotiation behavior define future negotiations, whereas the digitalization will intensify a competitive, short-term oriented and distributive negotiation behavior. Further research is needed to determine additional future insights and complement our findings. Practitioners can use our suggestions to become aware of and adapt to future changes, and early on initiate a future-oriented thinking in their companies to stay competitive and optimize their negotiations.

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