



SOCIAL FUTURING – EXPECTATIONS AND RISKS

Second Conference of the Social Futuring Center

15/06/2017
14.00 – 20.00
A38 Ship

Program



13.30 – 14.00 Arrival, Registration

14.00 – 14.10 Opening ceremony, Foreword – Zoltán Oszkár Szántó

14.15 – 16.20 I. Plenary Session – Man and Environment

Chair: Balázs Szepesi

14.15 – 14.35	Bertalan Meskó Science fiction in healthcare
14.35 – 14.45	Commentary: László Lovászy
14.50 – 15.10	Tamás Kocsis Finite Earth, Infinite Ambitions: Social Futuring and Environmental Sustainability from the perspective of Social Science
15.10 – 15.20	Commentary: János Mika
15.25 – 15.45	János Setényi Global Production and Sharing of Knowledge: Expectations and Risks
15.45 – 15.55	Commentary: Aczél Petra
16.00 – 16.20	DISCUSSION, Questions and Answers

16.20 – 16.45 Coffee Break

16.50 – 19.00 II. Plenary Session – Strategies and Methods

Chair: Petra Aczél

16.50 – 17.10	Loránd Ambrus Future-proofness and longer term political strategies
17.10 – 17.20	Commentary: Zoltán Balázs
17.25 – 17.45	Eszter Monda Social Futuring in the Context of Futures Studies
17.45 – 17.55	Commentary: Réka Várnagy
18.00 – 18.50	DISCUSSION, Questions and Answers

18.50 Closing Ceremony, Afterword – János Csák

19.00 Reception

PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

14.15 Bertalan Meskó

Science fiction in healthcare

Commentary: László Lovászy

Healthcare and healing has never seen such rapid changes as they do today, due to technical and disruptive innovations. The two thousand years-old status quo has been wiped out; the immense amount of information and tools are all accessible to professionals as it is to patients and none of the participants of healthcare is prepared for this. The technological revolution has brought cultural changes with it, where the emphasis lies on human relations, empathy and skill, all the while every part of healthcare is becoming more and more technologized.

It is a great challenge for both professionals and patients to find balance in this wave. Medical curriculum has to include methods and knowledge as to prepare new doctors for their new tasks: instead of being the key keepers to their very own Ivory Towers, they have to learn how to be a guide for their patients in this digital-medical information jungle.

Teachers and decision-makers therefore have to provide a bridge between the science fiction-like technological future and today's merits of healthcare, with digitalizing services, emphasizing prevention and propagating a new type of doctor-patient relationship.

The very key to this is the futurist mindset which may help spread knowledge and formulate well-established decisions in this information-driven world.

14.50 Tamás Kocsis

Finite Earth, Infinite Ambitions: Social Futuring and Environmental Sustainability from the perspective of Social Science

Commentary: János Mika

In a historical sense, humanity has accomplished its mission: it has populated Earth and has used the riches and resources of the former to its own benefit. In this process, “wanting more” has been encrypted in our genes – be it in terms of numbers, or material comfort – and we have developed a tendency to heed this incentive in our decision-making (For example, when do we feel like we have improved at a personal or family level?) However, from an environmental perspective, Earth has a limited amount of resources, placing restrictions on these high expectations. Accordingly, humanity clearly needs to identify new ways of living, and make efforts to develop new goals.

Maintaining at least an average standard of living for ten billion people requires immense control over resources. This kind of control may be called external control (ex-control) and has intensively developed since the Industrial Revolution; that is, since the beginning of the use of fossil energy sources. It is important to realize, however, that one of the many things that differentiates us humans from animals is not only our ability to exploit such forms of external control, but also our significant control over internal motives in the form of the conscious management of our desires: this can be called internal control (in-control).

In the light of this situation, it is worth exploring what the connection is between the more or less well-known concept of environmental sustainability and that of social futuring. Is there any overlap between the two concepts, and how can one evolve from the other? Can we identify any local-level (dis)similarities regarding these two in practice? The significant potential inherent in human beings – the unfolding of which is evident on a historical scale – can make interpretation of this issue easier. In this context, it is worth identifying the cornerstones of social futuring so as not to impair human ambition by blaming it for using up the Earth's limited resources and causing natural disasters. This goal is to give humanity new direction and impetus, while retaining the intensity of earlier ambitions.

15.25 János Setényi

Global Production and Sharing of Knowledge: Expectations and Risks

Commentary: Aczél Petra

This short addition to the discussions tries to briefly show the most important steps of the process of the fast globalisation of Higher Education: a global switch to the degree-system, gradual build-up of transnational credit transfer schemes, standardisation of curricula and textbooks; the evolution of the global workforce market due to highly mobile students and teachers; the spread of university and franchise foundations; the breakthrough of free online courses; the appearance of global university ranking tables, ending with a PISA-like post-grad competence tests developed by OECD.

My main message is that the strong globalization trends can only be absorbed by localization. In the second half of this discussion I will provide a typology of localization strategies through a few examples, such as:

- graduate education points only for earning additional credits (Aquicum Institute of Technology)
- graduate-only (cream-off) universities (CEU)
- national key institutes and key laboratories as excellence centres (China)
- regional universities aiming for regional development (Finland)
- co-working partnership networks (EU applications)
- research consortia led by European elite universities (EU Horizons 2020)

Therefore it is shown that the biggest challenge of a national system of higher education (including its regulative framework) is to find a balance between the intelligent acceptance of external changes (so called global trends) and the creative management of localization initiatives. The key term for local regulators would be functional differentiation, which allows for each participant to find unique answers to global challenges, and lets them formulate local opportunities and services. The duty of a nation-state is to help and sometimes manage these processes of functional differentiation instead of forcefully keeping integrity or introducing homogenous reforms.

16.50 Loránd Ambrus

Future-proofness and longer term political strategies

Commentary: Zoltán Balázs

For a start, I would like to argue that future-proofness is a first and foremost a human virtue. Thus it is also a virtue of human communities in general. In this latter context, the problem of what a future-proof political society could possibly mean must be inevitably faced.

Next, it seems natural to presume that there is a close conceptual connection between future-proofness of a political society and its longer term political strategies. But we cannot take this idea seriously without possessing a suitable notion of political strategy available. While working out these conceptual connections we may well encounter difficult theoretical problems.

An alternative to the direct conceptual approach is to examine how longer term political strategies served future-proof political societies in the past.

Let us take Leszek Kolakowski's incisive 1971 paper, "Theses on Hope and Despair". Kolakowski here discusses the problem of how to subdue a contemporary Communist regime without armed struggle. It thus targets a regime that has to base its sole claim to legitimacy on an ideology, without, however, practically anyone in the political society believing in that ideology. Its rule therefore can be secured by violence and relentlessly violent communication only. By the end of the eighties Solidarity and its political allies succeeded in dismantling the totalitarian regime in Poland. And indeed, the strategy of Solidarity involved a well thought out conception of a future-proof Polish political society.

A serious reading of Kolakowski's paper should then uncover several lessons about the concept of longer term political strategy. We could best access these lessons by a close scrutiny of his text and attempting to answer questions it surely raises.

17.25 Eszter Monda

Social Futuring in the Context of Futures Studies

Commentary: Réka Várnagy

In my presentation I shall be looking for the answer to the question of how we could use the methods of futures studies in the research of social futuring. First of all, I shall define futures studies and social futuring, and analyse the evolution of futures studies to show how the methods had changed and how those could prove useful in the field of social futuring. After this, I would like to introduce the generic foresight process of applying said research methods and approaches, and finally, contextualise all with social futuring.

During the first social futuring workshop conference, future orientation was mentioned, which is also an important part of the research of social futuring. Measurement of future orientation is possible and advisable on individual, organisational and even national levels. Furthermore, I would like to examine individual and organisational future orientation and the related „foresight maturity model” linked to the idea of social futuring. I am also going to compare future orientation indices (SOFI, JKB) and point out the pros and cons of each.

My goal is to show how futures studies could prove useful in the research of social futuring in terms of its problem-solving approach, and how its methodology and foresight process could be used in respective contexts. In addition, I would also like to show what kind of measurement and indices of future orientation could be used for the analysis of individual, organisational and national social futuring.