

New releases: Hungary in 2025

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and change on a more *ad hoc* basis in relation to specific opportunities and people.

. **Twitter.** It is an opt-in counterpart or parallel to certain (mainly news & broadcast) functions of the website or listserv. We aim to set up a (group) feed by the end of this year with a group of volunteers who are already familiar with Twitter. A pilot period of about 1 month is foreseen before this channel will function independently of the communication strategy group.

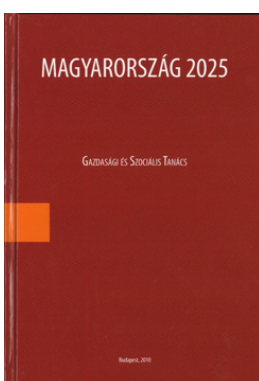
. **Blog.** A blog is a highly functional, flexible and free way to curate quality content in our subject domain(s). We aim to have a blog running before the end of year (2011). We need 5-10 reasonably experienced writers as contributors and want to post approximately every two weeks. A pilot period of 2-3 months is foreseen to establish a smooth process and regular updating.

. **Website portal.** We consider the current Joomla based website to be sufficient as is, but with some room for improvement. Firstly, content needs to be updated more frequently and consistently. Secondly, the look of the site can be improved, and we recommend the design of a new template, that can also aesthetically cohere with the look of the blog and social networking sites. By mid 2011 we aim to teach more potential contributors how to use and update the site, create a rotating system of contributors so that at any one point in time there are multiple people that can help make changes.

. **Illuminate.** This is an online collaboration tool that we would like to introduce to the membership in a scaled fashion, through the setup of webinars. We aim to have these up and running for about four times a year by the end of 2011.

Social networking platform We recommend using a social networking platform to enable forums and threaded discussion, chat and social networking for members. These platforms allow members to develop profiles, conduct cross membership communication, have threaded discussions, post comments, create specialist groups, and share documents. We would like to see a platform introduced to members and functioning well by the end of 2011.

NEW RELEASES



Hungary in 2025 [Csaba LENTNER]

This book was initiated by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences concerned with the society's confidence in the future fading away. The authors outline the possible and desirable development future alternatives for Hungary based on professional forecasts and non-experts' opinions (stratified, representative polls). The futurists try to tell – building upon professional knowledge as well as the opinions of young people – how the Hungarian society is going to develop when those youngsters, members of the millennium generation will be decision makers actively forming the society. The book covers 30 studies in specific fields of social, economic and technological development. This mosaic-like set of knowledge is arranged by Professor Erzsébet NOVÁKY, project leader, co-author and editor of the book, according to the methodological principles of interdisciplinary futures studies. She believes that the planning should be more and more based upon the accomplishments of futures studies. "Otherwise we can get into a situation where handling the changes of the

Edited by: Professor
Erzsébet NOVÁKY,
Published by: Hungarian
Economic and Social
Council (2010) Budapest,
560 p.

country and the whole world will be quite difficult” – says NOVÁKY, leader of this research.

Introducing a book that displays so many fears and hopes, the reviewer has to touch upon the social and economic milieu of the country in question. Hungary’s 1100 year-old history is marked by delayed stages of economic and social development from the 16th century on. The Turkish wars, the loss of independence, two defeats in world wars, and finally joining the communist block harmed the Hungarian society. The railway construction boom that boosted the economy of the United States and helped the democratization of the American society, in Hungary it preserved the backward social relations from the second half of the 19th century. Having said so, it also invigorated the economy. It helped a semi-feudalistic class, interested in slowing social progression, to stay in power.

The Soviet type planned economy helped to rebuild the country after World War II, but after running out of its reserves, the country fell into a deep social and debt crisis. Since the end of the eighties, establishing the market economy dynamised the economic growth, but a significant number of people have hardly felt its positive effects. General employment rate is extremely low now, only at 54.9%, while unemployment rate among 15 to 26 year-old people is 26.7%. Unfavourable tendencies range from the decline and aging of the population to worsening state of health. In a country based on market conditions, a society with deteriorating outlook certainly will not build a successful market economy. Although, the rate of foreign working capital is high, which helped to modernize the technological level of production, the budgetary situation of the country and the instability of the national currency are worrisome. By now, the crisis that started from the subprime mortgage market has distressed many Hungarian households. Most of them borrowed heavily in foreign currency, resulting in a growing number of insolvent families. No wonder that this nation is concerned with its own future.

This raises the significance of futures studies as an interdisciplinary study in Hungary. Hungarian futures studies started in 1968, in the first year of the planned economy system’s New Economic Mechanism, under the leadership of the late Professor Géza KOVÁCS. It continued with the formation of the Committee on Futures Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and then with the foundation of the Department of Futures Studies at the country’s first economic university, Corvinus University.

The essays in the book were inspired by these organizational frameworks. The book is an outstanding achievement of the institutionalized 42 year-old Hungarian futures studies. It uses an entirely new methodology, in accordance with the social demand as well as its traditions. Complex visions elaborated in the 1970s pointed to improvement in the efficiency of production as the engine of development. One of the critical diagnoses, declared in 1979, was that by 2020, the industrial society would not meet the growing needs of society, except with the help of science-inspired production and service development. Complex visions elaborated after the millennium and led by professor NOVÁKY use new approaches like this very book itself. Namely, a forecast is worked out amid the circumstances of the paradigm shift and the complexly interpreted instability. The surveys are focused on the individual as a bio-psycho-social being, developing a

relationship with the future closer than previously. By constructing more and more future variants, it tries to ensure a greater freedom of choice as the individual has to meet future expectations despite various changes and future shock factors. A new society has to be built on new values.

This new method of survey breaks with the conception – fundamental during the decades of the planned economy – that the economy's state of development and its future trajectory determines the society of the future. Renewed methodology of futures studies is adjusted to the altered social and economic relations. John LUKACS¹ derives the 21st century from 1989, the termination of the Soviet-American confrontation, cessation of the Soviet zone of influence in Eastern Europe. He believes that the institutions of the market economy and the new democracy turning into a solid system began not in 2001 but in 1989. Similarly, Hungarian futures studies also started in the time of the erosion of the planned economy. Thus, today it is already a mature science working with foresight for over 20 years.

Hungary is a special case where, although futures studies used to be performed within the framework of the planned economy, the future of the Hungarian economy was still seen in connection with certain market elements – which partly became reality, creating a better economic and social situation than that of other Eastern European countries. This is the reason why Hungary could build up its market economy and a pluralistic society first. In Eastern Europe, the precursors of the now well-known characteristics of the 21st century have already appeared during the 1980s, and to some degree even in earlier decades. Hungarian futurists of the 1970s, working in a restricted economic, non-democratic system, envisaged the necessity of an alternative based more on a market oriented and democratic approach. They considered it to be the more effective model.

The authors of the book *Hungary 2025* wanted to have a look at the prospects for the next generation. The goal was not to give a precise prediction by drawing up one vision, but to sketch the possibilities, fears and hopes waiting for the Hungarian society, and to work out the alternatives for Hungary around 2025. The mission of the book was to draw attention to the fact that the 'present' of the next generation is formed by us in our present as well as in the close future, and therefore, we have a great responsibility to fulfill. The aim of the research was to assist society's future-oriented and future-conscious thinking.

Hungarian futurists claim that a better future would come only if we can face the changing world – instead of obsolete ideas of the past, relying for our future on adaptation to and recognition of the opportunities offered by the new situation. However, discovering these changes is quite a difficult task. To achieve it, the researchers applied three methodology principles of futures studies: *complexity*, *participativity* and *alternativity*. Using these methods jointly is an unconventional research approach. In regard to *complexity*, they tried to cover as many fields of reality as possible. In the spirit of *participativity* they intended to involve as many people as possible from those whose future was dealt with. The researchers put emphasis on activating non-professional youngsters. Finally, *alternativity* meant constructing numerous different scenarios in

¹ Lukacs, John (1993): *The End of the Twentieth Century and the End of Modern Age*, Ticknor & Field, New York, USA

order to answer various problems. The thinking was that alternative methods leading to alternative objects may furnish various answers for future problems.

A Hungarian saying says that the gist always lies in the details, which is true for the message of this book. The researchers were exploring the changes determining Hungary's future in two areas closely associated with each other. One of them includes the factors we are able to influence (such as demography, health care, nutrition, education, sustainability of households, regional development, social changes). The other includes those we can have only a moderate impact on, like globalization and exterior economic conditions. Changes can be identified in four basic areas: demographic-social conditions, technological development, natural and economic environment. These are the areas where the population's potency to form the future appears most explicitly. So, these became the object of the researchers' analysis.

In accordance with the principle of *participativity*, individual ways of social reformation were explored. Present-day youngsters, prospective decision makers of 2025, were asked about their ideas concerning the future. Researchers were curious about how the members of the millennium generation relate to the future, as globalization, digitalization and virtual reality are such dominant experiences for them. These non-professional beliefs compose the expectations from which alternative scenarios can be elaborated. Professional forecasts make up one pole in the complex set-up of past, present and future, while those expectations make up the other. The two poles form the action space together, potentially influencing the future by decisions inducing changes and helping adaptation.

Under the principle of *alternativity*, complex alternatives were defined by two steps. First, by building on individual attitudes revealed through participatory futures studies alternative scenarios were compiled. Secondly, professional forecasts were integrated into those scenarios. So, professional and non-professional elements were related to each other. In this process, scenarios based on expectations were converted to complex future alternatives. More precisely, future possibilities worked out by professionals and expectations drawn up by non-professionals were brought together. The outcome can be the basis for developing strategic concepts. It can draw a set of individual and public actions, because future alternatives are made up by professional and non-professional fears and hopes, possibilities and expectations.

The present review, partly due to size limits, will not disclose the result of the separate surveys. So, I will confine it to two remarkable statements. There is serious fear among professionals that in absence of significant changes, Hungary will become one of the most backward countries of the European Union. Inflexible, out-of-date economic structure, dependent on imports of raw materials, energy and accessories, permanent budget deficit, high inflation and unemployment will mark the country. However, the country could succeed with a mature modernization strategy, but it would require the cooperation of economic and political actors (which is not a simple task). Positive economic changes could serve as a starting point for the society's morale improving. However, while 61% of university students intend to settle down in their home country, only 39% of secondary students want to do the same. These results of empirical surveys have to give futurists, economic leaders and politicians food for thought.

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There is still much to do in the middle of Central Europe so that things can gather new momentum and approach. We hope that the studies in the book will inspire researchers and other readers to keep up with the issues raised.

Long-Range Futures Research: An Application of Complexity Science [Rakesh KAPOOR]



By Robert H. SAMET
4-Scene Development
Corporation Ltd. 2008

This is an ambitious book. It uses complexity science, or the science of evolution and complexity, to look at challenges of global development and sustainability in the next two hundred years in a holistic way. In doing so, on the one hand it provides something like an overview of futures studies; on the other it puts cities and spatial structure at the heart of the prevailing economic model of growth and development. The growth of cities is central to the historical and future evolution of civilisation in this framework.

A central premise of this study is that the economy is a complex adaptive system of transacting households and establishments. Ecostructures of households and establishments are complex adaptive systems for the diffusion of investment capital, and they evolve with increasing complexity to economise on the unit cost of transactions.

SAMET identifies the quantitative and qualitative evolutionary parameters that are driving world development. Investment capital is the most critical, quantitative, system growth parameter that creates spatial structure with the evolution of the world system of cities, thus playing a central role in the evolution of civilisation. Investment capital has the equivalent properties to 'exergy' in an ecosystem and investment flows drive the economic system away from equilibrium towards 'far-from-equilibrium stability'.

The qualitative evolutionary driver of the system is the increase in planning standards and the physical quality of life that correspond to the stages of development.

In view of the sustainable development studies and climate change models, which involve consideration of at least five future generations with a planning-time horizon of 100-150 years, this book takes a planning time horizon of 100-150 years to 2150 to include five future generations and traces the evolutionary trajectory to 2250.

This study is based upon twenty years of research by the author focussing on the growth of the world's system of cities, the changing urban economic structure in the transition to an informational economy, and the emergence of sustainable city regions or "ecopolitan" states.

For the purposes of futures research, SAMET identifies the following eight stages of civil development – traditional, agropolitan, infrastructural, industrial, distributional, informational, ecopolitan, and planetary, each stage being associated with an indicative Gross National Income (GNI) per capita.

An ecopolitan state, according to SAMET, is a "prospective sustainable city region of 5-20 million inhabitants in which human society can evolve to its full potential at a reasonable per capita standard." In an ecopolitan society, a balance would be struck between economic efficiency, social equity and sustainable civil development.