

HOW DO THE BUDAPEST FUTURES COURSE 2001 PARTICIPANTS THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE VALUES?

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Values were our main theme at the Budapest Future Course 2001, as we realised that values form our everyday activities, they give a measure by which we can evaluate the world around us. In a way *values form a framework in which we live and work*. This framework clearly sets what is right and what is wrong, what is acceptable and what is not. Its function is to provide stability and orientation, which is very much needed in our world. It is important to see the cultural aspect of interpreting values: as values have been formed for a long time, they carry the knowledge and wisdom of all the humans living before to help us understand our world.

As their force is in their stability, *values are hard to change and be changed*. A human life is based on the values, so if they change nearly everything needs to be restructured. It is understandable that the process of changing a culture, the way of thinking, or anything that reflects values takes a long time.

Indeed, our world is changing faster than ever. The new technologies and the globalisation provoke and backup dynamic changes. These phenomena call for *new values*: creativity, adaptation, life long learning are capacities that are indispensable for survival today. Also, as we learn more about environment and pollution, global problems emerge. There is a threatening possibility of overusing the resources of our globe, which can lead to the decline of all human beings. It can be clearly seen that our society arrived to a point where bifurcation starts. Either we choose to create a sustainable development or we might overshoot and collapse.

The conclusion is evident: it is urgent and necessary to change even though it is hard and takes a long time. Where to start? If we accept that values are our driving forces, then *in order to generate deep change, we must reform our values on the consumers' society.*

During our summer course we discussed these issues several times, and came up with the same conclusion. Futurists, who are aware of the importance of present actions and who feel responsible for the future, realise the importance of a radical change. Although, the need is evident, the desirable orientation of change is discussed. On a theoretical level, we addressed the questions when we talked about universal values, if they exist, and the question of what these values would be. This time, we tried to analyse values in a more practical way: we evaluated a questionnaire in order to see which are the main areas in which change is needed according to our group of futurists. From the answers, we also tried to define the values, which act as driving forces among the BFC participants.

1. The questionnaire

Our objective was to probe the values of our group that are present not only at a theoretical level, but also at a practical one, because speaking about values is much easier than living by them. In order to achieve this aim, our questions treated everyday subjects such as living circumstances, work and happiness. It means that there were no direct question about values (which is more important: to be or not to be), the answers only gave some facts and opinions that were used to discover indirectly the values behind them.

The questionnaire consisted of five groups of questions (see attached questionnaire at the end of this chapter):

I. The characteristics of the particulars

In this section we tried to define the characteristics of our group. Asking about age, sex, qualification and residence gave an overall picture about the participants' social background, which is a determining factor when talking about values.

II. Residence, environment

These questions aimed to reveal the environment participants live in and also the reasons of choosing that place. The possible answers included practical responses such as "close to the workplace" and some others, which could reflect an environmentally conscious human being as for example "more nature-concerned way of life".

III. Private and public life

In this section we asked the family background of the participants to see whether they take responsibility of others or live on their own.

IV. Work

The main point in this section was to see whether people are working only for financial reasons or they have other motivating elements such as responsibility or being interested in what they are doing. We hoped to find new values such as creativity or entrepreneurship not only traditional ones.

V. Happiness, general feeling

By asking people about what makes them happy we are asking them about values that they consider important. As this section offered the best opportunity to investigate the participants' set of values, the answers consisted not only of choosing an answer but also of establishing a hierarchy between some statements that reflected values that came up during our previous discussions.

VI. Free time

The questions were directed to know how people spent their leisure time, how frequently they pursue several activities.

The questions were all closed, the particular could choose from different possible answers, but could not articulate his/her ideas.

It is important to realise that it was our first attempt to create a questionnaire that reflects the values of the individual. Therefore we did not form a hypothesis to be confirmed or denied, it would come at a further level. This was a pilot-questionnaire; hence the results should not be overemphasized. Neither can these results be generalised: the phenomenon described in this paper reflects the perceptions of our group of futurists, but not a trend in society or even among futurists.

Despite of all the above, it might be interesting to see our results, what young, educated, responsible citizens came up with.

2. The outcomes

2.1 *The characteristics of the respondents*

We had the possibility to hand out our questionnaires to all the participants, who all answered and handed back the questionnaire. (First conclusion could be that our group was really co-operative, which we appreciate a lot.) Our goal was to reach an equal number of males and females, which could be totally fulfilled, so 50% of the respondents were women and 50% men.¹

The average age of the respondents is 31 years, which can be considered young as well as experienced. It is important as we take a look at the qualifications: 60% of the respondents have a university degree and in addition I would assume that the ones who finished secondary school (34%) are mostly university or college students.

Most of our respondents come from capitals (53%) or cities (26%), only a 3% live in a village. Therefore, in this paper we will discuss urban values, which are evaluated by young and educated people, who are especially future-oriented (assumption based on the fact that they attended the Budapest Futures Course 2001).

2.2 *Residence, environment*

We found that two types of residence were common along the respondents: storied building (35%) and house with garden (34%). A vast majority of them, namely 83% stated that they were satisfied with their housing conditions. It seems that traditions play an important role in preferences: 41% of the respondents said that “they were born into this situation and they liked the things the way they currently are”. Also 30% of them preferred the comfort and the other advantages of living in a city. These practical reasons, which can be considered as traditional values, seemed to be winning the case.

We tried to make people think more about this issue by asking them what they would change in their housing. Environment and creativity seemed to be the key issues here, as most of them had the desire to live in a peaceful and natural environment and/or in a house designed by themselves.

Conversely, when asking why other people would like to change their housing conditions, the answers were much more practical: a high 40% of them chose the answer “closer to their workplaces”. “Living in an environment that is appropriate for them, and in a house that they designed themselves” got only 7%

¹ The questionnaires were treated by *Krisztián Brenkus* and *Dávid Szemere*.

here. *Finally we can say that regarding housing the traditional, practical reasons are guiding our choices.*

2.3 Private and public life

Every fourth person lives alone; the others live with a partner or a family. Some of them (26%) would like to change, either because they would like to live with a partner (54%) or they would like to live on their own (28%).

I think that these datum do not provide enough information about the family lives of the respondents, as they were not asked to specify their marital status in the first group of questions. So it is impossible to decide whether mostly young students wish to move out and live on their own, or the couples are unhappy with each other. All we can see is *living with a partner is still a strong desire.*

One more datum can be interesting: only 10% of the respondents would like to have children. Concerning the young age of participants it reflects a change in social values, as having children was highly respected before. Of course, the timescale was not evident in the questionnaire, so some respondents might have considered themselves too young to have children. Still, it is important to see that there is a trend in developed societies, which suggests living without children or having children at an elder age and this trend can be observed among BFC participants, too.

2.4 Work

The participants according to their occupation were quite intellectual: 50% of them claimed to have intellectual and creative work, and 40% of them studied. Most of them thought that they have interesting work (44%), but not challenging as only 17% chose this option. 26% of the respondents said that work was their duty, which can reflect a sense of responsibility.

According to the lack of challenge, 36% would change their work for something more interesting and creative, or for a carrier that involves change. I think it is evident that *new values like creativity and the capacity of adaptation are present among the members of this group.* They actively look for the possibilities to challenge and improve these abilities.

Only 6% of respondents would change their work in order to earn more money, which is understandable if we look at the fact that 20% claimed to live in good financial circumstances and 41% thought that he/she lives better than average.

Although, most of them, 60% would carry out excess work, it cannot be explained only on a financial basis. In my opinion, most of these people enjoy their job so working more is not regarded as a catastrophe.

2.5 Happiness, general feeling

For the question “why are we happy?” we got a wide selection of answer, and none of those is dominant (more than 50%). This diversity could be explained by the fact that participants of the summer course arrived from all over the world (from Philippines to South America), and from different economic, social and cultural backgrounds, so happiness has a different meaning for all of them. Although, it is important to underline that some answers were quite popular: *health got the most points* (18%), but other issues like interesting work, good friends and feeling balanced were important, too.

Although when thinking about why others are not happy, respondents came up with more down-to-earth reasons: poverty (15%) and health (13%). It can be logical if we remember that the participants were satisfied with their financial situation, and when thinking about their own happiness they took money for granted.

Health was an important issue in both cases, which could be regarded as a good sign: these people would like to live in a healthier environment, with less pollution and more green space. *They realise that environment is a key factor, which determines the well being of humans*, so it should be preserved and taken care of.

In order to get an overall picture about the values of the participants concerning some core issues, we declared six statements, and asked them to state if they consider these issues important, less important or not important. There was only one statement that was considered important by the vast majority (81%), and it is the following: “*everybody should have the possibility to work*”. It reflects not only the fear of feeling useless but more a basic human characteristic, the need to achieve goals, to do something that is appreciated by the members of society.

Most of the participants thought that “people should buy products that were produced in an environment-friendly way” was important as well as “people should live in a peaceful environment”. We can say that there was a general agreement on the importance of environment. Most of the respondents seemed to be aware of the growing threats of pollution and the overuse of resources and they were ready to take some actions to prevent catastrophe.

Concerning the importance of equality, the opinions differed: “people should be equal” was a statement, which was considered important by 62%, less important by 22% and not important by 16%. It is interesting to see that the differences in the wealth of individuals even mattered less.

2.6 Free time

Our last question aimed to reveal the intensity of social relations of the respondent and his/her cultural activities. Most of the participants are interested in the world around them as they read the newspapers on a daily basis and watch television at least weakly. Regarding social activities, they talk to friends on a daily basis, which shows the importance of communication, and go to pubs and bars weekly, so their social interactions are not based exclusively on the Internet or on the phone. Participants do sports on a weakly basis, which suggest that they not only think that health is important but also act like this. Considering their cultural activities, participants seemed to prefer reading, which is a very good sign. Unfortunately, they only visit concerts and theatres yearly, which could be explained by the fact that these activities require more time, more money and more planning ahead.

3. Conclusion

After regarding the answers given by our group of futurists, we can conclude that *traditional values still play an important role in our lives*. It is important to realise that this is not a negative phenomenon as some values are universal and deserve to be appreciated. *Health, environment and work were the main issues that the respondents found important*.

Concerning health it is good sign that participants realise the close relation between living healthy and living in a healthy environment. Although, they tend to do only obvious activities such as sports, and would not move out of the city to have a garden. This question might be important, but can be realised only if there is not much inconvenience about it. But to tell the truth, the questionnaire should have asked about other environmental friendly activities such as recycling or selective collection of waste that could be carried out in cities, living in a storied building.

Some *new values appeared in connection with work*. Participants emphasised the importance of creativity and challenge, which is fairly a good sign if we think about information society. It seems that work is an aspect where people can practice and develop new abilities that later might also appear in other spheres of life.

BFC 2001 QUESTIONNAIRE

CHANGING VALUES – FORMING NEW SOCIETES

Answering is voluntary.

I. Particulars

1. *Sex:*

- 1 – male
- 2 – female

2. *How old are you?*

3. *What is your highest degree of qualification?*

- 1 – primary school
- 2 – secondary school
- 3 – college degree
- 4 – university degree
- 5 – PhD

4. *Are you employed currently?*

- 1 – yes, manager
- 2 – yes, qualified subordinate
- 3 – yes, subordinate with secondary qualification
- 4 – yes, private entrepreneur
- 5 – yes, shareholder of a company
- 6 – student
- 7 – unemployed
- 8 – other, please specify:.....

5. *Years spent in practice:years*

6. *What is your current (fast) profession and position?*

.....

7. *Where do you live?*

- 1 – capital
- 2 – capital agglomeration
- 3 – city
- 4 – small town
- 5 – village

II. Residence, environment

8. *Where do you currently live?*

- 1 – in a storied building
- 2 – housing estate
- 3 – house with a garden
- 4 – owner-occupied block
- 5 – guarded block of self-contained houses
- 6 – on a stand-alone estate

9. *What are your housing conditions?*

- 1 – living with parents
- 2 – living with relatives
- 3 – living alone in your own house
- 4 – living with others in a lodging
- 5 – lodger
- 6 – college student
- 7 – other, please specify:

10. *Are you satisfied with your housing conditions?*

- 1 – yes
- 2 – no

11. *Why would you change on your housing conditions? Mark three, please.*

- 1 – I would like to live in a more peaceful and natural environment
- 2 – I would like to live in the bustle of the city
- 3 – I would like to have some neighbours on whom I can count
- 4 – I would like to live closer to my workplace
- 5 – improved transport infrastructure is extremely important for me
- 6 – I would like to live in an environment, which is appropriate to me, and in a house that I have designed myself
- 7 – I would like to have all my relatives living nearby
- 8 – I would like to live far away from neighbours
- 9 – I would like to live in a small community that uses every effort to enhance social life
- 10 – too expensive
- 11 – other, please specify:

12. *Why would you not change on your housing conditions? Mark two, please.*

1 – I was born into it and I enjoy things the way they currently are

2 – I prefer comfort and other advantages of living in a city

3 – I like nature

4 – too expensive

5 – other, please specify:

13. *Is immigration a frequent phenomenon in your environment?*

1 – yes

2 – from time to time

3 – rare

4 – no, it doesn't exist

14. *Why do you think others in your surroundings decide on changing their housing conditions?*

1 – they would like to live a more nature-concerned way of life

2 – they would like to live in the bustle of the city

3 – they would like to have some neighbours on whom they can count

4 – they would like to live closer to their workplaces

5 – improved transport infrastructure is extremely important for them

6 – they would like to live in an environment, which is appropriate to them, and in a house that they have designed themselves

7 – they would like to have all the relatives living nearby

8 – they would like to live far away from neighbours

9 – they would like to live in a small community that uses every effort to enhance public mindedness

10 – too expensive

11 – other, please specify:

III. Private and public life

15. *In what manner do you currently live?*

1 – single

2 – with a partner

3 – in a nuclear family

4 – in a traditional family

5 – other, please specify:

16. *Would you change on your marital status?*

1 – no

2 – maybe, because...

3 – yes, because...

1 – I would like to have children

2 – I would also like to live with my grandparents

3 – I would like to live on my own

4 – I would like to live with a partner

5 – I would like to live with somebody else

6 – other, please specify:

17. *Why do other people in your environment not change their marital status?*

1 – children keep families together

2 – they live in an open marriage

3 – they would like to live in a traditional family

4 – traditions and conventions keep families together

5 – they live happily in their circumstances

6 – other, please specify:

IV. Work

18. *What kind of work do you have?*

1 – I study

2 – I work in an office

3 – I pursue monotonous, routine work

4 – I pursue intellectual and creative work

5 – I don't have a particular work

6 – I am a blue-collar worker in the industry

7 – I am a blue-collar worker in the agricultural sector

8 – I am inactive

9 – other, please specify:

19. *Why did you choose this kind of work?*

1 – you have to make a living

2 – interesting work

3 – it always has a challenge in store that I have to deal with

4 – it is my duty

20. *In which case would you decide on changing your workplace or profession?*

- 1 – if I could earn more
- 2 – if I found a more interesting and creative work
- 3 – if I were fired
- 4 – if my personal career presumed the change
- 5 – it depends on my family obligations
- 6 – if I had to learn to keep my current workplace
- 7 – if my company could not keep up with the technological changes
- 8 – if my firm's economic situation worsened
- 9 – if I could establish my own company
- 10 – if I had to retire
- 11 – if I could get some more free time
- 12 – in case of a possibility for working abroad
- 13 – other, please specify:

21. *Fluctuation is a common feature of your current workplace?*

- 1 – yes
- 2 – from time to time
- 3 – rare
- 4 – no, it doesn't exist

22. *What do you think about your financial situation?*

- 1 – I live in good economic circumstances
- 2 – better than average
- 3 – average
- 4 – below average
- 5 – among deprived people

23. *Would you perform excess work?*

- 1 – yes, weekly
- 2 – yes, monthly
- 3 – no

V. Happiness, general feeling

24. *Why are you happy?*

Because, ... Mark five, please.

- 1 – I am healthy
- 2 – I have a safe/secure job
- 3 – I have interesting work
- 4 – I can devote myself to my hobby
- 5 – I can devote myself to my family
- 6 – my job involves a lot of travelling
- 7 – I am in easy circumstances
- 8 – I have many good friends
- 9 – I live in secure conditions
- 10 – I can share my problems with others
- 11 – I live in a beautiful, roomy environment
- 12 – I feel balanced
- 13 – I live without fears
- 14 – I am successful
- 15 – other, please specify.....

25. *Why do you think certain people in your environment are not happy? Mark five, please.*

- 1 – they are poor
- 2 – they are unhealthy
- 3 – they are alone
- 4 – they don't have friends
- 5 – their family is not acting in unison
- 6 – they hate the new and modern technical devices
- 7 – the society they live in is corrupt
- 8 – everybody is just caring for himself/herself
- 9 – lack of security
- 10 – they can't share their problems with others
- 11 – hideous environment
- 12 – they are not balanced
- 13 – they are filled with fears
- 14 – numerous and frequent delusions
- 15 – other, please specify:

26. *When would you be happier? Mark seven, please.*

- 1 – if I could earn more and consume more of material goods, health services, culture, technique, etc.
- 2 – if I had a job more adequate to my type of character
- 3 – if I could grow rich
- 4 – if I didn't have to undertake more work and burden
- 5 – if I had more children
- 6 – if I could do more for my loved ones
- 7 – if I could spend more time with my friends enjoying ourselves
- 8 – if I could learn
- 9 – if I could travel all around the world
- 10 – if I could withdraw from the problems of the real world
- 11 – if I could freely choose the country I would like to live at
- 12 – if I could keep up with the rapid changes in technology
- 13 – if I had more friends in foreign countries
- 14 – if there were no fear of war between the nations of the Earth
- 15 – if natural catastrophes could be handled in a more effective way
- 16 – if I could live longer
- 17 – if I could live in harmony with my family, colleagues, friends and neighbours
- 18 – if I could share my problems with somebody
- 19 – if I could live without fear
- 20 – if I were successful
- 21 – if I were balanced
- 22 – if the rapidly changing information technology did not distress me
- 23 – if the media enforced a more positive picture about the world
- 24 – if national values were not be pushed into the background as globalisation proceeds
- 25 – other, please specify:

27. Estimate the approximate value of the following concepts in your life!

	<u>Important</u>	<u>Less important</u>	<u>Not important</u>
New information technology services should be made available to the whole society	1	2	3
Each citizen should have the right to intervene in issues subject to public affairs	1	2	3
Everybody should have the possibility to work	1	2	3
People should be equal	1	2	3
People should not be exposed to arbitrary methods of authorities	1	2	3
There shouldn't be considerable differences in the wealth of the individuals	1	2	3
People should live in a peaceful environment	1	2	3
People should have the possibility to take a rest and enjoy themselves	1	2	3
People should improve their manners and learn more	1	2	3
People should buy products that were produced in an environment-friendly way	1	2	3

VI. Free time

28. Please mark how frequently you pursue the following activities.

1 – on a daily basis	2 – several times a week	3 – weekly
4 – monthly	5 – yearly	6 – never

Going to the cinema	Going on an excursion
Going to the theatre	Gardening
Visiting light music concerts	Reading books
Going to classical music performances	Reading newspapers
Going to pubs and bars	Watching television
Visiting restaurants	Talking to friends
Attending sport events	Going to masses
Doing sport	

Thank you for your answers!