

SOCIAL FUTURING: Measuring Capabilities for the Future

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Abstract

'Social futuring' indicates a new, academic concept tested to be used in the measurement of social entities' preparedness for their prosperous futures. This novel, multidisciplinary approach was introduced by the Social Futuring Center (SFC) of Corvinus University of Budapest in 2017, in the frame of an international research project pursued in cooperation with the Geopolitical Futures(US), the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (China-CEE Institute), the Center for Complex Network Research called Barabási Lab of Northeastern University (US) and the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. The SFC has been created as a convergent research hub that gathers researchers and combines disciplinary approaches of many fields.

Social Futuring is thus the set of characteristics of a social entity (e.g. a community, a city, a country etc.) that fosters its capacity and fitness to envision and enact changes, and thereby prepare itself for the beneficial and strategic management of the future.

The planned outcome of the project titled ConNext 2050 is the Social Futuring Index (SFI) that will be employable to indicate the future-proof assets, capabilities and mindsets of countries. The uniqueness of this concept lies in the creation and sustainability of 'a life worth living'. In order to explore this worthwhile life, the Index appoints four pillars (1. geopolitics-ecology, 2. technology, 3. socio-economy, 4. culture-spirituality), and four normative standards (1. attachment, 2. care: material advancement and freedom, 3. peace and security, 4. contentment), which are measured by globally available indicators using statistical methods. The formulation of the SFI is currently under progress and is due to be internationally introduced in the late Spring 2020. The present talk aims to introduce the current status of this international research in the light of the rapidly transforming global environment. By means of the discursive, analytical and normative frameworks, a complex definition of social futuring will be established. Through systematic comparisons to the concepts of 'competitiveness', 'resilience' and 'future-orientation', the characterizing differences and similarities will be exhibited to prove the uniqueness and relevance of social futuring in academic and professional discourses. With this future perspective, the normative standards and functional pillars of social futuring will be discussed in order to outline the structure of the SFI.

Keywords: Social Futuring, Social Futuring Index, social entities, normative standards, pillars