

## **Hungarian Future Town and Theme Park**

### **Message to the participants of 4<sup>th</sup> Utopian Studies Conference**

#### **1. Creating Interest**

Dear Friends, imagine that you are in Hungary, in the southwest of Transdanubia, not far from the Croatian border, a mere 45 minute drive. The landscape is what we call Pannon-landscape. Just imagine the rough sea with waves that are huge at certain parts and smaller at other parts and this is what South-Transdanubia looks like from above. In the middle of this area you can find the Forest of Zselic, an almost untouched nature reserve. A small village is situated at the edge of this forest, it is called Bardudvarnok-Bánya. We have bought here an almost 100 hectare estate, a hill which looks like a huge stranded whale. On both sides, the whale is girded by a valley with a brook in each. This is where we would like to build the Hungarian Future Village-Town and Tourists' Theme Park.

If You, the participants of the Utopian Studies Conference were given the task to imagine a world and a built environment that could be the scene of an optimal human and spiritual world in 50 years to come, you would probably discuss the basic principles and the details for perhaps months. In Hungary there is a non governmental research and development institute (R ÷D), called the Institute for Strategic Research, which deals with a range of topics from ecology, area development, knowledge society, responsible economy and the mind, to the comparison of world religions and other spiritual topics. This institute makes use of the work of 500 experts and researchers not only in R÷D, but also in preparing and realising the strategies of intelligent regions or localities. Unlike European practice, we do not specialise in one subject, but endeavour to integrate topics and carry out complex developments. It is almost ten years since we have been thinking of the task and question put to You hypothetically to discuss, and we have come up with an idea and worked out the concept of the Hungarian Future Town and Theme Park.

What became of our dreams could well be called a utopian town. We borrowed the concept of utopia from the works of the famous sociologist, Karl Mannheim (of Hungarian origin), who, in his book *Ideology and Utopia*, published in the early 1930-ies, said the following: Contrary to social opinion, either old or new, every ideology, in every age is necessarily / inevitably false and not viable, but utopias are always true and viable. Starting from this concept of a utopia, we thought of building -as a brand new project - a village-town, a place that combines the advantages of both town and village and possibly eliminates the majority of the disadvantages of both. So we bought 70 hectares of land and our neighbour offered us another 50 hectares for the project, and became a partner. This village-town or small town will consist of such streets and houses that retain all the architectural traditions of the Zselic area, and at the same time will make use of the latest technology of the information age in the buildings and around.

Before making the plans for the project, we have examined and analysed most of the similar future-world, future-town constructions in the world in the past fifty years, and also most of the value-based theme parks created by the needs of the new global tourism. For the functional role of the future-town, we chose the role of a touristic theme park, because this makes it possible for people to come here for one day, two weeks, or for several years, or even to live here, and the touristic function is useful considering the financing of the project, based on the calculation data of correct rates of return.

This future town is meant to be a model not merely of the architectural work and ideas, but a model of the creation of a future world in Zselic (the commercial name is Eden in Zselic). Consequently this new future town is meant to be one of the knowledge and spiritual centres

of the world, with much attention to the preservation of the natural environment and its artistic recreation. In the future town we envisage a new type of society and democracy. The function of the future town would be to offer a complex set of services to anyone who enters it as a tourist or a permanent citizen. In this natural, spiritual, social environment they will have a chance to get better, heal their physical bodies, social selves, their soul, mind and spirit, separately and together, with the help of ancient and modern therapies and practices, or stabilise them. Provided they want to, of course, and they can choose from the principles and methods offered. So the future town is a healing place, where one can be healed with the past and the future.

Another important aspect is that we want to establish several small research and development institutes here, among them a Central-European future research or utopia research institute. To provide for these functions we would build and run ten thematic program centres.

## **2. The basic principles of the Hungarian Future Town and Theme Park**

After the millennium in the developed regions of the global world, theme parks, which are a new kind of touristic service, have become the leading touristic institutions, because tourists, as customers have new demands, requirements.

What they require is *cultural tourism or knowledge tourism*. It is worth noting however what kind of customer needs are behind the new travel-tourist requirements. In the nineties, analysts separated /identified two very different groups of tourist-customers: one group was interested in relaxation, forgetting, getting away from it all, the other was interested in services with more content, in personal growth or becoming whole. The first demand was met by the traditional offers of mass culture, mass consumption, and the other one - to put it cautiously - tended towards culture or knowledge consumption.

In the past few years an even higher need has been outlined: quality tourism, or an advanced level of cultural tourism, which expects tourism to provide high culture, an ideal way of life that prepares the way for the future. This is why there is a type of theme or experience park that tries to build directly on this need and specialises to meet this demand. This need is looking for a nature- and knowledge friendly way of life offered for touristic consumption.

In Hungary experience parks are opening their gates one after the other, and more can be expected in the near future. We expect that there will be an example of all three types of theme parks. We will find ones that cater for people attracted to mass culture, mass tourism openly, ones that offer higher level tourist services to cater for middle class needs of prestige and a virtual need to become more. The third type aims at *quality tourism*, and deliberately concentrates on consumption that enables customers to experience a future, culture-centred way of life close to nature, which is seen, as a life pattern. This is expected to be the future of tourism.

The first (or one of the first) experience park of the third type will be the program called Eden in Zselic. No one should expect an experience park to be evidently one type, because most of the tourists have very complex needs, and it is pointless to treat the layers of their personal needs separately. Therefore the experience park in Zselic is prepared to meet all three kinds of touristic or consumer expectation, but all the time demonstrating their bias for quality tourism. Besides the offer of mass culture, it provides a wide selection of nature- and knowledge-centred ways of life concentrated in one experience park.

The Eden thematic tourist experience Park in Zselic is a health-tourism park to be created in a pure natural environment, which is at the same time a regional e-tourism centre. In a development that goes far beyond the traditional boundaries of health tourism we want to create such a micro environment, micro society, micro way of life that is an ideal borrowed from the middle of this (21<sup>st</sup>) century. This experience park is the Eden or Utopia- World of

both present and future. Therefore what we are building is not only a tourist experience park, but - as we have indicated already - the first future-village or future town of our knowledge based age as the background of tourism, in a way anticipating a new micro world, which, in fifty years' time, will be a habitable, liveable, real world at several locations.

The strategy for the Eden Tourist Experience Park in Zselic is a full three hundred-page project. First, it outlines the changes that have taken place in global and European tourism. Then it presents similar touristic developments in the world, the tourism and e-tourism strategy of the European Union. It also introduces the economy and society of South-Transdanubia and Somogy County in detail, their ethnography, the touristic situation, and their future plans. Finally, it outlines the principles, the elements, the budget of the Eden in Zselic project as its central objective, and the conditions and possibilities of its realisation. The program of the Future Town and Theme Park, Tourist Experience Park In Zselic was discussed by the Regional Development Council of Somogy County early 2003. This development is part of the national development project submitted by Somogy County and the South-Transdanubia region made for the EU.

2.

### **The Mission**

The mission of the Eden in Zselic project is

#### **to unite as future village-town and a tourist experience park**

all the connecting elements of a nature park, a village park, a health park, a knowledge park, a community park, a tradition park, a spiritual park, a future park and an internet park, which together create a very special atmosphere, and make a way of life possible that tourists visiting here after the millennium will find inspiring, and they will find various ways of experiencing it as recreation.

Based on the mission we state the following principles:

- It is evidently necessary for the natural environment in South-Somogy that natural resources should not only be preserved but should be improved as well, so the planned theme experience park should have an ecological side to it
- According to the modern philosophy of tourism, the most important type of tourism is health tourism that serves physical, psychological and spiritual recreation and growth
- An important element is the exploration of thermal-medical waters, as an essential condition for health tourism
- The tourism of the modern (or post-modern) age is more and more lore-, knowledge-, and culture centred tourism, and that should become prevalent in Hungary too.
- In the European information society, based on European tourism strategy, this new thematic experience park could become the South-Transdanubian regional centre of e-tourism
- It is a unique feature of the Eden Tourist Experience Park in Zselic that it was modelled after the present human and communal needs of European people, and new researches indicate that besides the two hotels/inns, and the individual houses, ten thematic groups of buildings and program centres should be planned.
- The theme park will create an independent village/town, a unique micro-society within the park, and this will be the first knowledge settlement of the knowledge-based age.

- A second characteristic of the Zselic experience park is that the structure and programs of the experience park make it possible to meet very differentiated, personal and family needs individually.
- A third characteristic is, that not only special experiences are offered by this tourist park, but as part of health tourism, personal and communal self-healing can take place, and there is the possibility of trying an experiential space where ways of life and conduct can be tested and experienced.
- To sum it up, the project involves the creation of a future town on the one hand, and a tourist theme park on the other.

**3. The ten theme program centres** The above mentioned principles make up the concept of the Zselic tourist experience park and the following twelve project elements have been designed. The first two is concerned with accommodation; the other ten are theme program centres.

1. Hotels and inn and in them service and catering. (restaurants, cafeterias, souvenir shops etc.) All the building will be intelligent buildings.
2. Detached and group family holiday houses with a garden each. The building will be built from natural materials, and will run on renewable energy.
3. Eden House. This is the central service institution of the Eden Thematic Experience Park in Zselic. Its function is to develop communal living, to organise communal life; it is a media-house, a democracy workshop etc.
4. Nature House. In this house one can identify with nature, there will be an earth energy meter, an (astronomical) observatory, and a nucleus-observatory. (nuclear research lab). An organic part of this "house program" is the creation of a pond, an arboretum, a herbal park, woods, groves, park etc.
5. Health (Whole-ness) House. This institution is to enhance healthy living (to preserve and/or restore health). There would be medical, healing, health preserving, naturopathic programs, courses, therapies etc. It would be also an experimental workshop for distant (radionic) healing.
6. Tradition House. We could call it the House of Past and Future or the House of History. This is a tradition centre and at the same time a living outdoor village museum (skansen), a virtual yurt, an exhibition about the future. This is where the community feasts will be organised.
7. House of Physics. This is where the physical body, the energy system of man will be demonstrated alongside with all the related healing processes. After finding thermal water, part of the house will be a swimming pool and thermal bath with the connecting health services where healing from the water can take place.
8. Knowledge House. The visitors can get acquainted with intellectual life here, and there will be different knowledge-related services (library, films, Internet centre, etc.) and knowledge-centred therapies (painting school, spiritual-intellectual master school, correspondence programs etc.). Part of the Knowledge House. Is the Central-European Future Centre.
9. Consciousness House. Primarily the place where the brain/mind/soul/consciousness can be studied, a many-faceted workshop of spiritual and mental therapies. Peer institutions like the Institute for Positive Thinking, the (Open) University of New Awareness and the Team for Developing Social Consciousness will be parts of it.
10. Self House. It could be called character or Personality House as well, because its main function is the study and improvement of the human physical, mental, psychological and spiritual system and the understanding and complex maintenance of the integrated, and unified personality.
11. Spiritual House. In this group of buildings one will find the Christianity Centre, the

ecumenical church, the Virtual Pléroma House, an exhibition hall where the world's religions are introduced, and there will be a centre for religious and church services.

12. House of Technology/Innovation.. If every building and service works according to the demands of information age, then in this house one will be able to learn the theory of technology, or the requirements of technological trends. Some other services will be found here: e-tourism, e-health, and some services of e-environment protection.

Along these lines the concept of the Eden Thematic Experience Park in Zselic has been worked out, which will make it possible for the park to be built between 2004 and 2008 in Bárdudvarnok-Bánya, Zselic. If this tourist experience park is realised, it will be one of the greatest developments, or one of the greatest projects realised in Somogy County. Without exaggeration we can say that this project will probably be an outstanding development in Hungary, a model to be copied. The project supports the modernisation of tourism, fills it with new values and content, and so can improve European competitiveness.

#### **4. The message**

We hope that this brief summary has succeeded in outlining the Hungarian Future Town in Your imagination and has informed you about its possible program. If You managed to imagine this future town, could you help us with the realisation of this now virtually common idea? It is needless to say that the planning of either the whole, or its parts, or of any detail cannot be regarded as complete, either now or later, and we could give a long list of open questions to answer, and a list of the recognised hazards.

We would like to invite You simply to join the planning process, make Your utopias alive for us, and possibly be active participants in the building of the utopia-town, help us work out how it can be financed, and most importantly, how it can be run on a very high level. If You come to visit us, we are sure You will fall in love with the landscape, the mentality of the people living there, with the way they think - very demanding, and good attention to detail. If You are interested, please call us at the given number or get in touch with us via e-mail. At the end of summer, or early autumn we would like to make it possible for you to visit us, either individually or in a group.

We would be very grateful if you could be partners in this great challenge we created for ourselves.

**Csaba Varga, sociologist**  
president