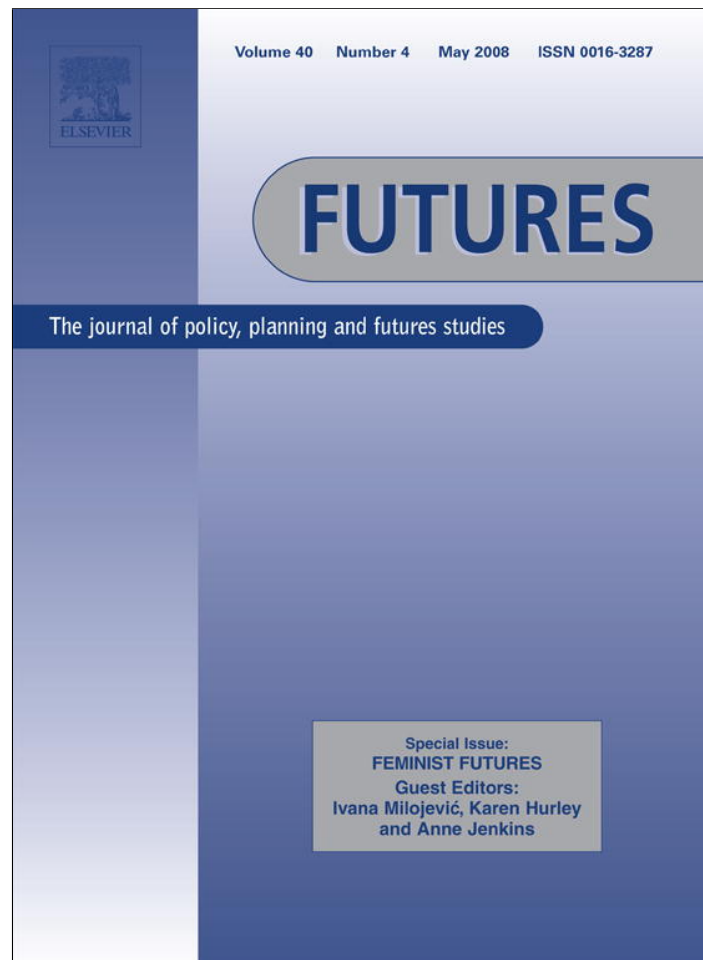


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# Timing feminism, feminising time

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## Abstract

This article deals with feminist engagement with the futures studies (and vice versa) and analyses the uneasy relationship that exists between the two. More specifically, it investigates the feminist theorizing of ‘patriarchal time’ and efforts to both decolonise and ‘reconstruct’ time based on feminist epistemological frameworks. Feminism is here understood as a social movement, ideology, theory, philosophy, worldview and a way of life. As such this term overlaps with, yet represents a distinct category from terms such as ‘women’, ‘gender’, ‘femininity’ and ‘women’s movements’. Thus, feminism itself is historicized and spatially contextualised as is the notion of non-patriarchal ‘women’s/feminist time’ developed by feminists. © 2007 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

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## 1. Origins and contexts

It is ridiculous to suggest that feminism simply “began” at one point in history. Any time a woman resists patriarchy, she is practicing feminism [1].

Far away there in the sunshine are my highest aspirations. I may not reach them, but I can look up and see their beauty, believe in them, and follow where they lead.—Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888) [2]

Feminism—as “a diverse collection of social theories, political movements and moral philosophies” [1]—has had many beginnings, phases, endings, revivals and manifestations. Its roots are both ancient and modern and its forms as diverse as geographical localities within which these various forms and phases appear. Feminism is undoubtedly a global social and political movement and yet it is often associated with the west. This may be due to the location of feminist *theorising* and the production of feminist texts—including feminist futures texts—written in English, the contemporary global lingua franca. The majority of feminist theorizing is conducted by western, white, Anglo, middle-class women simply by virtue of their access to financial, educational and spatial resources. So while historically and geographically feminist praxis exists almost everywhere (any time ‘patriarchy is resisted’)—feminist theorizing *en masse* originated in the 20th century western world and is most notably located within Western Europe and North America. Elsewhere it remains sporadic, ad hoc and marginalised, or at least articulated in different spaces and not communicated globally through feminist texts, or, likewise, through futures studies literature.

Feminist theorizing about the future—engagement with the field of futures studies—is quite limited in general, whether coming from western or non-western authors. Numerous women’s movements globally work

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towards building a different future (see for example [3])—but the articulation of what that different future may entail is more often *implicitly assumed* rather than *explicitly written about*. Many feminists' and women's groups are also not very keen on too much academic and theoretical work—even stringent anti-intellectualism is not uncommon. Instead, most commonly, high status is given to social and political activism that is firmly focused on *present* priorities and strategies.

However, as a movement for social change, feminism is *inevitably* concerned with offering *alternative visions* of the future. This, however, may not necessarily make actions and visions coming from feminist and women's movements part of the official field of futures studies. That is a shame as both these orientations focus on theorizing social change and would benefit from a mutual engagement. There are numerous reasons behind this uneasy relationship (or the lack of) that exists between feminism and futures studies. These are based on both situational and epistemological grounds.

The first factor to consider is general exclusion of women from concentrated professional activity within a particular field of enquiry—be it in the field of science and futures studies or even sociology and education. Second are some limitations that are more specific to futures studies. In particular, the hyper technological and scientific orientation of professional 'mainstream' futurism, the focus on 'expert' opinion in Delphi, quantifiable trend analysis, techno utopianism and social dystopianism—may be rather foreign if not outright hostile to many feminists. Using a feminist lens we could add that there is also a disproportionate focus on power relationships and the fields of economics and international politics within futures studies (i.e. East/West, North/South discussion, Pacific Rim debate, who will 'lead the world' in the 21st century and beyond, China/Asia vs. USA/West, etc.); and on the impact of new technologies on our societies (as in '100 ways in which new technologies will transform your life in the future') within mainstream futures studies. The larger framework of knowledge [4]—evident through questions asked, the statistics collected, and so on—still overwhelmingly remains technocratic, and thus male in the sense that issues central to most women and most feminists are avoided. For example, according to Wikipedia ([1], emphasis mine), the issues that are central to most feminists include:

*...reproductive rights* (including but not limited to the right to choose a safe, legal abortion, access to contraception, and the availability of quality prenatal care), *violence* within a domestic partnership, *maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment, street harassment, discrimination, and rape*. Many feminists today argue that feminism is a grass-roots movement that seeks to cross boundaries based on social class, race, culture, and religion; is culturally specific and addresses *issues relevant to the women of that society* (for example female genital cutting in Africa or the glass ceiling in developed economies); and debate the extent to which certain issues, such as rape, incest, and mothering, are universal. Themes explored in feminism include *patriarchy, stereotyping, objectification, sexual objectification, and oppression*.

But the futures of these issues would probably not be central to most futurists. On the contrary, with the exception of the topic of reproductive futures, the analysis of most other issues does not feature very prominently within the futures field.

Still, as discussed in the Editorial of this issue, the engagement of 'women' and 'futures' has been attempted within both futures and women's/gender studies. And, of course, some futurists did and still do engage with issue of 'women' and 'gender' within the context of futures studies (i.e. [5–13]). However, even these efforts have been sidelined as a 'special (read: 'optional') issue' within the field. Several more recent attempts by women futurists members of World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF) to enhance the area on gender and future—i.e. a special interest group, 'Women's Forum' during and between conferences and a 'separatist' listserv—have not gone very far. The conversation between feminism and futures has been marginalised even more, as very few attempts to link the two exist.

This critique of futures studies does not imply that all futurists proceed from 'a linear, technocratic, economic and triumphantly western base'—rather, there are many voices that are in opposition to and in contrast with that view.<sup>1</sup> But I do maintain, throughout this article and elsewhere, that feminist engagement

<sup>1</sup>In quotes are Jim Dator's comments and responses to an earlier draft of this paper—to which I am responding. Dator's main critique of this paper and some of my earlier work is that I take a selected portion of futures thinking and proceed by characterising all of futures studies via referencing to that portion. Even though I attempt to talk about 'predominant' orientation within futures or 'mainstream' futurism, and not about all of futures studies, to an extent Dator's critique is a fair assessment. Feminist thinking, which influences mine, is

with the futures studies (and vice versa) is limited and that large sections of futures studies do not manifest awareness of feminist cognitive frames and points of reference.

Having said all of the previous, it is also important to stress that there is a wealth<sup>2</sup> of feminist visioning of and for the future. These visions enable us to see what the overall feminist project for the future is/may be. And futures methods such as envisioning of alternative futures, backcasting, causal layered analysis (CLA),

(footnote continued)

marked by an engagement with the “*negative or reactive project ... of challenging what currently exists, ... criticizing prevailing social, political and theoretical relations*” [14] (p. 59). Parallel to this process, “or rather, indistinguishable from it ... [there is, of course, also] ... a positive, constructive project: creating alternatives, producing *feminist*, not simply *antisexist*, theory.” [14]. But when engaged in the critique, feminists (and other critical theorists) often focus on what they consider to be ‘a problem’, a contested issue, a manifestation of patriarchy—and not on what they are in agreement with. Thus—as part of this ‘negative and reactive project’—I do not discuss selected portions of futures studies that are also in the opposition to those coming from ‘a linear, technocratic, economic and triumphantly western base’. That is, I do not focus on sections of futures studies that I have no problem with, while putting on my feminist’s lens.

Where Dator and I maybe most significantly disagree, is in our evaluation of how big, significant and influential the latter (linear, technocratic, economic, western and patriarchal) orientation within futures studies is. I do believe that this latter orientation is still the dominant orientation within futures studies. Likewise, with all the latest developments in terms of how ‘we’ perceive time (i.e. as influenced by Einsteinian and quantum physics) I do believe that it is still linear, clock/calendar/mechanized time’ that predominates in our Western society (ies). This disagreement between Dator and myself could be because one of us is ‘wrong’ and the other one ‘right’—which would be based on the view that there is an empirical reality ‘out there’ that we can quantify, measure and determine with more accuracy. Such process would enable us to more authoritatively decide whether there is indeed such a thing as ‘predominant’ orientation within futures studies. On the other hand, and this would be more in line with the feminist epistemology that is ‘predominantly’ constructionist, this difference in our perspectives could be based on our respective experiences and various situations/events/texts that we have been exposed to. Furthermore, based on cognitive frames we both hold (i.e. refer to work by linguist George Lakoff) we (and others) will perceive and order reality in very specific ways. A cognitive frame of feminism/gendered analysis may influence my perception of seeing ‘patriarchy’ almost everywhere. Not having cognitive frame of feminism, on the other hand, may influence people to not see patriarchy anywhere. As specified by Lakoff (2004 (*Don’t Think of an Elephant: Know your values and frame the debate*, Melbourne: Scribe publications), p. xv): “Frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world. As a result, they shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what counts as a good or bad outcome of our actions. In politics our frames shape our social policies and the institutions we form to carry out policies. To change our frames is to change all of this. Reframing *is* social change”.

<sup>2</sup>One example of this is an area of **feminist science fiction**: for example, see overviews by Justine Larbalestier (2002) *The battle of the sexes in science fiction*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press; Veronica Hollinger “Feminist theory and science fiction”, in Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, ed. (2003) *The Cambridge companion to science fiction*, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press; Natalie Myra Rosinsky (1984) *Feminist futures: contemporary women’s speculative fiction*, Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press; Marleen S Barr (1992) *Feminist fabulation: space/postmodern fiction*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press; Jenny Wolmark (1994) *Aliens and others: science fiction, feminism and postmodernism*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press; Helen Merrick & Tess Williams, ed. (1999) *Women of other worlds: excursions through science fiction and feminism*, Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press; Jane B. Weedman (1985) *Women worldwalkers: new dimensions of science fiction and fantasy*, Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech Press; Tom Staicar (1982) *The Feminine eye: science fiction and the women who write it*, New York: F. Ungar Pub. Co.; Sarah Lefanu (1989) *Feminism and science fiction*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Jane Donawerth (1997) *Frankenstein’s daughters: women writing science fiction*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press; Marleen S. Barr (1981) *Future Females: A Critical Anthology*; Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press; Marleen S. Barr, ed. (2000) *Future females, the next generation: new voices and velocities in feminist science fiction criticism*, Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield; Jane L. Donawerth and Carol A. Kolmerten ed. (1994) *Utopian and science fiction by women: worlds of difference*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University; Lucie Armitt, ed. (1991) *Where no man has gone before: women and science fiction*, London: Routledge; Denise Du Pont, ed. (1988) *Women of vision*, New York: St. Martin’s Press; Sarah Lefanu (1989) *Feminism and science fiction*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Betty King (1984) *Women of the future: the female main character in science fiction*, Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press; Vicki Mistacco, ed. (1989) *Breaking the sequence: women, literature, and the future*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Pamela Sargent, ed. (1976) *More women of wonder: science fiction novelettes by women about women*, New York: Vintage Books; Connie Willis and Sheila Williams, eds. (2001) *A women’s liberation: a choice of futures by and about women*, New York: Warner Books; Joanna Russ (1995) *To write like a woman: essays in feminism and science fiction*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Also see texts on **feminism, women and utopianism** such as Lucy Sargisson, (1996) *Contemporary feminist utopianism*, London: Routledge; Libby Falk Jones and Sarah Webster Goodwin, ed. (1990) *Feminism, utopia, and narrative*, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press; Dunja M. Mohr (2005) *Worlds apart: dualism and transgression in contemporary female dystopias*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co; Angelika Bammer (1991) *Partial visions: feminism and utopianism in the 1970s*, New York: Routledge; Lawrence Foster (1991) *Women, family, and utopia: communal experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press; Sally L. Kitch (2000) *Higher ground: from utopianism to realism in American feminist thought and theory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Qingyun Wu (1995) *Female rule in Chinese and English literary utopias*, New York: Syracuse University Press; Nan Bowman Albinski (1988) *Women’s utopias in British and American fiction*, London: Routledge; Qian Ma (2003) *Feminist utopian discourse in eighteenth-century Chinese and English fiction: a cross-cultural comparison*, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate; Frances Bartkowski (1989) *Feminist utopias*, Lincoln, NE; London: University of Nebraska Press.

action learning and even scenario analysis fit really well with the work done by feminists so far. Furthermore, these futures methods can help enhance the usually rudimentary concluding section on ‘future’ that exists within many feminists’ texts. And lastly, these methods can help make some of the implicit visions within feminism more explicit and may further assist with some strategizing within feminist and women’s movements.

## 2. Trajectories

In terms of futures trajectories, this engagement is crucial. While we have officially entered a ‘post-feminist’ phase within social sciences in general (following several waves of feminism in the west, official ‘backlash’ of the 1990s, and so on); within the futures field the overall situation can still best be described mostly as pre-feminist. It comes at no surprise that as early as 1978 [15] (p. 1) Mary Daly wrote that patriarchy appears to be everywhere, “even outer space and the future have [already] been colonized”. The colonisation of our present and future worlds continues unabated, especially now that we have entered the phase of social neo-conservatism globally. This, in my view, includes the so-called ‘post-feminism’, the era beyond ‘political correctness’, the emergence of ‘raunch culture’ [16] and, of course, the revamping of totalitarian societies with the help of the ‘security’ discourse. All of the previous is but a representation of a patriarchal worldview—a system that continually manages to reinvent itself as a normative futures discourse.

Parallel to this process, contemporary developments *within* modern feminism suggest the following trajectory for its future: *mainstreaming* (most mainstream disciplines acknowledge the existence of gendered ways of knowing, there is acknowledgment that gender issues are or may be relevant for any given topic of enquiry); *diversification* (further multiplication of existing feminisms and women’s movements) and *reinvention* (from third ‘post-feminist phase’ to fourth, possibly peace or eco oriented, a new feminist meta narrative). In the meantime, it is crucial to consolidate feminist futures visions up until now, and this article is one limited attempt towards this goal.

Of course, it would be impossible to outline a feminist project for the future in regard to each particular topic that has been of interest to feminists (see, for example, above non-conclusive summary from Wikipedia) or a critique of masculine/patriarchal visions for the future within each official discipline (i.e. feminist critiques and alternative preferred futures visions in the areas of economy, international relations, urban planning, and so on) here. I’ve also attempted a consolidation of feminist futures at other places (i.e. [17], [18, pp. 131–159] [19–22]) and some sections of this article develop on ideas and arguments presented in these texts. Here, I focus on one issue that is crucial to the area of futures studies: time. The analysis will be limited to texts that either argue for the distinctiveness of women’s/feminist ways of knowing, doing and futuring, or to texts that explicitly or implicitly bring gender in the theorizing of the future. The section on time will then be utilised to further theorise places of contention and places of possible collaboration between feminism and futures studies. Some of the questions that will be raised include what theorising time based on female subjectivity means and whether such reconceptualised time can be utilised to rethink and de-colonise futures from patriarchal time. Another two issues that will be discussed are going to focus on connections between ‘women’s time’ and the emerging eco meta narrative as well as whether we can get any further insight in terms of feminist and futures engagement, or the lack of.

It is increasingly being acknowledged that modern futures studies (distinct from ‘foresight’ or human anticipatory capabilities in general) since their beginnings some four to five decades ago predominantly “centred around the idea of progress through science and technology” [23]. This in turn has been premised upon a particular approach to time—namely, time seen as linear progression from the rudimentary past towards more developed/advanced future. The idea of regress has also proven influential, also premised on linear time, albeit focused on the reverse direction (from ‘better’ to ‘worse’). But the linear approach to time is but one way to approach this phenomena as “time is a relationship and can be only identified in relation to place and change...time-space-being and movement (change) are ... [thus] intertwined and preconditions of each other” [24]. Like anything else humans consider, time does not exist independently of our observations, and specific approaches to time are thus social and human constructs.

The social construction of time has been acknowledged in regard to how different civilisations and cultures approach time and also how these constructions change throughout history. But there is also gendered dimension in how humans approach time, as different genders find themselves positioned differently on

time-space-being-movement/change axis. This dimension, however, largely remains unrecognised and is as well heavily contested. In addition, alternative approaches to time that incorporate marginalised gendered knowings, are also marginalised in relation to dominant, hegemonic time. This hegemonic time is the approach that ‘wins’ over all the others, and becomes naturalised and normalised as objective phenomena.

In our current era this objective time is still the time of a clock. It is used to measure time, which is seen as linear—the ultimate invention for and of modern industrial era. It is in the ‘postmodern era’ that hegemonic time begins to break down, becoming contested from multi-gendered and multi-cultural spaces and indeed from the new sciences (particularly string theory). However, many of the old narratives remain. Within the post-modern, digital time thus incorporates and builds upon rather than radically transcending industrial time. Clock time, while differently imagined, still remains paramount, objective and uncontested ‘given’.

### 3. Re-inventing time<sup>3</sup>

The clock, not the steam-engine, is the key-machine of the modern industrial age: even today no other machine is so ubiquitous [25] (pp. 14–15).

One cannot think intelligently about time within patriarchal history, with man-centered epistemologies [26] (p. 14).

A fantasy: time without limits [27] (p. xv).

Nowadays we commonly forget that clock time was at one time ‘invented’ and that this was done in order to respond to the needs and desires of a particular society/culture/civilisation/gender. We also commonly forget that once, before the advent of industrialisation, time was measured by human activities or environmental changes and not so much ‘by the clock’. As argued by Boorstin (in [28] (p. 54), emphasis mine):

The first grand discovery was time, the landscape of experience. Only by marking off months, weeks, and years, days and hours, minutes and seconds, would mankind be *liberated* from the *cyclical monotony* of nature. The flow of shadows, sand, and water, and time itself, translated into the clock’s staccato, became a useful measure of *man’s movements across the planet* ... Communities of time would bring the first communities of knowledge, ways to share *discovery*, a common *frontier* on the unknown.

As can be seen from the previous paragraph, from its very beginning narratives of linearity, colonisation and domination (over nature, and other peoples) have accompanied the advent of linear, industrial, clock time. Capitalism, industrialism and colonialism, as well as patriarchy, helped with a construction and an imposition of such an approach to time as well as with the attempts to standardise, to unify global temporal diversity under a banner of a normative *hegemonic time*. Hegemonic time is western, Christian, linear, abstract, clock dominated, work oriented, coercive, capitalist, masculine and anti-natural [29] (p. 14).

Promoted in schools and at work, industrial time was (and still is) based on the urgency of punctual behaviour, and associated with achievement and success [28] (pp. 69–70). The latecomer became characterized as “a social inferior and, in some cases, a moral incompetent” [28] (p. 69). The industrial time template was exported as a ‘package’ all over the world, it was imposed on all irrespective of whether or not the new temporal order was welcomed or rejected in different places [30] (pp. 107–108). Non-compliance, on the other hand, “spelt automatic exclusion; it meant being constructed as ‘other’ and therefore in need of ‘development’” [30] (pp. 107–108). Such was/is the power of hegemonic temporal order that:

The assumptions associated with the linear perspective, Newtonian science, and neo-classical economics, in conjunction with the rationalised time of calendars and clocks, form a powerful, mutually reinforcing conceptual unit. As such, this conceptual conjuncture constitutes the deep structure of the taken—for—granted knowledge associated with the industrial way of life, creating the by now accustomed semblance of certainty and control [30] (p. 97).

The values that such temporal frameworks are supporting are those of “order, promptness and regularity” [28] (p. 68), which are fundamental values of industrialism and capitalism. Furthermore, time itself has also at one stage in history become a product, which can be bought, sold and saved, utilised well and certainly not at

<sup>3</sup>The previous versions of this section appear in Milojević 2005 and 2002.

all 'wasted'. And the imposition of such an approach to time to even those social groups whose life (cultural, gender) circumstances did not fit well with it was nonetheless successful. As argued by George Orwell [31]: "Those who control the past, control the future; Those who control the future, control the present; Those who control the present, control the past". Time too is then power [28] (p. 118) as there is "no greater symbol of domination, since time is the only possession which can in no sense be replaced once it is gone". Social groups able to impose their own approach to time to others, through normalisation and universalisation of 'hegemonic' time also succeed in 'controlling' both the present and the future in indirect ways. Thus, the contemporary dominant approach to time—devised by a particular social group to satisfy the needs of a particular society of a certain historical period—is by its very nature exclusionary.

But, furthermore, time conceptualised in such ways is no longer 'progressive', if it ever was. Rather, it has become a part of our current dilemmas, a contributing factor towards humanity's present and future challenges. Working from a poststructuralist and/or a new, emerging 'eco paradigm' authors such as Levine [28], Nowotny [32] and Adam [30] agree with Mumford's claim that clock time was invented to satisfy the needs of industrialisation and not, for example, the environment. In turn, the discovery of industrial time had an enormous impact on both human societies and the natural environment [28,30, 32]. Adam [30] argues that when time became a commodity, a product to be bought and sold, both the environment and the future became simultaneously devalued. This remains a main principle in the neo-classical economic approach and reflects the general attitude of modernism:

The future ... is discounted which means giving the future less value than the present ... This means, by today's value and at a discount rate of 10 per cent per annum over a period of ten years, the future \$1,000 is calculated to be worth a mere \$386 today ... the future is devalued by a sleight of the economic hand ... [which] makes many an incomprehensible action rational ... From the standpoint of the present, projected into the future and back again, the future is less important than the present and, given a long enough time span, it is in this scheme of things worthless [30] (p. 75).

More recently, we have also seen an emergence of a new hegemonic time, as represented in the narrative on 'compression of space and time' [33]. This new 'globalised' time is an "instantaneous time" of a 'three—minute culture' [34] (pp. 432–433), an "evolutionary progression from a 'time surplus' to a 'time affluence' to a 'time famine' society", which is how most developed countries could now be characterised [28] (p. 13). While Levine argues that globalised time follows in the tradition of the industrial linear one, others [32,34,35] argue that compressed globalised time is radically different from the more conventional linear one. That is, globalised time is 'instantaneous' and 'simultaneous' [32,34,35]. It is not linear. Digital clocks and watches are different from the conventional watch that indicates that time, indeed, is passing, writes Meeker [36] (p. 57):

Digital clocks and watches convey no such context [indicating time passing]. Impaired instruments that they are, they are unable to comprehend more than one instant at a time, with nothing to hint that there is a process going on that includes what went before and what comes after. A digital timepiece resembles a highly trained specialist who has learned to do only one thing, to do it very well, and to ignore all surroundings and relationships. Digital watches and narrow visions fit together very well, and both are signs of our time.

There are other problems with this emerging new time. As previously discussed, it is based not on measuring time by human activities or environmental changes but on the accentuated clock time. Furthermore, this time is also based on "contemporary technologies and social practices" which are themselves based "upon time frames that lie beyond conscious human experience" [34] (p. 433). It is also based on Anglo–American culture and its addiction "to rapid and perpetual change" [28] (p. 44). Globalised time is thus still seen as a commodity, a product, even money; as something that passes, which can be wasted, which can be saved and bought (Evans-Pritchard in [34] (p. 417)). Inactivity still equates with "doing nothing", signalling "waste and void" [28] (p. 41). Within the Anglo–American cultural context, Levine [28] (p. 41) argues, inactivity is dead time:

Even leisure time in the United States is planned and eventful. We live in a culture where it is not uncommon for people to literally run in order to relax, or to pay money for the privilege of pacing on a

treadmill. It sometimes seems as if life is constructed with the primary goal of avoiding the awkwardness and sometimes the terror of having nothing to do.

Like industrial time, globalised time also continues to be exported and forced upon individuals and societies that may have different relationships to time. This attitude will continue to devalue the future, as argued by Adam earlier. Both concerns for future generations as well as of the environment are missing from such a ‘compressed’, instantaneous approach to time. Also missing are concerns and priorities raised by feminists and the approach to time more in tune with the lives of families, children and women themselves.

For example, Jay Griffiths argues that the single biggest great resister of hegemonic time is childhood itself:

One of the most tenacious conceptual threats to work, and to Captain Clock’s hegemonic Time, is childhood itself. Children have a dogged, delicious disrespect for worktime, punctuality, efficiency and for schooled uniform time. Their time is *an eternal present* [italics added]. They live (given half the chance) preindustrially, in tutti-frutti time, roundabout time, playtime; staunch defenders of the luddic revolution, their hours are stretchy, ribboned, enchanted and wild: which is why adults want to tame their time so ferociously, making them clock—trained, teaching them time—measurement as if they were concrete fact. The school clock is pointed to as the ultimate authority which even the Head obeys [29] (p. 15).

But luckily, as argued by Michel Foucault, even though certain forms of power/ knowledge prevail and become hegemonic, the process of normalization is never complete. That is, as suggested by Foucault, “knowledge is never fully co-opted ... there will always be subjugated forms of (power/) knowledge that can be used to resist prevailing and hegemonic” ones [37]. In Section 4, I argue that the feminist reinvention of time—the discovery of ‘women’s time’ is one possible subjugated history, which can be utilised to undermine previously described hegemonic, universalizing industrial and globalised times.

#### 4. Critique of hegemonic patriarchal time

As with many other areas of enquiry, feminists initially identify ‘the problem’, the subject, issue that has been ‘colonised’ by patriarchy—theorised from within the masculinist/patriarchal lens. In the case of time, it is ‘clock time’, ‘industrial’ time as well as linear time with a clear beginning and an end, which are seen as a problem. The “time of project and history”, which is the term used by Julia Kristeva [38] (p. 17) to describe linear time is now taken for granted, as a given, as ‘natural’. But it is actually an artifice, “one of the massive achievements of western culture, and as such ... a profoundly collective construct” [39] (p. 42). This collective construct fits well with “the dominant myths of western civilization [which] are those of man marching through time on a mythic journey in search of self, while woman remains outside historical time” [27] (p. x).

Patriarchal time—abstract, linear, clock dominated, industrial, historical—exists “in the first place by means of the crucial exclusion or repression of women” argues Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth [39] (p. 37). In addition to being built on exclusion of women and everything ‘feminine’, there are other problems with this, patriarchal, conception of time:

Linear time is not an abstract historical construct only: its manifestations are concrete and ubiquitous....Where historical process gains ascendancy over life process, we face an impoverishment of our lives... [27] (p. ix).

Feminists authors theorising time from female centred epistemologies therefore agree with Lewis Mumford about the ubiquity of clock time and with Jay Griffiths about the impossibility of universalising time to reflect all life experiences. They add that this industrial orientation to time can also be outright hostile to how women perceive time and live within it. The discovery of “Women’s Time’ [38,40] was thus attempted to decolonise time itself from patriarchal boundaries. But before further discussing what ‘women’s time’ may be it is also important to stress here that there were two distinct engagements with time that came out of feminist theorising.



## 5. Timing and contextualising feminist/women's time

The 20th century western feminism originally developed within an exclusively western, linear approach to time, arguing for further 'progress' and development, which predominately meant women's inclusion within already existing institutions. In fact, feminism is "clearly indebted to forms of historical thinking made possible by modernity" [41] (p. 21). As well, stories of progress have "worked for as well as against the interests of women...[who]... have often been passionate believers in ...large-scale narratives of the time... [such as]... national progress, racial uplift, women's growing freedom" [41] (p. 21).

So the first wave of feminism attempted to get involved in just those terms—it demanded equal rights with men, or, "in other words, their right to a place in linear time" [42] (p. 187). Feminists critiqued women's exclusion from the public sphere and they critiqued women's exclusion from the dominant approach to history. They critiqued the interpretation of history in which men became recognised as 'subjects' of history while woman was delegated to an ahistorical, biological sphere. This meant that each female was thus seen as a universal 'woman', in terms of her ahistorical universal 'nature' and in terms of her ahistorical universal role of a wife and a mother. Thus as poetically expressed by Adele Aldridge [43]: "His story [became] History [and] My [women's] story [remained] Mystery".

Further theorized by Kristeva, the time of (official) history is thus a linear time, a time of "project, teleology, departure, progression and arrival" [42] (p. 187). This symbolic order is also "the order of verbal communication, the paternal order of genealogy ... a temporal order" of "the Father" [42] (pp. 152–153). It has been difficult for women to access this temporal order—the political and historical affairs of a society—except by "identifying with the values considered to be masculine (mastery, superego, the sanctioning communicative word that institutes stable social exchange)" [42] (p. 155). The narrative of modernity, for example, was based "around ideals of progress formed through the separation of private and public spheres" [44] (p. 120) and the only way for women to get involved with the narrative of modernity was by leaving their 'natural' sphere of authority, the family sphere, the home [44] (p. 120).

The official mainstream historical timelines and their universality have also been disputed by feminists. For example, a famous question was posed by Di Joan Kelly-Gadol in 1977 to challenge accepted schemes/conventional forms of historical periodisation. In her article titled: "Did Women Have a Renaissance" she argued that some of the development that reorganised Italian society along modern lines between 14th and 16th century "affected women adversely, so much, so that there was no renaissance for women at least, not during the Renaissance" [45]. Other periods of "supposedly progressive change have often coincided with a loss of power and status for women and occurred at their expense" [41] (p. 202). Consequently, feminists of the first wave demanded these perspectives also be included within 'official' history.

The second wave of feminism, on the other hand, demanded "women's right to remain outside the linear time of history and politics" [44] (p. 120). The idea of 'women's time' coined by Kristeva and further developed by other theorists, was born out of this second impetus.

It is very important to stress here that the main argument for conceptualising an alternative approach to time based on female subjectivity, is not about asserting that so-called 'women's time' applies to all women at all times of their lives [46] (p. 94), because it does not. Furthermore, the argument can be made that:

Rather than being elemental creatures attuned to natural rhythms, many women nowadays are, if anything, even more preoccupied with time measurement than men. Caught between the conflicting demands of home and work, often juggling child care and frantic about their lack of time, it is women who are clock watchers, who obsess about appointments and deadlines, who view time as a precious commodity to hoard or to spend [41] (p. 20).

Therefore, this reconceptualisation is undertaken in order to argue that 'women's time' can be used as "an exemplar for times lived, given and generated in the shadow of the hegemony of universal clock time" [46] (p. 94). The main purpose here is not to establish 'new dualisms and dualities', but to "sensitize us to a complexity largely unauthorised and left implicit in social science analyses that focus on some aspects of time to the exclusion of others" [46] (p. 94). In addition, when we compare multiple times, we can "begin to see that not all times are equal" and that some times are "clearly privileged and deemed more important than others" [46] (p. 94). This is, of course, the case not only for the various approaches to time, but also for various

approaches to the future. Outlining various alternatives, in this case, women's, serves a dual purpose here: both challenging hegemonic futures visions, and making more informed the present decisions about the future—including the ones that heavily rely on a particular implicit view of time.

The idea of 'women's time' historically developed within the golden phase of feminist visioning of radically different futures. This period, the 1960s and 1970s was both "a golden age for futures studies" [47] (p. 127), [48] (p. 19) as well as for feminist visioning. This Golden Age of feminist visioning belongs to the second wave of feminism, starting in the west, in roughly the 1960s and culminating in the 1980s. Theoretically, this phase occurred after, and in response to radical feminists' demands to go beyond liberal concerns with inclusion (encompassing the inclusion within 'linear time, of project and history'), but prior to the general increase in popularity of post-modern theory amongst the Left—which made statements about unified 'women's' experiences an impossibility. The fourth turn of feminism [18] (p. 134)—a post-structural, diversity phase—questioned the unifying and universalist approach that characterized much of the visioning developed in the previous phase.

It was thus during the second wave of feminism that various approaches that argued for the distinctiveness of *Women's Ways of Knowing* [49] developed. It was in that era that concerns with inclusion were replaced with concerns with building a qualitatively different future and present based on qualitatively different gendered experiences. These arguments for the *distinctiveness* of women's ways of knowing have been based, as Kathy Ferguson [50] (p. 61) argues, on approaches either within *praxis feminism*, which focused on distinctiveness of what women are said *to do*, or on approaches within *cosmic feminism*, which focus more on what women are said *to be*. More concretely, female experience has most often been defined by "mothering and reproduction; by the political economy of the gendered division of labour; by the arrangements of the female body; by women's connection to non-human nature; by spirituality and contact with the divine" [50] (p. 61). As will be seen in Section 6 on 'women's time' all those narratives feature simultaneously when devising alternatives to the patriarchal time. These narratives do indeed heavily rely on essentialising, as the fourth feminist poststructural term has shown. However, it is often recognised here that such essentialism is not 'real' but rather 'strategic' [51]. Engagement with 'strategic essentialism' means that while arguing for distinctiveness of women's perspectives and positions authors are also well aware that these too are predominantly socially constructed discourses. The construction of 'women's time' should thus be understood in those terms.

## 6. Universality and particularity of time

It is also important to note here that human experience of time is at one level universal. As Johannes Fabian argues in *Time and the Other* (overviewed in [41] (p. 22)) due to interconnections between cultural systems it is a myth to argue that different groups inhabit different times:

There is only one time, he insists, not a multiplicity of times. ... Even if specific cultures have very different ways of understanding time, nevertheless the members of those cultures inhabit, in one sense, the same time... Their differing ways of measuring time do not prevent them from existing in the same temporal plane, any more than people from cultures that draw maps differently are thereby precluded from finding themselves in the same place... [41] (pp. 22–23)

At the same time:

...individual groups have their own distinct histories, rhythms, and temporalities quite apart from traditional forms of periodization...time *is* relative to specific cultures and groups. We make sense of it differently, imagine its passing in myriad ways, fashion wildly divergent pasts and futures for ourselves. [41] (p. 3, 23)

So while it is important not to fall into the trap of constructing binary linear (western, masculine)/cyclical (eastern, feminine) distinctions—both cyclical and linear as well as 'eternal' time being integral to social life and experiences of *all people*—it is also important to assert differences that may free us "from the tyranny of a single, universal time" [41] (p. 2). Our approach to time is undoubtedly a social construct, thus different cultures, genders and worldviews may experience and perceive it differently. Furthermore, as argued earlier, it

is important to undermine contemporary universal, hegemonic time at some level because any approach to time has serious repercussions to how we live our lives and envision our futures.

So, let's then investigate further the following questions: What happens when time itself is theorized based on female subjectivity, connected to what women are said to be doing, or being? What would be specifically female/ feminine/ women's experiences that can be utilised to re-theorise and de-colonise patriarchal time? In which ways is the discovery of 'hidden histories'—crucial for construction of alternative futures—connected to the overall redefinition of time by feminists? Can the concept of 'women's time' help support a new emerging eco paradigm, arguably humanity's best hope for long-term survival? And lastly, via a discussion on 'women's time' could we gain some insight into an uneasy relationship that exists between feminism and futures studies?

## 7. Women's time

Numerous authors and critical texts have shown that it is possible to devise a whole new way of understanding time based on feminist/feminine epistemological frameworks. To start with Kristeva [40] (p. 352), she has argued that if we take 'women's/female subjectivity' into account we get two types of temporality to start with—cyclical and monumental, or of repetition and eternity. Forman and Sowton [27] (p. xii) argue that the best way to define what women's time is then—outside of patriarchal time and man-centred epistemologies—is to look at the past, within more gender balanced matrilineal societies, where "*the time itself was considered female*" (italics mine).

This is similar to feminist reconceptualisation of historical timeline: instead of theorizing historical stages in terms of technological developments (Stone Age, Industrial Age, Postindustrial Age, etc.) the main demarcation point becomes the introduction of patriarchy. Thus, the historical timeline developed by feminists divides societies into matrilineal and patriarchal ones and proposes futures trajectories as either the continuation of status quo (patriarchy, 'androcracy/dominator society') or as the radical break from patriarchy (equity, 'gylany/partnership society'<sup>4</sup>). Thus, periodisation that arises from a particular (western, patriarchal) timeline and based on a particular (western, patriarchal) understanding of time, progress and development is revisited. All this is crucially important as the construction of radically different alternative futures is hardly possible without recognition of alternative histories, alternative timelines and alternative approaches to time itself. To be able to create another future, it is always an imperative for (marginalised) social groups to recreate, reinvent and reconstruct the givens in the mainstream interpretation of the past and history. This is because the motto of "if it exists [existed] it is possible" [10] undermines the argument about the alternatives being 'naïve, unrealistic and impossible' that often comes from 'realistic' futures supporters. So, for example, given that non-militaristic/peace oriented, non-patriarchal/gender balanced societies did exist somewhere in the world at some stage in history, this then opens up a possibility of their recreation. 'Futures realism', on the other hand, while it may be a contradiction in terms, is, nonetheless, an influential approach based on 'most-probable'/'more of the same'/'business as usual' futures, and commonly used to discredit the alternatives. So, based on experiences of time that are believed to have existed within a particular historical era (when 'time itself was considered female') and on experiences uniquely attached to female embodiment, feminist construct/re-construct an approach to time that makes 'the most sense' when these eras and experiences are taken into account.

Not surprisingly, one of the crucial arguments presented in *Taking Our Time: Feminist Perspective on Temporality* [27] is that nothing can be more distinctive of 'women's experiences' than giving birth to children, and this theme is also used to argue for distinctiveness of women's approach to time. In this book, O'Brien [26] for example argues that the main difference between dominant and 'women's time' is in the shift from "a death—determined future to a birth—determined one" [27] (p. 7). While not all women give birth, those that do become intimately aware of the difference between time that follows the motion of the clock and that of the organic, event time:

...the woman in labor experiences herself not as moving with time [of the clock] but as moving in it. For her, time stands still, moments flow together, the past and the future do not lie still behind and before her.

<sup>4</sup>Androcracy/dominator society and Gylany/partnership society are terms introduced by Riane Eisler.

In place of sequence, and linear relation, there is an overwhelming richness of sensation, which pulls her attention from the outer world. She is immersed in the immediacy of her experience, her body is no longer a neutral background for her consciousness. [52] (p. 132)

Furthermore, because the majority of world's women spend significant amounts of time caring, loving, relating, educating and managing a household and because most do experience female times of menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and lactation, women are familiar with times that operate according to non-economic principles, argues Adam [46] (p. 95). These times, of caring, loving, educating and so on, can neither be "forced into timetables, schedules and deadlines nor allocated a monetary value" [46] (p. 95). They are open ended, not so much "time measured, spent, allocated and controlled as *time lived, time made and time generated* [46] (p. 95). These time—generated and time—giving activities have "no place in the meaning cluster of quantity, measure, dates and deadlines, of calculability, abstract exchange value, efficiency and profit" [46] (p. 95).

Here, we move to viewing time predominantly as 'event time', or 'cyclical like the seasons', 'spiral', 'dialectical', 'chaotic', 'contradictory', 'knowing no beginning and no end', and reflecting 'life as it is lived'. Compared with "historical time" it is not abstract or time out of mind, but "experienced time", "species time", "common time" [26] (p. 14):

Men have used mind for the sorts of understanding of reality embedded in the history of the conquest of time, men's history. Women "mind" the children. The obvious thing that is wrong with this is the failure to realize that the first is destructive of history, a quest for Nirvana, the periodization of abstract heroes arrogantly symbolized in the cyclically insignificant death of the deified individual: the second—coping all the time—is the absolute condition of a human existence in time. Human history has meaning only in species time, a reality dimly recalled by "remembering" our individual birthdays while forgetting the cyclical integrity of species life.

Because currently, all formalized work relations are touched by clock time and tied up with hegemony and power, women's time is rendered invisible and outside normative time as well as outside basic assumptions and categories of classical social science analysis [46] (pp. 94–95). As already mentioned earlier Adam [30] argues that the problem with industrial/patriarchal time is in discounting both nature and the future. Nature is discounted on the grounds of assumptions that view the earth as "a man-made machine", and the future by being given less value than the present [30] (pp. 74, 79). This is in line with the way the "total productive system of an industrial society" [53] (p. 11) is organised. Using a metaphor of a "three-layer cake with icing" Henderson [53] (p. 11) asserts that only about  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the cake ('private', 'public' and cash-based 'layers') is monetized. But while this private and public sectors constitute 'top two layers' they depend on activities conducted within non-monetized productive lower two layers of 'social cooperative caring economy' or so-called 'sweat-equity' and also 'mother nature' layer [53] (p. 11). An economy organised in such ways is neither 'people' nor 'nature' centred and comes at a cost—"unpaid labor [of sweat equity] and environmental costs [are] absorbed or unaccounted, [and] risks [are] passed to future generations" [53] (p. 11). The gendered dimension of such 'accounting' is implicit, premised on the centuries old distinction between public and private spheres.

In turn, by most commonly not being able to enter the economy on patriarchal terms—as these terms are such that nature, body, future generations/family issues are made invisible/non-existent—majority of the world's women are subsequently financially severely penalised. For example, part-time, casual-time, flexi-time may better suit people who (in their 'free time' and on a 'voluntary basis') also care for other people are still seen as inferior to 'full-time'-based paid work. This 'inferiority' is visible through both status-based and financial remunerations (i.e. pension and health care plans, paid travel, holidays, opportunities for training and career advancement) that are given to those that are able and willing to 'sacrifice their time' and do 'full-time', 'extra-time' and 'over-time'. Those people are then also commonly given a higher say—being given more opportunities and being better listened to—within decision-making processes. This includes decision making in terms of desirable future directions for our societies, and all their members. So not only is the linearity of productive, paid and financially more rewarding careers impossible for those who need to 'live life in stages' (going in and out of work force, having 'gaps'/holes in biographies, etc.) they are also penalised on

more accounts than one for it. One penalty is exclusion from decision-making processes or semi-inclusion—thus, those that spend the most time caring for future generations are also the ones who have the least say at the global and social level in terms of what future these new generations may inherit. Of course, as many times pointed out by futurists, future generations too are excluded from/invisible within decision-making processes, even though they may be the ones most impacted by such decisions.

As seen from the previous discussion, time thus is indeed a power. Hegemonic time is implicit in contemporary organisation of the economy and how we move our bodies through both time and space. It leaves a mark on everything it touches. For example, it leaves a mark on individual human's body and health, on the way we raise our children and on the way we still give 'rewards' based on masculinist-based/patriarchal values and priorities within our global economy.

The notion of 'women's time' aims to disrupt these connections. Adam [46] (p. 94), for example, argues that because historically and *en masse*, women as a social group stayed in "the shadow of the hegemony of universal clock time" this gendered knowing still influences women, or at least, it still influences women (and men) willing to tap into this knowing. Those that remained in the shadow of the hegemonic time, most commonly women, may also be more closely aware of the existence and the importance of now devalued 'natural' time—event time or 'species time' and 'generational time' [46]. Women's 'glacial', 'shadow' or 'rhythmical' time [34] (p. 439); [46] (p. 52); [52] (p. 127) does, unlike hegemonic industrial and globalised time, allow for time to be perceived as existing in the 'eternal present' [28] (p. 94), [54–57]) and also as cyclical—"the realm of nature and of women" [27] (p. ix). Most importantly, it also allows for perception of time as 'intergenerational' [34] (p. 429).

This particular theme, of time as generational, has been best developed by Elise Boulding in her concept of the 200 years present. Boulding [9] (p. 3) argues that the short-time frame used to both make foreign policy and live personal lives is almost from moment to moment and that it is important to expand our time perspective to be able to better understand all kinds of events. But, while in many cultures, (for example within the traditional Indian approach to time) a sense of time and history is much greater, it is also sometimes *so large* as to make individual human events seem insignificant. On the other hand:

Between these extremes there lies a medium range of time which is neither too long nor too short for immediate comprehension, and which has an organic quality that gives it relevance for the present movement. This medium range is the 200 year present. That present begins 100 years ago today, on the day of birth of those among us who are centenarians. Its other boundary is the hundredth birthday of the babies born today. This present is a continuously moving movement, always reaching out 100 years in either direction from the day we are in. We are linked with both boundaries of this moment by the people among us whose life began or will end at one of those boundaries, five generations each way in time. It is our space, one that we can move around in directly in our own lives and indirectly by touching the lives of the young and old around us [9] (p. 4).

This intergenerational approach to time is critical for 'futures generation' thinking, and thus is yet another area where feminist epistemology and futures studies overlap. The idea presented by Boulding about the 200 years present corresponds with other attempts to theorise time from uniquely 'women's' experiences. That is, instead of being digitalised and compressed, the clock time is replaced with approach to time that is stretched and extended, based on both natural cycles and the way women (and perhaps also men) may experience time at the body level—as eternal now.

Interestingly enough, a huge movement arguing for *The Power of Now* [58] for reclaiming 'states of being' (rather than states of perpetually doing) is underway as one of the means of addressing various problems humans currently experience: anxiety/stress-related disorders, materialism and overconsumption, and personal and social spiritual impoverishment. Inspirations for an alternative way of living in the present and in the 'being' energy is found in approaches to time that have existed within different, non-western, civilisational frameworks and within marginalised spaces within western civilisation itself. 'Women's time' may be one such alternative marginalised space that we could collectively tap into in order to develop more human and nature friendly futures.

So while dominant industrial ‘clock’ time may have been useful at one point in (western, patriarchal) history our current challenges require different approaches to both time and future. Thus it is important to realise that there are multiple places and spaces of resistance:

The challenge to Hegemonic Time has come from the radiant variety of times understood by indigenous peoples; from self-conscious political protest, from children’s dogged insistence on living in a stretchy eternity; from women’s blood and from carnival [29] (pp. 14–15).

We need a new approach to time that allows for diversity and that is powerful enough to help us in ‘Rescuing all Our Futures’ [59]. If the new alternative futures are to be inclusive of many different worldviews, cultures and genders then the new approach to time needs to be also. This means development of an awareness that many different ways to approach time exist, that the way we see time and live in it is foremost a social construct and that some of those constructs may be harmful to our lives and the future while others may be beneficial. In line with arguments developed within the feminist fourth phase it would also be important to practice ‘time multiliteracies’—to develop the ability to shift from one time mode to another, depending on surrounding circumstances. And our present circumstances demand a dramatic change in how we commonly perceive and assign value to time. As argued by Richard Swift [60] (p. 9), we are currently in the midst of a ‘rush to nowhere’:

We drive fast cars. We are expected to ‘multitask’ and some people have even come to enjoy it. Children are rushed to grow up. We are under ever-increasing pressure to work faster and faster. Some people work themselves to death.... We gobble fast food.... We sleep less than we used to.... There is a macho ethos of speed that goes with it all. It’s like the Mike Douglas character in the Oliver Stone movie *Wall Street* says: ‘Lunch? Lunch is for wimps’.

The main need has now become to find ‘liberation’ from the globalised, computer-generated compressed time that threatens life itself [29] (p. 15). This *new hegemonic* time remains necessary if it is materialistic, pan-consumer oriented, uni-chronous future that is desired. If on the other hand, it is the creation of more peaceful, gender-balanced, sustainable and planetary futures that is desired, both decolonisation of the future and hegemonic time and the reconstruction of our approach to time needs to take place. In doing so, modern ‘time liberators’ can learn from women and cultures that have different ideas of time. Also in line with postmodernist demands for inclusion, ‘the multiplex vision’ of the world that is sought—rather than the one that is dominated by one culture, civilization, gender—we also need to develop ‘multi—temporal proficiency’ and ‘time literacy’ [28] (pp. 187–191). This means enhancing one’s own temporal repertoire and learning of alternative approaches to time [28].

## 8. Conclusion

We do not grow absolutely, chronologically. We grow sometimes in one dimension, and not in another; unevenly. We grow partially. We are relative. We are mature in one realm, childish in another. The past, present, and future mingle and pull us backward, forward, or fix us in the present. We are made up of layers, cells, constellations. Anais Nin (1903–1977) [61]

The reason for the previous detailed study on hegemonic and alternative ‘women’s’ time(s) was to, firstly, exemplar the difference between ‘about women’/‘Women’s question’ topics and a futures based study informed by feminist epistemology. The latter would include critique and ‘decolonisation’ of dominant ‘masculinist’/‘patriarchal’ ideas about the future and their subsequent reconstruction via using feminist/feminine lenses. It would also require an awareness/recognition that even the most ‘objective’ phenomena (i.e. ‘clock time’) are social constructs and thus influenced by gender relations. As well, this study was conducted with the purpose of identifying some additional bones of contention and places of possible collaboration between feminism and futures studies.

In addition to the factors outlined in the first part of this paper, another reason for the late, and barely existent engagement of feminism with futures studies is perhaps also due to a particular epistemological divide. At the time that futures studies were experiencing their own ‘golden age’, feminism was going through the phase of abandoning liberal demands for inclusion within the glorious project of modernity. The separatist

feminist projects included invention of ‘women’s time’—holistic, eternal, cyclical, organic, intergenerational. The special status that ‘the future’ got within futures studies could thus not be replicated within the knowledge area that at that time focused more on space (women’s embodiment) and more on present (women’s liberation praxis). Traditionally, historically and during the ‘reinvention’ phase, ‘future’ has not been a dramatically separate area within the framework of ‘women’s ways of knowing’. The discipline of ‘futures studies’, on the other hand, has only become a possibility in a particular historical era that made a significant distinction between past, present and future intelligible. Furthermore, during the time modern futures studies emerged feminism was becoming a separatist (on its ‘own terms’), anti-intellectual (practice oriented) and collectivist effort. Futures theorizing, on the other hand, developed predominantly as a highly intellectual, individual effort premised on particular roles of ‘experts’, ‘academics’ and ‘professionals’—futures organizations such as WFSF notwithstanding. All this at the time when feminists asserted the importance of personal histories, everyday life experiences and the perspectives of ‘a majority’.

Still, feminists did engage with futures studies, even though not ‘officially’, especially through de-colonisation of patriarchal projects for the future. Feminism has always been not only about the critique but also about the ‘construct’ [62], of constructing ‘an alternative’ [63] (p. 17). It has both engaged within the “*negative or reactive project... of challenging what currently exists, ... criticizing prevailing social, political and theoretical relations*” [14] (p. 59) and with posing alternatives and strategies. This is because feminism could not afford to remain “*simply reactive, simply a critique*” argues Grosz [14] (p. 59) because in doing so it would ultimately affirm “*the very theories it may wish to move beyond*” [14] (p. 59):

To say something is *not* true, valuable, or useful *without posing alternatives* is, paradoxically, to affirm that it *is* true, and so on. Thus coupled with this negative project, or rather, indistinguishable from it, must be a positive, constructive project: creating alternatives, producing *feminist*, not simply *anti-sexist*, theory. Feminist theory must exist as *both critique and construct*.

This critique and construct includes feminist de-colonisation of dominant approach to time also. But reconstruction of time, this and similar de-colonisations (i.e. of patriarchal futures) have largely been conducted away from professional futurist’s organization, journals and meeting spaces and, instead, within women’s, gender and feminist’s studies. This may be due to the existence of additional areas where futures and feminism clash—for example in terms of theoretical and methodological approaches that differ, as briefly discussed in the first part of this article. But it is also important to stress here that, at the same time, there are many areas in which feminism can complement futures enquiry and likewise futures can benefit feminist ones.

This is especially crucial when we think about contemporary global challenges to all our futures. Some of the contemporary issue we are facing globally—the biggest challenges for our futures—lie in the lack of quality relationships between ourselves, across our differences, and also in our relationship with the Earth that sustains us. Creation of dominant, hegemonic, industrial ‘clock’ time was part of the overall modernist project for the future. This approach to time, and such society, neglected both the centrality of human–human as well as human–nature relationships. The industrial and ‘clock’ approach to time ‘liberated’ us from constraints of human body and the natural world, but there was a cost involved in this. Furthermore, this dominant approach to time/and its imposition was in many ways oppressive to both women and other (non-Western) cultures, and thus based on exclusionary realities of colonial, post-colonial and patriarchal world. The continuation of this approach to time—albeit highlighted, compressed and fast forwarded—is currently taxing the health of people of all cultures and genders everywhere. The current speed of life, continual environmental degradation and perpetual global warfare are in part rooted within the previously described hegemonic view of time. The question I’d like to raise at this point is: Can these detrimental developments be changed if the dominant approach to time stays the same?

We could also ask the following questions: Had we had societies in which women were co-creators of our common futures, in part derived from women-centred approaches to time—what would our presents look like? Had most men—particularly, professionals, scientists, industrialists, merchants, academics and theorists—spent more of their lives in contact with children’s ‘tutti-frutti’ time, what type of decisions in regard to our work, social and natural environment would they have made? If women’s perspectives on time, as well as their experiences, worldview and priorities for the future, had not been sidelined in the past, would we still had divisions between ‘developed’ and ‘undeveloped’ worlds, colonisation of ‘primitive’ peoples,

environmental degradation, future ‘shock’, and the current accelerating speed of life? Would we still assign dramatically different financial and status-based rewards to people depending on the length of time they dedicate to the formal monetarised economy? Consequently, who is to benefit most from the advent of new hegemonic time—influenced by ‘neo-Taylorism on steroids’? [64] If, as some trends indicate, more and more both men and women start occupying spaces outside normative ‘compressed’ time of a ‘rat race’ what may be the implications for global economy, society and gender relations? And lastly, what further repercussions can we anticipate if the patriarchal colonisation of time itself continues?

The colonisation of time, the development of hegemonic time that imposes the perspective of one group onto the whole of humanity and all the consequences of such development, is one example of what happens where our common futures are theorized and developed predominantly on exclusionary social practices. Alternatively, I believe that it is possible that some of our main contemporary problems that are endangering all our futures could have been averted had the women’s/feminist perspectives on time and other issues, as well as those by other excluded groups, had instead been included. It is also entirely possible that had a ‘women’s’ approach to time been consulted the field of *futures studies* would not have developed at all, due to an absence of a special status that future received within a linear framework. But, on the other hand, it is equally entirely possible that we would then have foresight, action learning, futures perspectives and futures generational thinking incorporated within everything we do.

So it may be *high time* for feminist knowledge to become a readily available resource for futurists, eager to propose alternatives that challenge not so desirable outcomes of humanity’s current dominant ways of (not) engaging with long-term (eco and human-centred) futures. The process of feminising futures is thus ultimately not about devising a ‘laundry list’ of ‘women’s issues’. Rather, it is about using inclusive decision-making processes that would enhance our (human) ability to get our priorities right and increase our chances for the most favourable outcomes.

Throughout this essay I have repeatedly argued that both feminism and futures can only benefit from mutual engagement. Futurists need to acknowledge the pervasive influence of gender both within how futures issues are selected and theorized as well as in terms of particular futures-oriented praxis. Feminists, on the other hand, would greatly benefit from getting acquainted with particular futures tools and methods. This would enable further articulation of feminist project for the future and explicit outlining of strategies that can be utilised for its promotion. Besides, ultimately, the world that most futurists and feminists want is the one in which betterment of the living conditions for our species is of paramount importance.

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