



Conversation
Futures studies and feminism

Karen Hurley*, Eleonora Masini, Elise Boulding, Riane Eisler, Smita Premchander, Pamela McCorduck, Patricia Kelly, Debra Bateman, Elisabet Sahtouris, Caroline Smith, Jeanette Patindol, Vuokko Jarva, Ivana Milojević, Linda Groff

School of Environmental Studies, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, P.O. Box 1700, STC CSC, Canada V8W 2Y2

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1. Introduction

This Conversation is a collection of some of futures studies most prominent women's voices: those who have provided insight and guidance over the years and those whose wisdom is newer and emerging. This collection does not pretend to be all inclusive but a humble beginning to women's voices becoming stronger in the din of futures talk dominated by men.

The Conversation is a weaving of writings forwarded to the editors of this special issue in response to questions developed by Ivana Milojević, and distributed to futurists at the conference of World Futures Studies Federation in Budapest during August 2005 and through our various networks via email. We have also taken a few liberties by including additional words from the writings of women who responded but, humbly, did not say quite enough. We recognize that there are important feminist futurist's voices that are not included and can only say that for various reasons they were not able to participate. We hope that this conversation is only a beginning to a larger movement of women, of all ages, and around the world, becoming interested and active in creating their own localized, diverse, lush, dancing visions of the future.

The Conversation begins by examining current trends, which are not hopeful on the surface but offer ample opportunities for change. As Elise Boulding [1] wrote "the chief reason for optimism regarding the future status of women in society as the year 1976 [or 2007!] opens is that the old structures simply are not working any more." Then the discussion offers alternative futures or scenarios to counter the notion of simply continuing present trends as a path to the future. The women respond to our questions of the relevance of feminism as a visionary ideology and social movement, whether or not we can continue to talk about 'women' as a group, and what role does feminism have within the practice of futures studies. The Conversation ends with preferred visions of the future and the role of women and feminists in creating positive futures.

2. Participants

Before proceeding with the Conversation, it will be worthwhile to say something, albeit rather briefly, about the participants.

*Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 250 477 2290; fax: +1 250 472 1857.

E-mail addresses: kghurley@uvic.ca, karenhurley@shaw.ca (K. Hurley).

Debra Bateman, educator and doctoral student, lectures in Futures Education, Studies of Society and Environment and Education Studies Major at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia in the Faculty of Education.

Elise Boulding, peace builder and professor, has made numerous contributions to futures studies include the translation of Fred Polak's *Image of the Future* (1961). She is the author of *The Future: Images and Processes* (1995) and *Cultures of Peace* (2000).

Riane Eisler, speaker, consultant, human rights activist, is author of many books including *The Chalice and The Blade* (1984), *Tomorrow's Children: A Blueprint for Partnership Education for the 21st Century* (2001), and the recently released *The Real Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics* (2007).

Linda Groff, peace and spirituality theorist, has been a professor at California State University, Dominguez Hills for 33 years, and is the Director, Global Options Consulting. Her work focuses on global futures, peace, and intercultural and interreligious synergy.

Vuokko Jarva, gender sensitive futurist, is an adjunct Professor, Department of Home Economics and Craft Science, University of Helsinki, Finland where she teaches and is conducting research on cognitive futures work in everyday life.

Patricia Kelly, educator and researcher, with a specialization in cross-cultural curriculum, is currently working on a Sessional Staff development project at the University of Canberra in Australia.

Eleonora Barbieri Masini, futures studies leader, visionary and member of the Club of Rome, is now professor Emeritus where she taught Futures Studies in the Faculties of Social Sciences and Human Ecology, Gregorian University in Rome from 1976 to 2004.

Ivana Milojević, researcher, educator, feminist futurist, is currently teaching futures oriented courses at the University of the Queensland and the University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia. She is also research director of Metafuture.org. and author of *Educational Futures: Dominant and contesting visions* (2005).

Pamela McCorduck is a lecturer and author of eight books, many of which have been published in all the major European and Asian languages, including *The Futures of Women: Scenarios for the 21st Century* (1996) as well as consulting for a wide range of firms and other organizations in the areas of high technology, finance and transportation.

Jeanette C. Patindol, author and peace builder, teaches economics, communications and popular culture courses at the University of St. La Salle in Bacolod City, Philippines.

Smita Premchander is trainer and consultant for gender, micro finance and micro enterprise both in India and internationally. She has recently completed her doctoral research on microfinance impact from women's perspective. She is the founder of Sampark, an NGO in Bangalore, India.

Elisabet Sahtouris, evolutionary biologist, futurist, business consultant and public speaker is author of many publications including the newly re-released *EarthDance: Living systems in Evolution* (2000), *A Walk Through Time: from Stardust to Us* (1998) and *Biology Revisioned* (1998).

Caroline Smith, organic farmer and community activist, is a professor in science education and sustainable futures education in the Faculty of Education, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne.

3. Current trends

Qs: What would you identify as the main current trends (locally or globally) that are impacting women the most, both in negative and positive terms? Given these trends what may be the most important issues women will face in the future? Which strategies do you see as being crucial/the most likely to succeed in addressing these issues?

ELEONORA MASINI: I see an aging population in the developed world and an increase in young population in the other. The trend also continues that there is not enough room for women in the labor market and what there is, is not valued sufficiently. And still, women's real roles as carriers and actors of change are not visible to themselves nor decision makers. Therefore, we must begin, first of all, to reinforce women's awareness of their role as actors of change. We need strategies to develop such awareness.

RIANE EISLER: The challenge for the women's movement today is moving to a second phase where we show that gender equity is not only necessary for women but for the future of the world. We can, and must,

show that while gender equity alone will not solve all the world's problems, without gender equity we cannot move to a more equitable, peaceful, and sustainable future.

This has been the focus of my research and a central theme of my books, and is also the central theme of the film “The Chalice or The Blade” I am now working on. Our vision is of a film that can be used by women's groups worldwide to show that women's issues must be moved from the back to the front of the political and social agenda.

For many people anything affecting the female half of humanity is “just a women's issue”—a secondary matter to be addressed after the “more important” issues have been dealt with. This stems from the systemic devaluation of women and anything considered “feminine.” We can and must change this. My book “*The Power of Partnership*” is a handbook for personal and social transformation that shows again and again how the unconscious devaluation of women and the feminine has been disastrous not only for women and girls worldwide but for human society.

CAROLINE SMITH: Local trend (Australia)—a push to part time and casualisation of the workforce deprives women of benefits such as superannuation, sick leave entitlements etc. Younger women sometimes do not understand how hard women have fought for rights that they now take for granted. Women tend to be the victims of this.

Global trend: the increasing gap between rich and poor impacts on women in particular, poverty increasing in global South, crimes against women, devaluing of women and female infanticide has produced worrying gender imbalance in China—could possibly contribute to an increased militarism?

HIV AIDS huge burden in Africa/Asia, etc. Men still demand sex without condoms in many instances. Women, particularly grandmothers have to look after HIV AIDS orphans.

On the positive side, women are the strength and foundation of local community and many small local enterprises empower women economically.

SMITA PREMCHANDER: I am concerned about India, where our national figures show a reduction of women as compared to men, because of societal attitudes leading to abortions of female foetuses, at a very large scale.... This will lead to more and more control over women and their lives by a male dominant society.... TV channels promote the traditional biases against women, there are few voices rising for women, publicly. Religious beliefs make women more and more traditional, too, and they also end up promoting bias towards males... I feel the need for feminist activism exists as strongly as it did, more than ever, in fact. Despite the fact that women are more educated now, all societies are becoming less liberal, and women too often unknowingly promote this increasing conservatism.

At an international level, too, men still hold the key positions in organizations, and women find it difficult to hold key positions of power, and few women are able to lead mainstream organizations or create alternate organizations with pluralistic orientations and collaboration rather than aggressive leadership as the value base.

If these trends continue, women will continue to be sidelined and will not be able to take leadership. Only women who align with and promote male biased structures will retain their leadership positions, and I find this a scary scenario. We must come out and claim leadership in the public domain if we have to make a fundamental change in the direction the world has taken.

IVANA MILOJEVIĆ: It is also important to add here that all over Eastern Europe, in so called ‘transitional economies’ structural adjustment policies are introduced that are often detrimental to women and families. When I gave birth to my first child, in the early nineties, I received a whole year of PAID maternal leave from the state/organization I previously worked for (in former Yugoslavia). This was a result of often-demonized socialism and communist ideology—that had ‘equality of sexes’ embedded as a critical value. Of course, there were many problems with socialism and communist ideology, and these systems too were detrimental to women in other ways, but it is a shame that some positive aspects were not preserved.

Of course, the welfare state is being diminished elsewhere as well. There are numerous studies that show that women in both these transitional economies, as well as in the context of ‘the Third’ world provide, or are expected to provide, services that buffer the negative aspects of economic restructuring caused by the extension of global capitalism. These studies also show that benefits that may result from national economic restructuring, such as more job opportunities and higher consumer choices, are usually reserved for younger

and educated professional women. On the other hand, it is the most vulnerable women who suffer from existing inequalities and insecurities that are currently being intensified.

It is now more crucial than ever to remember an analysis by Marilyn Waring, New Zealand feminist and a Parliamentarian, who pointed out in the 1980's the absurdity of the dominant economic system by noting that women who cook, clean and take care of the children and other family members are considered to be unproductive, unoccupied, and economically inactive, as no wages appear in the national economic accounts. But at the same time a man employed to sit in a nuclear bunker and wait for hours at a time, for an order to fire a nuclear missile is productive and economically active, he is assigned an economic value and is seen to contribute to his nation's growth, wealth and productivity. In our alleged 'post-feminist' era we may have men cooking at home and women working for the military, but how is that changing the fundamentally patriarchal foundation of economy? How is that changing the exploitative relationship that exists between, in Hazel Henderson terms, monetized half of the cake (private and public sector, cash-based underground economy) and non-monetized layers of 'sweet equity' and mother nature, that absorb hidden social and ecological costs? Unfortunately, some of these economic absurdities are continuing and also even accelerating, having numerous negative implicating to us all.

PAMELA MCCORDUCK: I see the main trend—and it is global—that affects women is the huge religious fundamentalist backlash against the present and the future. Change is taking place quickly, and rather than embrace and try to shape (or even take responsibility for) that change, most people would rather hark back to an Eden that never was, and return to "the old ways". This is hardly limited to Christianity or Islam, though these two religions are most prominent in the developed world. The fundamental scriptures of these religions are shockingly anti-woman, and serve as justification for what is really woman-as-scapegoat for all the fear and malaise that many feel about modern life.

The counter-trend to this is women's improving educational status. They are capable of thinking and investigating for themselves in ways their forebears were prevented from. A good thing. We will need all the brains and energy we can bring to bear to counter these social trends.

JEANETTE PATINDOL: Globalization affects all, but I see the globalization of media as an instrument of not only reflecting but also propagating culture as both an opportunity and a threat for women all over the world. All that manifests externally first begins in the mind, and how the mind is fed with images of how women are or should be impacts on how it is manifested in the cultural sphere.

A key issue every woman has always faced and will always face is how she sees and values her self as a person, which is almost always defined by how she was brought up and the images and notions of her value as a person and as a woman fed to her by her family, school, community, society, the media, etc. Until and only until she comes to terms with her own value and her own powers as a woman and as a person, all other issues are secondary.

Basic strategies for focusing on this issue are still education, whether formally through schools, or informally through media and trainings, and always through modeling and mentoring, bringing up young people—both girls and boys—on appreciating femininity and womanhood for the gifts and powers it brings to life, relationship and the world, for its own sake.

DEBRA BATEMAN: Recently, there has been discussions about the misconception that 'women' can have it all—career, family, love, good health and laughter. And probably, it is true that we can at least have a bit of each. The trend in the Western World is that the more we can have, the more we want, the more we have to earn, and the more our lives became evaluated on the basis of our ability to participate within a consumer society.

We need to become more responsible and critical consumers in the world in which we live—not only in economic terms, but in consumption of space, emotion and time. Education is the way in which transformation can occur for future generations. The futures must be both playfully and critically envisioned with a view to facilitating discourse out of the reflection and learning of our lives, and the lives of others.

LINDA GROFF: There are two important trends currently having a big impact on women, including in the USA, my country: (1) the ongoing war with Iraq; and (2) the influence of fundamentalist, right wing thinking, including on Bush Administration policies. Both of these trends come, in this writer's view, from fear, and they both reduce and limit the role of women in public policy—unless women support the male-dominated agenda.

My late husband, Paul Smoker, and I also wrote on a holistic, integrative view of peace (see “Preferred Futures/Positive Futures” section) and whenever war dominates the public agenda, it tends to take attention and resources away from any peace agenda—including seven aspects of peace that we elaborated. Because the tone of US policy also impacts the world a lot, this also effects peace efforts around the world, which have mobilized against Bush Administration policies, which have tended to polarize not just the world, but also US domestic public opinion as well. Too many people—including terrorists and the Bush Administration—have been stuck in either/or thinking, which is a mindset not appropriate for an interdependent world in the 21st century.

VUOKKO JARVA: Globalization is the biggest challenge for women, both in bad and in good. The (Western) male patriarchal mode of economy is a vast threat to women all over the planet. Because the dominant male economic ideology (monetistic, capitalistic, competitive, exploitative) does not value the small-scale basic household and local economy, often unpaid work of women. The large-scale economic decisions are made without consideration of the influences in the women’s economy. This exploits more and more efficiently the resources of the women, who mainly carry the burden. This means both the intensification of the gap between the rich and the poor and incredible waste of women’s resources in crude physical work and worrying.

Globalization in the spreading of knowledge and easiness of contacts independent of distance is a positive opportunity for women. It is no longer so easy to hide misdeeds, but they are very easily spread around the world so even distant people can express their opinion. As well it is much easier to spread new good ideas through the solidarity nets of women.

The most important issues women have to work in future is first to connect women’s groups, working on same and common issues all around the world. “I am not alone” and “my work is valuable” are the most powerful tools anyone can have. The other crucial issue is to encourage men to see how the patriarchal culture exploits their humane capabilities by imposing the masculinist role model upon them as well as free themselves from their ties to work together with women towards more whole-humane humanity.

The sharing of innovative ideas without monetary compensation (like the LINUX-program system in computers) all around the women’s groups is very important resource. Maybe some instance could construct a dictionary of sustainable innovations. The other important duty is to create loose networks among women’s groups globally. The organizations are very valuable especially in national and international politics, but they need the support of grass roots, cross-societal and cross-cultural “light” networks. These networks can be only temporary, project character or long lasting. Their advantage is the ability to react very quickly.

PATRICIA KELLY: Global Warming will create millions more poor people, particularly in the already poor and most vulnerable areas of the world. Women always suffer more in these circumstances. They go without food; they will be the last to be educated. As women in wealthy countries, we make decisions every day that will contribute to this. Do we drive gas guzzling cars? Are we prepared to make minor changes in our quality of living to help the planet? Do we make our voices heard to politicians in support of better approaches and criticizing backward moves?

Secondly, the trend towards fundamentalism will disadvantage women whichever society we live in. We will face increasing pressure to conform to dominator norms. So-called civilization wars divide us and try to stop us seeing each other as women, who can benefit from mutual support. On each side of the divide, we will be called upon to “sacrifice” (our children, our rights) for the common good, rather than questioning how that helps the “common good” and whose “common good” it is. Our numbers can be strength in resisting. We need more cooperation and collaboration not less.

In terms of unhealthy futures, I am concerned at the way the media is coopting women into dominator visions, for example, the movie “Smith & Smith” in which equality was celebrated as the equal ability to fight and murder. Television programs in most societies increasingly glamorise and celebrate war and “sacrifice”, in order to normalize the idea of women sending their children, male and female, to the current and coming oil, (water?) wars.

4. Alternative futures and scenarios

Q: What could currently be identified as the alternative futures/scenarios for women’s/gender futures?

ELEONORA MASINI: An alternative scenario would be to see a strong presence of women aware of their capabilities.

PAMELA MCCORDUCK: In our 1996 book, *The Futures of Women* [2] Nancy Ramsey and I identified four possible futures for women. We see each of them playing out, though the “Backlash” scenario is far more prominent than we would have dreamed 10 years ago. For example, we were criticized for suggesting that women were not going to take hold of the US Congress anytime soon, but the outcome proves we were sadly correct. In a few individual cases, the “Golden Age of Equality” is playing out; in other cases, “Two Steps Forward, One Step Back” is playing out, particularly in women’s presence in science, which is sadly important because science is one of the driving forces of the 21st century.

In business, nearly nothing has changed—top corporate jobs in the US have gone from 10% held by women in 1996 to a whopping 11% now. It is not a pipeline issue: there were many women taking M.B.A.s in the 1980s, who should now be running US corporations, but they are not. Those women have instead moved laterally, to open their own businesses, start their own professional firms, because corporate culture is still generally hostile to women. This leaves the “Separate—and Doing Fine, Thanks” scenario, which is a place many women in the developed world find themselves. Women in less developed parts of the world may not have such choices, unfortunately.

PATRICIA KELLY: Unhealthy and healthy futures seem equally likely and no doubt will continue to co-exist. The degrading of public education and public health and increasing costs make it more difficult for disadvantaged women to achieve the higher education they need. This will decrease communication and increase the gaps between women in our society.

Healthy futures struggle to grow through this concrete. They would be of course, cooperative, collaborative, nurturing of both men and women. We have made collective, global decisions regarding population, education, pollution, and are working together towards a sustainable society. The visions exist, what is lacking is political will and courage. Since most of the media are not in support, we need women’s networks publicizing healthy visions. We should use healthy language, healthy visions and healthy metaphors and not be co-opted into using the distorted language of the conservatives, such as “reform” when it means removing rights our predecessors struggled to win.

VUOKKO JARVA: The dominance of women or female culture on this planet does not seem an alternative: it would not necessarily change the hierarchic structures. Riane Eisler’s “partnership society” is a good model in itself. The problem is how to interpret it. One must remember, that there are spheres of the male and the female in all dimensions of our culture and life. One should not forget either, that there are negative aspects in the female culture as well. These “yang and yin” aspects should be balanced to create a more humane global village.

The worst possible scenario is naturally, that the present blind secular religion of monetism and economic efficiency causes the apocalypse where women are destroyed as well as men. The second scenario of horror is that, when the present Western dominance is accumulated even more male dominated or some day changed into e.g. Eastern male dominance, the positive development of recent decades stops and the women’s situation gets worse.

One optimistic scenario is that this wave of patriarchal globalization is only a wave and will be proactively reversed some day to more humane, especially if people working for humaneness do not give up and become hopeless.

SMITA PREMCHANDER: Women have more confidence in their own thinking and articulate and live it much more today than they ever did before. Yet, class, caste and religious identities fragment their voices, evidence the example: when rich women employ the poorer as housemaids rather than demand their partners share the household work, and in the bargain they continue to perpetuate extreme social and economic, as well as gender inequalities. We need to perceive clearly the interrelationships between social, economic and cultural factors that structure society and influence attitudes, and then only can we negotiate a future that envisions caste, class and gender equality.

RIANE EISLER: One scenario is regression to the kind of societies we have been struggling to leave behind: societies that orient to the domination model. Violent and oppressive cultures make the subordination of women a top priority. The reason is that a male/superior-female/inferior view of our species is foundational to a top-down, authoritarian culture. We are seeing this regression worldwide, with the push to get women back in their “traditional” place in a “traditional” family by regressive regimes and would-be regimes.

The male/superior-female/inferior view of our species is a mental template that is generalized to all rankings of domination, whether based on race, religion, ethnicity, and so on. The notion that one half our species is put on earth to serve and the other half to be served is a template for all economic injustice.

We must show that stopping the push back in gender relations is essential not only for women but for men and children. We must show that fundamentalism is not a matter of religion or morality. It is an immoral return to the fundamentals of the domination model—beginning with a male-dominated, punitive, and authoritarian family.

The positive futures scenario is a breakthrough to the partnership model. In this social configuration difference is valued rather than equated with superiority or inferiority—beginning with the most fundamental difference in our species between female and male. These connections between a positive future and equal partnership between women and men can be seen cross-culturally and historically.

For example, in Nordic nations such as Sweden, Norway, and Finland the rise in status of women has led to a caring society that has pioneered human welfare and human development. Along with the higher status of women, and women's almost equal representation in government, have come policies that fund stereotypically feminine traits and activities such as care giving and non-violence. As the status of women rises, men also back policies such as universal health care, childcare, paid parental leave, etc.

These are not perfect nations by any means. But they orient more to the partnership model. Part of this model's configuration is respect for human rights and investment in human development. We also find less focus on the old "conquest of nature and greater ecological consciousness. And we find less violence: the Nordic nations pioneered peace studies and laws that prohibit physical discipline of children in families and also have a strong men's movement trying to disentangle "real masculinity" from domination and violence. We must show these connections between "women's rights" and a less violent, more sustainable, less economically polarized and yet highly productive society to both policy makers and the public at large.

ELISE BOULDING: In my projection of the future I have suggested nothing the least bit radical. I have assumed that shifting to a smaller scale of organization for many aspects of daily life, and developing a more intensive utilization of the human resources of both sexes and all ages and ethnic and racial backgrounds in local communities, will also stimulate the fuller development of all individuals... When women have an autonomous sense of their own being, having a husband will not oppress them, having a job will not oppress them. They will move from one pattern to another, as men will, when the time seems right for it. Since there will be no public spaces marked for white men only, women and minorities will be fully involved in the work of shaping the new society. [1: pp. 788–789].

LINDA GROFF: There is a huge agenda of global, national, and local issues facing humanity's future. Many of those issues are currently being ignored—at least by the current US government, which is focused largely on the Iraqi war effort, to the exclusion of almost everything else (except tax cuts for the wealthy), and under a dominance of male/machismo values. There are a huge range of issues where women can play an important role in demanding that these issues be addressed and not forgotten, including: ending war and excessive militarism; supporting arms control and non-violent ways to resolve conflicts; working for social justice, equality of the sexes and opportunities for women and minorities in all societies to get opportunities for education, health care, and jobs; supporting education on, and respect for, cultural and religious diversity; taking care of the earth and now dealing with the threat of global warming; and supporting spiritual-religious traditions (from all faiths) that seek ways to bring humanity together. The US and the world are currently totally polarized and out of balance largely as a result of US government policies. Women must align with like-minded men to work together to bring these other issues to the fore, for the sake of everyone's future.

JEANETTE PATINDOL: Girls who grow up to be women with a strong, clear and firm sense of their value as persons and as women, in tune with their feminine wisdom and powers, comfortable with using these and proud of who they are, in all their complexities—and boys who grow up to be men who see, appreciate and honor these in women, and are not threatened by them.

It is not so much charting new paths for women as going back to timeless wisdom, to our basic instinctual selves in their full bloom and glory, and learning to integrate this instinctual, "underground" Self with the post modern, "topside" rational sophisticate in a 21st century world and onwards. Dr. Clarissa Pinkola-Estes [3], in her book, *Women Who Run With The Wolves*, has discussed this extensively and beautifully, in a way that not only makes sense intellectually, but resonates deep down for every woman.

IVANA MILOJEVIĆ: And crucial in that process, as already pointed out, is not just the external change. We still have a long way to go in addressing what Sidra Stone terms ‘Inner Patriarch’—a compelling inner voice echoing thousands of years of patriarchal beliefs that everything feminine and to do with ‘women’ is in some ways inferior. Just one look at mainstream/most influential science fiction, for example, shows in which ways women’s empowerment is defined there mostly in terms of their masculinization (i.e. Weaver in *Alien* trilogy, Hamilton in *Terminator* trilogy, Moss in *Matrix* trilogy). Alternatively, in the contemporary global raunch culture of starlets, pop-princesses and even rebels, sexual objectification still remains a source of alleged ‘women power’. Going beyond myths of both ‘tough’ masculine women and sexualized vixens is crucial, and in my view, as important as changing social policy and economy. Personally, I find the New Age movement as well as spiritual eco feminism the most influential and potent in creating this new mythology for women.

DEBRA BATEMAN: It is time to revision womanhood, manhood and personhood. We need to stop the fracturing of peoples all over the world with these labels that impress differences in how we should behave, what should believe and how we should live. I would like to believe that as acceptance (and not tolerance) of differences is assumed and embraced collectively, there would be a greater and more empowering space for humanity to grow emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, collaboratively and soulfully.

5. Feminism

Qs: Is feminism still relevant in today’s day and age as a visionary ideology and social movement for individual, local and global futures? How would you respond to the backlash against and critiques of feminism that say (a) it is an outdated, mono-cultural, binary, essentialising and stereotyping ideology and movement no longer relevant for younger generations of women/changing societies; (b) that it has created as many problems as it had tried to solve; and (c) that because of the gains made for women by feminist interventions the issue for the future is rather the discrimination and disadvantage of boys and men.

SMITA PREMCHANDER: Yes, persistent feminism is as relevant as ever before. More so because the distance between ‘speech’ and ‘action’ is increasing. Those who ensure they find compliant women call themselves gender-sensitive. Those who can ensure their women will never compete for first place, call themselves the best friends of women.

- (a) The problem with ‘mainstreaming’ is that the issue gets lost, and the problem with giving special spaces to women is that it continues to marginalize them. But we have to provide these special spaces... and over a period of time women begin to gain voice.
- (b) Every change creates problems, this one does too. We have to see which problems are solved and for whom, which problems are created and for whom? Ultimately the society is formed of both [genders], and the path from an unbalanced situation to a fairer one is not likely to be easy for either the currently privileged category, which will fight for retaining power, nor for the currently underprivileged, who will bear the backlash of the changing society. A problem along the way does not mean we give up what we begin to do.
- (c) I do not agree. Men and boys will gain, too, in the long run. They will benefit from a more equal relationship. I know several men, older and young, who are proud to have more equal relationships within their homes with their partners and wives, and caring and non-traditional roles with their children. Short-term discomfort will lead to a longer term deeper change, and for that it is worth the effort.

CAROLINE SMITH

- (a) Some of these charges are or have been undoubtedly true, but there are now women’s voices in all cultures calling for culturally located responses to male power and domination e.g. female genital mutilation issues, women in severely male dominated cultures etc. Like the move from modernism to post-modernism, feminism has become localized and particularised, but is still critical for a sustainable and socially just future. Where do culture and male oppression intersect? Who decides women’s futures?

- (b) No it has opened the debate, rightly so, and exposed the differentials in power relations between males and females.
- (c) Any backlash suggests that these issues are a real challenge to the dominant paradigm; otherwise they would be ignored and dismissed. The discrimination of boys in education issue seems to me to be code for fear of the loss of the ‘natural’ order of males on top. It should be used to continue the dialogue around gender. We have barely begun.

ELISE BOULDING: Women’s distinctive INGO styles can be identified at any international gathering where both men and women are present. Better listeners, less status conscious, operating with longer time horizons, women can lay the groundwork for future solutions when impasses arise. Because they have lived at the margins of the public sphere for so long, they are less emotionally invested in existing ways of doing things, and can visualize alternative approaches to problems more easily [4: pp. 168].

ELEONORA MASINI: Feminism remains relevant, especially with regards to research on what women are ACTUALLY doing in all countries, especially developing and East European countries, to rebuild social relations and structures.

PAMELA MCCORDUCK: Curiously, individual and often local futures seem to be more open to a feminist point of view than global futures do. My city councilwomen are more effective than my women representatives in Congress. I presume this has to do with relative power—men are hanging on to global power and women have not offered an effective challenge to that. I do not put any hope in “trickle-up” politics—that the power women are gaining at the local level will somehow move up to global power. I would be happy to be wrong.

Feminism is sadly more relevant today than ever before. Outdated? Only when we see the statistics change seriously. Monocultural? Oh, please. Are you telling me that women in the Eastern European and Philippine sex trade really like it? That African women really prefer clitoridectomies?

Binary? There we have something—a really good vision of multiple, non-binary views would be a welcome thing. Essentializing? It is anti-feminists who essentialize and stereotype. They make assumptions about all women that curl the hair of the rational human being.

Feminism has created problems? For whom? Men? That too bad. It was a terrific ride for them for 6000, 10,000 years and it has come to an end. Tough. Get over it. For women? Women who complain about their new responsibilities need to look back at what it was once like in patriarchal cultures, including their own. Or they can look across borders to see cultures that still consider women as second- and third-class citizens. Feminism is not paradise on earth; it is just a lot better for women (and I think for men too) than anti-feminism.

It may be that feminism has created disadvantages for boys and men. I will try and be sympathetic, but with difficulty. Why are disadvantages to boys and men more important than disadvantages for girls and women? And if, as I believe, that in the long run genuine equality among the several (not just two) sexes will be to the advantage of everybody, my sympathy drops to the vanishing point.

PATRICIA KELLY: What else is new? It has never been easy to be a feminist. I recall a Rebecca West quote “I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat.” That still rings true. In fact, we are being urged to adopt a “with us or against us” approach that actively discourages criticizing the current system.

There are many problems for young men, and as the mother of one, I care very much. However, I think they are because the movement towards each other, towards better communication, has been stalled and reviled. Young men know what they are not meant to do, but there is little systemic support for them to develop the emotional and spiritual vocabularies they need to grow. Nor are there enough positive opportunities for them to grow. The role models currently available through most of the mass media are limited, limiting and not capable of supporting healthier futures. We need to provide better rites of passage than getting drunk or driving cars too fast. And we need to offer more detailed visions of what alternative, healthier partnership futures could be. How we get these publicized when the media is in so few hands is part of the problem.

VUOKKO JARVA: Feminism has been, and still is, an important visionary ideology and worldview, which has, and is, creating tools for liberating women and, even more, men, too from the gender prisons the present

cultures favour. It will be needed in developing variations as long as there exists discriminative segregation and domination on basis of gender. Feminism is as well a point of view, which already has fertilized several other welcomed developments, for example men's research and search of new, humane masculinity.

JEANETTE PATINDOL: I think that for a more peaceful, harmonious and creative (as opposed to destructive) world, we should do away with things or concepts that force arbitrary divides, placing people and phenomena into boxes (as if they can be boxed anyway), and analysing and defending these boxes to their death (which actually reminds me now of more traditionally "masculine" modes of seeing and working with the world). We resist against patriarchal and "macho" systems with the very methods they use!

I think it is time for us to grow into our fullness as women, and heal the world with our wisdom and grace and magic, not because we are feminists, but because we are humanists, first and foremost, concerned and caring about life, the earth (and even the Universe!) and all its inhabitants, and working not only with our minds and bodies but also with our spirits and our hearts.

Feminism is an important first step. But we must grow to healing and wholeness, even as we help the world heal and become whole, too, and not anymore create further division, destructive competition and struggles for power, but rather operate from a more creative, spiritual and truly more powerful way of being. Then again, it all comes back to coming into your own as a woman and as a person, in the fullest sense.

LINDA GROFF: The most important feminist stance for me is when women (with the circle representing the female principle) hold the space for the whole, and are concerned about the fate of all humanity and how we learn to live together on this planet, in a way that increasingly recognizes our global interdependence, but also variations in local needs and resources, and the potentials for everyone to evolve and offer their particular gifts to humanity as a whole today.

Ideally, that feminism also comes from love at its core (which expands human consciousness and interconnectedness), rather than from anger (which constricts human consciousness and our relationships with others).

This experience of love and interconnectedness now needs to be extended to all of humanity, not just our own cultural-ethnic-racial-and religious group(s). Almost all religions also support love/compassion, the golden rule (to treat others as one would like to be treated), and peace (in some form) in their scriptures. What we need to realize today is that these principles and feelings need to be extended to all humanity today in a globally interdependent world, with a global economy and global telecommunications-not just to our own group. Women, as natural networkers and connectors, who bring life into this world and thus inherently (with few exceptions) value and nurture life, can play a vital role in bringing this about.

RIANE EISLER: I find that the so-called postmodern attack on "essentialism" is at bottom regressive. I will answer this and the next question with the following excerpt from my book "*Sacred Pleasure: Sex, Myth, and The Politics of the Body*" [5]:

"Obviously, like all categories—from nations and universities to houses, dogs, and stones—the category woman includes many differences as well as commonalities. But the human brain cannot function without categories. Indeed, as brain research and cognitive science demonstrate, it is our capacity for categorizing that makes it possible for us to sort out what would otherwise be an overwhelming barrage of senseless sensory input. Moreover, as many feminists point out, to suggest that we abandon the category woman as a descriptive term in academic writings at a time when the omission of women's experiences, contributions, and even presence in historical, literary, and philosophical discourse is just beginning to be challenged in the academy is indeed postfeminist in the most regressive sense of the word."

As for the argument that feminism is no longer relevant, let's be clear about this: it is nonsense. Violence against women is the most ubiquitous human rights violation in the world, poverty worldwide falls disproportionately on women (even in the rich United States, older women are much poorer as a group than men), and today women's reproductive freedom is in grave danger even in the United States.

Certainly we have to pay attention to the problems of men and boys. But many of these problems are the direct result of a male socialization for domination and violence, for suppressing "feminine" feelings such as empathy and caring, of being taught that being a "real man" means not being like a woman. Fortunately men are today challenging this, like the many fathers doing the "women's work" of feeding and diapering babies—and deriving enormous pleasure from this. But these changes in men only happened because of the women's

movement. The crux of the matter, as I point out briefly in my earlier responses and at great length in my books, is that to help men we have to advance women. Only then can both women and men thrive. It's that simple.

6. Women's talk

Q: Can we still talk about 'women' (women's issues, priorities, visions for the future, etc.) as a group? Is there a multiplicity of women's and feminist visions for the future?

RIANE EISLER: Women's issues must be talked about. These are central human issues. We must highlight that much that has gone awry comes from the systematic exclusion of women and "femininity" from social governance. Even our language makes women disappear, as in the standard use of words such as man for human, he instead of she or he, etc. The idea that we now stop talking about "women's issues"—the complex of problems flowing from the subordination of women and the stereotypically feminine—is regressive. It's a major impediment to the cultural transformation we urgently need at this time when the mix of an ethos of domination and violence with high technology can take us to an evolutionary dead end.

ELEONORA MASINI: Yes indeed or else we shall lose what has been achieved.

Women too, I believe, are listeners to the seeds of change in the process of history. Because women have not competed with men until recent times, particularly in the Western world, they have not become completely captured by the social system and hence have not completely absorbed the prevailing social character. In fact, women have acquired and kept alive the capacity to build visions [6: p. 42].

PAMELA MCCORDUCK: Can we still talk about women's issues, etc., as a group? I wish we did not need to, but yes, we can still do that. Women in developing countries have different problems from women in developed countries, but all women still have problems, as women living with the consequences of patriarchy.

SMITA PREMCHANDER: We can and should talk about women's concerns, priorities, and aspirations. More so because they differ from one another, and make us aware of the need for listening to multiple voices, creating differentiated spaces for women, and of how a feminist world vision emerges that is radically different from what men accept and promote. The drama played within our homes gets replayed in the public domain, and vice versa, so women's talk is highly relevant within family, organizational and societal structures.

PATRICIA KELLY: Until we feel that visions truly not just include us but engage with us, I think we have to. If we don't who will? While women around the world suffer so disproportionately in terms of work, education, human rights, health, sexual exploitation, then it is a group issue. Those who have a voice surely need to speak up for those without. Women spoke up to gain all the advances that I benefit from and those advances are more fragile than we think. I see regressive visions re-emerging in Australia, for example, trying to challenge legal abortion, the "back to basics" in education, criticism of working mothers, urging Australian women to have more children, and using terrorism as an excuse to reduce our civil liberties.

JEANETTE PATINDOL: Oh yes, we can and we must! In the same way that the poor, the differently-abled, the youth, the old, the coloreds, etc. can and must. My only concern is for us to talk about all our "group issues" in the context of the broader framework of not forgetting that we must basically see each other as human beings worthy of honor and respect, and a full life deserving of any living being (that's why we have these "issues", because our being women, or differently-abled, young, old, colored, etc. appears to limit this fullness for us), and not in the context of an "Us-against-Them" lens.

DEBRA BATEMAN: We can because we still have the freedom in Australia to gather for whatever purpose, in regards to whatever subject we want to discuss. Other parts of the globe may not have this luxury. Ideologically, yes, we can still talk about women, because based on deconstructive methodologies the concept of man is incomplete without the silent binary of woman.

More powerful to me though, if women will continue to gather separately from men, is the metaphor of the woven conversation, where whilst there may be some distinct voices in distinct conversations, those distinctions are erased or enmeshed as the voices become less distinctive and more collective and random. Conversations such as this invite participation from more voices than are normally heard, as the 'weave' grows denser and matures.

VUOKKO JARVA: We need women's talk for several purposes. First of all it is necessary to empower ourselves and other women to see themselves in a more relevant way than the dominant masculinist

worldviews mirror. The other thing is that we do have many powerful women's cultures, which are an endless horn of plenty to find new ways to think, experience and act. These cultures are still mainly invisible in the mainstream world economy and politics. Concerning feminism I would not want to see women's or feminist visions to become one new rigid secular religion (which is a real danger along the academization of women's research). I agree very much with my colleagues from developing countries, that the Western feminism does not necessarily make visible the problems of women in other cultures. I am hopeful that the richness of various feminist and gender sensitive approaches can flourish and create fruitful dialogues everywhere.

ELISE BOULDING: By inspecting a broad picture of how women have worked in every type of setting from local to global, we see clearly their role in bringing about transformational social change. For every threat to human survival, women's movements have brought a powerful counter dynamic of constructive, inventive strategies directed toward shaping a more just, peaceful, and humane world [4: p. 91].

CAROLINE SMITH: Yes we can, though it is difficult and we must be very careful not to universalize. However there do seem to be some themes that are common to the majority of the world's women such as male domination and control of women, women's issues especially around poverty, children being forever marginalized, access to wealth, land ownership etc.

Also critiquing of probable futures (present) brought about by militarism.

LINDA GROFF: The women's movement is by no means monolithic, which is fine, as long as people can dialogue on what is best for everyone. What has always surprised me the most is that some anti-feminist women, such as Phyllis Schlafly in the US, who espouse very conservative views, including on the traditional role for women in the family, themselves lead a very non-traditional lifestyle and are very active advocating their views in the world.

Women in developed and developing countries often have very different issues of key importance on their immediate agendas. These differences also need to be respected, and ideally women in more developed countries with more opportunities need to find ways to help women in developing countries with less opportunities to also get their needs met and gain more access to opportunities—for education, jobs, etc. One such example—of a policy that has greatly helped women in developing countries, which women in developed countries can support—is microcredit loans to women (which a man in Bangladesh originated with the Grameen Bank, and which has spread to many other countries).

ELISABET SAHTOURIS: *Women as Natural Leaders:* As an evolution biologist lecturing widely on what we can learn from living systems in the natural world that is useful for getting us through our current global and local crises, it has long been apparent to me that women understand the problems and see the natural solutions easily and immediately. They “get” my holistic integral picture of a living, self-organizing universe and planet, my picture of species maturing over time from hostile competition to the economic efficiency of sharing and collaboration. They get it with a great sigh of relief that what they have always intuited or deeply known may really be so, despite what science has taught them in schools and universities.

There is good reason for this. In the past few centuries' most formal education was reserved in the West for boys and men who learned the non-living languages of math, logic and engineering in the dead language of Latin. Small wonder they designed and built our technological age. But as science gained priority over religion in being given the mandate for telling our cultural creation story, its view of nature as non-living mechanics was projected onto all our social institutions from governments and businesses to schools and hospitals—actually onto the whole of societies, which were constructed according to mechanical models and expected to run like well-oiled machinery. Only things never worked that way, and now even men are refusing to stay in their assigned cubicles, treated like cogs in wheels.

Everyone is now waking up to the fact that we and our organizations are alive and intelligent; that we can do things differently. The scientific worldview is changing more dramatically than during the Copernican revolution; changing from non-living accidental mechanics to self-organizing living systems everywhere in nature. And precisely because women, over these past centuries, grew gardens and fed people, birthed and raised babies, juggled family economies, healed the sick and adjudicated disputes, they are experts on living systems. They are desperately needed now that we have declared our world unsustainable—to help men see the natural maturation of living systems, to understand that it is more productive and less expensive to make friends of enemies and build their economies rather than exploiting and destroying them, to make local and global economics into a great web of caring and sharing until every human is as healthy as are the 100 trillion

cells in our own bodies (each individual cell so complex that it contains 30,000 recycling centers just to keep its proteins healthy).

It is ignorance of how living systems function and evolve that has led to our unsustainable economics and politics; it is knowledge that will save us and women have that knowledge. As Xilonem Garcia, an indigenous grandma and Meshika elder in Mexico, once said to me: “Anyone who knows how to run a household knows how to run a world.” This simple truth reflects the sophisticated understanding that living systems operate by the same principles regardless of scale. One day all scientists will know this, but our world is burning and women need to step up and claim the validity of their inherent and practical knowledge to lead the way out of our mess into a thriving future! www.sahtouris.com and www.ratical.org/lifeweb.

7. Feminism and futures studies

Q: What questions do women’s experiences/worldview and/or feminist ideology/movement raise about futures studies-as they have been and can be practiced?

ELEONORA MASINI: In my experience in futures studies or future thinking, even if there are not women futurists, we have to update methods. We also need research with women on their activities, networks and awareness of the future.

RIANE EISLER: Futures studies like other disciplines are still extremely male-centered. There is no such thing as a gender-neutral science or discipline in a world where a gender double standard has practically made the female-half of humanity invisible.

We need truly a holistic approach and this means changing entrenched scientific and educational traditions worldwide to include women’s voices, needs, experiences, and aspirations. Again, here the encroachment of some of the more extreme positions of postmodernism in academia, including in futures studies, is doing us a large disservice by trying to convince us that if we are just “value neutral” and “detached” we will leave modern prejudices behind.

DEBRA BATEMAN: I believe in equality and access to alternate futures for all people, and it is my personhood that I explicitly address and advocate within my futures work. Over the years of my involvement in the field, I have engaged in discussions in a number of ‘women’s’ futures groups. What I believe many women offer to the field is a ‘softness’ that is not to be mistaken for a lack of academic rigour. As a woman it is good to have this space to share reflective and emotive practice. However, because I am committed to the endeavor of humanity, I also like to engage with male voices as they challenge my feminine perspectives. When the ideologies come together, it is harmonic, regardless of the disharmony that may have been experienced in the process of our coming together. I look forward to a time when males and females can be more comfortable in the ‘discomfort’ of differences that emerge through our gender perspectives.

SMITA PREMCHANDER: The key question for feminist futures relates to how we can ensure that women have more rights over more material resources (grant and enforcement of property rights for example) and decision-making about the use of these, for these are critical to their having any influence over their own and the society’s future. How can women own more resources and exercise more power, within their homes and in the community? This question needs to be central to the discourse and debate about feminist futures, at least from the point of view of a south-based activist and scholar. I have referred to this in a book I have recently co-edited, *Gender and Sustainable Development* [7], which highlights the need for more gender-sensitive research and development action.

ELISE BOULDING: The creative imagining work of women does not easily fit into the mold of the professional futurist. We are more likely to encounter it in science fiction than in the “serious” work of spelling out futures. This is nonsense, of course, because every woman with responsibility for a household is a practicing futurist... Practical futurism is a way of describing not only women’s family activities, but also the entire range of women’s activism of the past two centuries. Women have worked into the time spaces of the near tomorrow to rearrange it in terms of perceived needs of social groups not well served today. From time to time women have appeared whose minds leaped far into the future, who saw different social constellations entirely [8: pp. 780–781].

What is missing from technological futurism? The long view, a recognition of the fragility of life; reverence for diversity of life, reverence for intuitive knowledge; understanding of the functions of solitude necessary to

create deeper bonds among people. Eloquence about the spaceship earth and the crowded planet has on the whole not opened up new vistas of how to think, feel and behave as humans. It has not led us to an exploration of the joys of frugality, nor to a personal recognition that the earth family sits at one table and is fed from one farm—the earth farm. It has not increased our respect, to say nothing of love, for one another, nor our skill in getting along together... And not opened up the inner space of the spirit [9: p. 117].

PATRICIA KELLY: Futures Studies could be a wonderful space because we can explore endless possibilities. But it is also gendered.

In 2004, we saw this in the different responses made by members of the WFSF online to an animated film available on the WWW. Some male futurists did not understand why some women futurists found it an alienating and dystopic vision. We all bring our encultured and gendered experiences with us to our futures work. What should be possible is serious reflexivity in which each futurist examines what we bring with us and is truly prepared to engage in respectful dialogues.

I find it takes courage and huge energy to challenge the “certainty” and confidence of established male futurists in the forums that we currently have available. Even in such simple matters as language, in English, futurists still use terms like “mankind” and “man” in their writing and at conferences and speaking up about this is still difficult. If I speak up, I am “holding up” a meeting to “complain” about something many regard as “trivial”. As a white, middle-aged female, I find it difficult to challenge powerful males, particularly on issues that involve cultural and religious intersections. But the way we “name” the world is important. It reveals the myths below our speech or our writing.

VUOKKO JARVA: The mainstream of futures research has been surprisingly masculinist and very much dominated by the Western male worldview. The women’s issues are considered marginal, even by women as futures researchers. I am happy for such pioneers in futures studies as Elise Boulding and Eleonora Masini. For example in my field of home economics, there has very little discussion of the factual role of women and households in world economy. The most interesting discussion instigated from a male in futures area lately has been David Loye’s discussion on Darwin’s “love principle” on basis of the book “Descent of Man” (sic). (see: <http://www.thedarwinproject.com/loye/loye.html>.)

LINDA GROFF: Within Future Studies, technology has always been seen as a major driving force for change, which it is. Here, however, it is important to also look at the societal implications of technological change on people’s lives, not just glorify technological change as an end in itself. One recent sub-movement within Future Studies is called “Transhumanism,” which in its extreme form (as expounded by Ray Kurzweil of M.I.T. and others) sees the calculation speed of the human brain as being surpassed by the increasing calculation speed of computers, leading to computers/machines ultimately surpassing humans, whose future will be to download their consciousness into a computer chip, with “God” then being all computer chips linked together! I have had indepth discussions with several very bright, high tech, young men with this view. The irony is that transhumanists are also seeking immortality, but since they only have a materialist worldview, not a spiritual one, they see immortality as limited to the physical only. They also mistakenly (in my view) equate consciousness as only a function of the physical brain, leading to a very reductionist view of what it means to be a human being.

Fortunately, there are other more cutting-edge researchers who look at invisible dimensions behind our manifest, material reality, and who see matter as concentrated energy (a la Einstein), thus being open to explore deeper aspects of what it means to be a human being. Future Studies, as a discipline, needs to remain open to looking at these deeper dimensions of what it means to be a human being. This, for me, remains one of the real “big picture” and main cutting-edge issues for both Future Studies and scientific research.

This return to a focus on both spiritual and material aspects of reality, as part of a larger, integrated whole, will also allow a return to a much greater appreciation of aspects of ancient, indigenous, non-Western cultures and how they integrated these different aspects of life into one everyday, integrated whole, which will perhaps, with time, help people in Western cultures to become more humble and open to learning spiritual traditions from non-Western cultures, rather than assuming, and proceeding, as though Western materialist, empirical science, on its own, has all the answers—even though it has contributed much value and knowledge to humanity, but it is not the total story or end state of our human journey and quest for the truth of who we are. The biggest, holistic, integrative view of who we are is finally to integrate both the spiritual and the material, the invisible and the visible, the energetic, as well as the concrete physical, aspects of who we are.

JEANETTE PATINDOL: If we all agree that the future/futures are in a constant state of flux because it/they have yet to be created by what we do now, and what we do now is conditioned by what we think about and how we think about now, where is the discussion of what we think about and how we think about now (and alternatives to what we think about and how we think about now) in futures studies?

In how I have experienced FS groups so far, my impression is the way to study the future is through a lot of words, calculating, arguing, left-brain thinking, etc. Where is the place for and value of silence, contemplation, spirit, intuition, right-brain thinking and whole-brain thinking for that matter? Are our collective futures to be devoid of these?

CAROLINE SMITH: I think there is much work to be done here, for example there is some evidence that women's images of preferred futures differ significantly from men's. What about girls and boys too? Perhaps that is a research project we could all take part in. For example, I think women tend to be more circumspect about futures and there may well be some futures issues that attract women more than others. Perhaps we more interested in ecological aspects than some men, not sure. I note that issues like technofutures, transhumanism in particular, attract very little female comment and personally this issue turns me off very strongly. I have read books like "The Spike" and have a visceral revulsion for these sorts of futures—the continuation of technofutures and domination of nature. There is much work to be done linking peace studies to futures before rampant macho militarism threatens our very survival.

I don't want to essentialize again but I have also noted that the kinds of research methodologies preferred by female researchers tend to be the messy but deep areas of qualitative research. I personally love to form relationships through my research, to explore deeply with people their hopes and fears for the future through conversation rather than questionnaires etc. that can be whacked on to a computer for analysis. Has a use but doesn't tell you why people believe what they do. I would love us do create a research project with some guide questions so we can talk to women about their preferred futures in all our different settings and contexts. Perhaps CLA is a useful tool for this?

I also note from some of the discussions on the WFSF list that exploration of localist, low tech possible futures e.g., those around the concept of permaculture, tend to be marginalized and dismissed as idealistic, hippy-ish and unworkable. At the same time it is interesting that many women are attracted to these perspectives as preferred futures. I think this is an unfortunate trend that permeates much of even the futures community, -particularly in light of the threats of peak oil and climate change that are already with us. Many, many women (and men) are working towards local in ways that are quiet, persistent and unrecognized still by the dominant mainstream. The cultural creatives.

PAMELA MCCORDUCK: Most practicing futurists are still men, and most of them still marginalize gender as an issue. For me, it compromises the power of their visions of the future, but people still keep paying them, so they keep on doing it the old fashioned way.

IVANA MILOJEVIĆ: Like feminism, the futures field is also diverse and uneven. When we put our feminist/women-centered lens we may be mostly heard when we voice our critique. This critique is most predominantly of techno-futurism, continuation of the 'destroying lives industries', percentage of male and female futurists, methodologies that focus on 'experts' such as Delphi or even in scenario development, trend extrapolation and forecasting that does not take gender into account, and so on. When, on the other hand, we subtly and quietly create alternatives, these tend to be dismissed as naïve, utopian and irrelevant. I have many examples of this, but I'll only mention here the posting on the WFSF listserv by myself that responded to the request by the editor of *State of the Future* (Millennium Project) on counterterrorism scenarios. While other scenarios that were posted were later included, mine, focused on the relationship between gender, war/militarism and future, were conveniently simply ignored.

But, of course, futures field also attracts us for its many potentials—methods such as futures triangle, alternative scenarios, preferred futures visions, backcasting, CLA—are extremely useful when discussing what may or even should lie ahead. We should also recognize contributions by many male futurists, and again, I will only give one example: James Robertson's [10] *The Sane Alternative*, wherein he outlined three main scenarios for the future: business as usual, hyper expansionist (HE) and sane/humane/ecological (SHE) futures. Essentializing it may be, but I still find this template useful and inspiring.

8. Preferred futures and positive futures

Q. What role do women and/or feminists have in creating positive futures visions for the future of humanity? What are women's/feminists preferable futures visions, as articulated by women's movements or yourself? How do you explicitly or implicitly bring "gender" issues into your futures work?

SMITA PREMCHANDER: We need to come together as women, across classes, continents and cultures. There is a need for developing alternative scenarios for the world, which are not based on arms supremacy but survival of all. There is a need for organization structures that are not pyramids, but composite wholes with several leaders and networking processes.

I try all the time to promote policies and programmes that create capacities among the poorest women to come together and manage their own resources and organizations. To pool their strengths, to articulate their issues, to chart their own paths, and to take longer roads that are their own, not shorter ones where they are herded like cattle.

Ten years ago, they thought I was a bit mad, and too drastic. Over time, I find more and more organizations are willing to hear and collaborate. Ten years ago, I was alone, now I find resonance among many people, both women and men. Ten years ago, I was offered support by senior women at critical times in my career, today I have been able to do so for many women across the world, in their personal and professional lives, and have plans to start a mentoring site for women, worldwide... I work with the poorest women at the grassroots level, and with organizations at national and international level to change them from within, and to change their policies and programmes. I have sometimes lasted up to 2 years in the latter organizations till the dominant structures and paradigms are threatened and throw me out!

Across the spectrum, I find women are willing to come together, and share much more of their personal and professional lives than they ever did before. They are willing to enter the public realm with their personal stories. This gives me a lot of hope for us as women.

PATRICIA KELLY: If we do not have a role, then humanity doesn't have much of a future. We need to keep promoting healthier long-term visions for humanity and other species and publicly deconstructing unhealthy ones. As an actor, in the 1970s and 1980s I took part in Street Theatre and worked in women's theatre to share women's stories from women's perspectives. As a mother, I apologised for not doing better. As a teacher, I try to model an authentic self, also struggling to make sense. I consciously use "healthy" metaphors and readings in the units I teach: "oasis", "nurture".

I set assessment tasks such as Peer Interviews about the task, that involve listening and being listened to and reflecting on learning and what students bring to that. Most male and female students are searching for "integrating circumstances" that will help them to grow. I try to encourage "democratic habits of the heart" (respect for others, self-respect, willingness to accept responsibility for the common good, willingness to accept diversity and to approach others with openness Bellah, 1985 in [11: p. 14]. Riane Eisler's vision of a partnership future, neither patriarchy nor matriarchy but collaboration for something better inspires me.

RIANE EISLER: Women have a major role in creating positive futures. Not because women are better than men, but because we have not been socialized to win at any cost and to numb our "soft" feelings, such as empathy. Of course not all women are empathic. And many men are. But studies show that as a group women do bring a more caring ethos into organizations and governments—and we urgently need more caring social, economic, and environmental policies.

This said, we must join with caring men to work for a sustainable future. I have found that my writings, which offer the partnership model as the blueprint for the future, attract many men. They have raised the consciousness of both men and women to the centrality of gender issues to all aspects of life—personal, social, economic, political and spiritual.

I have made it a priority to accept speaking at conferences where people do not expect to hear about "women's issues." Once it is clear that we are not talking about replacing patriarchy with matriarchy, that shifting from domination to partnership benefits both men and women, it is possible to reach people who would otherwise feel threatened and defensive.

Unfortunately even now most "positive" futures scenarios, even those that claim to use a systems approach, fail to include gender as more than just a little sidebar at best. We have to change this! We must envision and

create a gylanic future, where gyne (woman) and andros (man) are linked rather than ranked. As I wrote in “*The Chalice and The Blade*” [12]:

“We stand at an evolutionary crossroads: breakdown or breakthrough. Ours is a time when the lethal power of the Blade – amplified a millionfold by megatons of nuclear or biochemical warheads – threatens to end all life. But there is another alternative: a way of life where the life-giving and illuminating power of the Chalice guides our world...

As co-creators of our own evolution, the path we take is ours to choose. There is the path of domination that at our level of technological development may take us to an evolutionary dead end. There is the path of partnership: a gylanic world based on mutual respect, mutual accountability, and mutual benefit... . At the heart of this new world will be the replacement of the presently failing “dual economy,” in which the male-dominated economic sector that is rewarded by money, status, and power must in its industrial stages cannibalize both social and ecological systems. Instead we can expect that the nonmonetized “informal” economy—of household production and maintenance, parenting, volunteer community service, and all the cooperative activities that permit the now over-rewarded competitive activities to appear successful—will be appropriately valued and rewarded. This will provide the now-missing basis for an economic system in which caring for others is not just given lip service but is the most highly rewarded, and therefore most highly valued, human activity. . . . Social policies and funding will support caring and caregiving.... In this world, where the actualization of our higher evolutionary potentials—our greater freedom through wisdom and knowledge and our great capacities for consciousness and caring—will guide social policy, a primary focus of research will be the prevention of personal and social illness, of both body and mind... .

For above all, this gylanic world will be a world where the minds of children—both girls and boys—will no longer be fettered. It will be a world where limitation and fear will no longer be systematically taught us through myths about how inevitably evil and perverse we humans are. In this world, children will not be taught epics about men who are honored for being violent or fairy tales about children who are lost in frightful woods where women are malevolent witches. They will be taught new myths, epics, and stories in which human beings are good, men are peaceful, and the power of creativity and love symbolized by the sacred Chalice—the holy vessel of life—is the governing principle. For in this gylanic world, our drive for justice, equality, and freedom, our thirst for knowledge and spiritual illumination, and our yearning for love and beauty will at last be freed. And after the bloody detour of androcratic history, both women and men will at last find out what being human can mean.”

JEANETTE PATINDOL: Human beings treating each other with respect and honor, as a basic mode of thinking and behavior, and human beings treating the rest of life (and even non-life) with the same respect, because they see everyone and everything as interconnected—elevating one elevates the rest; demeaning one demeans the rest. There is no more violence in all its forms, both direct and indirect. Instead, human beings and the rest of life blossom all over and abundantly, as they were always meant to be. Whatever struggle there is, is the struggle of growing into one’s higher and finer powers; whatever conflict there is, is the conflict that births more creative and more positive transformations all over.

PAMELA MCCORDUCK: We have a never-ending role, and it will continue for generations, given the difficulties. I have stopped talking about equity, which does not move the Powers that Be. Instead I point to the scientific work showing how diversity provides better solutions to problems than homogeneity does.

VUOKKO JARVA: My best future vision is that the best of the female and male culture are formed to more humane variety of cultures where men and women have much more freedom to develop their capabilities and live as they like, taking responsibility of the sustainability of the natural world and future generations welfare, as well as the present one’s. The evil and violent characteristics of both genders are ritualized so that, they do not endanger and seriously injure anyone. Population control is voluntary and agreed by both genders. The respect of living beings and the natural world, as well as human dignity is focal.

LINDA GROFF: Humanity is made up of many cultural, ethnic, racial, and religious groups. It is also made up of men and women, with different gender identities. Any true vision of the future must encompass and include all of humanity, in its rich diversity, as well as its ultimate oneness and interdependence. There can be no world, and no future, without both men and women. And the rich diversity of humanity also means that different cultural, ethnic, racial, and religious groups each have different gifts to contribute to humanity as a

whole, as the world rapidly becomes more interdependent. But this requires openness and reframing by all peoples that none of us have all the answers, and that we will be able to weave a much richer new fabric of global interdependence together only if all the threads of humanity's diversity are allowed and able to contribute to that emerging whole.

As we move rapidly into the future, we must all go back to our roots, and grab onto what is important and meaningful from our different cultural-religious traditions, and thus bring the best of humanity from different cultures into the future, while being open also to the gifts that others bring, which can all enrich our own lives—if we can only be open to each other and not arrogant and close-minded.

This globally interdependent world is a huge challenge to all humanity. If it is to work, globalization must be balanced with localization (and local needs being met), and women's role (in holding up half of the world) must obviously be included, welcomed and respected, just as the contributions of different cultural-religious traditions must also be welcomed and included. Only then can moving from a nation-state organized, and sometimes still tribal-based world, lead to a globally interdependent world, based on both unity and diversity, that is a more complex, whole systems world, but also a greatly enriched world that increasingly works for all humanity, not just a few. This is a tall order, but the version of feminism that I can most relate to is one that holds the space for the whole of humanity to exist and flourish, and one that supports and enhances life and our interconnections to nature and to spirit, rather than to war, separation, divisiveness, and destruction.

My late husband, Dr. Paul Smoker, and I worked on “Evolving Views of Peace, Leading to a Holistic, Integrative View of Peace,” including: absence of war; the need for international institutions to keep the peace; social justice; feminist peace, intercultural peace, peace with the environment, and inner peace, along with non-violent means (of different types) to bring about these different aspects of peace.

Different cultural-religious groups in the world especially contribute to different aspects of peace: Western cultures and religions especially focus on different aspects of outer peace in the world; indigenous cultures and religions focus on peace with the earth first; and Eastern cultures and religions always start with inner peace. If we put all these different aspects of peace together recognizing that they are all valid and important—then there is much that we can learn from each other, and a more powerful, holistic, integrative view of peace emerges, as well as spiritual, invisible underpinnings of our visible, materialistic world and future. Both women and men, who are on the cutting-edge in many different areas of life, have important roles to play in bridging this gap and making such a worldview more mainstreams in future. Ultimately we must all create the world together, in partnership with one another, to use Riane Eisler's term.

CAROLINE SMITH: Preferred future: cooperation rather than competition the dominant way of operating. Diminishing of extreme individualism and return to more cooperative ways of working. Valuing of women not based on youth and physicality, valuing instead of marginalizing older women for their wisdom and experience. Recognition and legislation re ageism. Respect for the earth and working with rather than against nature. The rise of ecofeminist thinking and action to create local, abundant, equitable and sustainable settlements. My experience working with ‘mature age’ women in education is that they are extremely interested in issues of ecological sustainability, but have had little education around this either formally or informally.

ELISE BOULDING: In 1987, I published a short piece on the topic of visioning positive futures: “Image before action” [8]. I have revised it here because the ideas in the article remain current to the notion of women's involvement in preferred visioning.

In conducting these visioning workshops with very diverse groups of men and women, I soon discovered that women, whatever their age, came up with far richer images of how future societies could manage differences without armies than men. Being less attached to “things as they are”, they were much freer to imagine a world that functioned very differently. This continues to be true today. Of course, men are learning too, especially as we do workshops on imagining a world with nonviolent peace forces instead of armies.

It was at a Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Summer Institute on disarmament in Denmark back in the 1960s that I first realized that none of us, neither the experts who were our speakers nor we WILPFers, really had a clear picture of what kind of world a disarmed world would be, how it would function, what institutions would keep it viable over time. I knew from my work in translating Fred Polak's *Image of the Future* from Dutch into English that it was a society's image of the future that acted as the key dynamic to guide its behavior toward that future. Without an image of a possible, positive future,

societies tend to drift. World War II left Europe in despair, and the old positive images from the nineteenth century were gone.

Could we begin visualizing positive futures again? In fact, how could we go on working for a disarmed future if we did not really believe that such a world would come about? We all are empowered in our personal lives when we have positive images of possible futures for ourselves, our families and the communities in which we work. Could we not redevelop this capacity—that oldest of all human capacities, to dream of a different and better future—for our society and our world again?

The opportunity to act on those intuitions came in 1980 when I was able to persuade Warren Ziegler to apply the workshop format he had developed to help communities envision futures in which their most pressing problems were solved, to envisioning a world without weapons. Since then, the “Imaging a World Without Weapons Project” has become a small but significant part of the international peace movement. It has also been able to conduct workshops for diplomats, soldiers, scholars and policymakers, all of whom have difficulty in picturing a disarmed world.

Since no one can work seriously for an outcome that seems inherently impossible, the unimaginability of a world secured by other social arrangements than those of military establishments has stood in the way of serious political moves toward arms reduction, let alone disarmament. Fear of nuclear holocaust, the primary motivator of arms control efforts to date, is a poor stimulus for creative problem solving because fear rigidifies search behavior. Hope, on the other hand, provides an excellent stimulus for problem solving, and extends the capacity for search behavior. What is achieved by the activity of imaging futures in which one’s wishes for society have been realized, is to provide hope to people.

What do people see when they step into the future through the World Without Weapons workshops? A more localist world, where problems of scale, size and complexity are handled differently than in the present. Computer networking keeps local communities connected. It is a world without age and gender segregation, a ‘clean green’ world that gives much attention to sharing of resources and management of conflicts. People look happier, are more relaxed. These themes are common, although the specifics of the future vary as much as the individuals engaged in imaging.

Now, in 2006, it is harder than ever to imagine a world without armies. Yet today an international nonviolent Peace force actually exists! The Nonviolent Peaceforce (www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org) is a “peace army” composed of trained civilians from around the world. This means that people have a concrete, working example of an alternative to armies with weapons—an example that needs to be supported.

The contribution these workshops can make is not to create blueprints for disarmament, but to make vivid the possibility that people can actually live under different and more peaceful social arrangements, to stimulate more analytic thinking about the kinds of institutions we need in the future, and to tap a wider range of ideas about how to work in the present to bring such institutions about.

IVANA MILOJEVIĆ: Feminist alternatives still have a common core that provides a reasonably unified vision for the future. The main characteristics of this vision include a shift from death, power, competition and hierarchy-based glorification to a vision where life, love, caring and equality are more valued. There is an emphasis that the future in front of us depends on our actions today, rather than solely on some universal, omnipotent and irreversible ‘objective’ processes. In addition, while hegemonic futures visions claim to be about ‘the real’, feminist alternatives are unashamedly utopian [13: p. 146].

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