

SPEAKING FUTURES

The Metafuture Keynote Monograph Series

No. 1

ALTERNATIVE TEMPORALITIES & CHOICES FOR OUR FUTURES

Ivana Milojević

Developed from the keynote of the same title
6th International Conference on Anticipation
Milan, Italy · 3 July 2026

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Image credit: Anticipation 2026 Conference

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ALTERNATIVE TEMPORALITIES & CHOICES FOR OUR FUTURES

Thank you so much, Victoria [Rodriguez Schon], for that wonderful introduction. Thank you to the organisers for all the hard work you've done. Manuela [Celi] – incredible. Thank you, everybody, for being here this morning, especially after that dinner last night, which I think made it a little bit difficult to come here on time. I really appreciate you being here.

And it is wonderful being here among so many colleagues and friends, and sharing some of my thoughts that some of you are familiar with and some are not. But I did my best to address the theme of this conference.

And we were given a really hard task. We were to rethink how “ideas about futures operate within conditions of uncertainty, indeterminacy and unknowing, shaped through aesthetics, ethics, epistemologies and material practices.” So that is a lot, right? I will try to touch upon all of those things. Let's see how I go.

A few years ago, actually, in 2019, there was an exhibition here in Milano by the performance artist Marina Abramović. One day, I hope to hang from the ceiling like that – you know, that lightness of being from trauma that she so well portrays.



Image Credit: Estasi. Marina Abramović at the Crypt of San Sepolcro, Milano, with the video work "The Kitchen. Homage to Saint Therese" (2019) <https://www.vogue.it/fotografia/article/the-kitchen-homage-to-saint-therese-by-marina-abramovic>

And that image and that piece of work she entitled *The Kitchen. Homage to Saint Therese*.

I would also like to start my presentation with an homage to my own teacher, somebody who introduced me to Futures Studies in 1993: Eleonora Barbieri Masini, a sociologist and educator like myself. I learned a lot from her.

In 1993 – obviously, this is not something so unknown or revolutionary these days – but for me, as a postgraduate student in 1993, just that idea that there is more than one future, that there are alternative futures that we can use to think about the present rather than extrapolating from the past, was revolutionary. Thinking about our decisions and our present moment in terms of where we want to go, rather than where we've been, or in terms of those projected, kind of

predicted futures, was something that has informed my thinking since then.

It was mind-boggling to me then because of the context I came from and because of what was happening there at the time [the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s]. And I found it liberating.

A piece of work that I especially enjoyed by Eleonora was a text she wrote, *Women as Builders of Alternative Futures* [Masini, 1993]. And in that text, she argued that women have the enhanced capacity to imagine alternatives, not because of any ontological qualities, right? Not because somehow, we have special biological traits, but just by virtue of exclusion.

Being excluded from dominant systems of meaning, being excluded from dominant ways that our societies operate, gives you what feminists call the double-point epistemology, and you can have a gaze both from within and from the outside. I really enjoyed that text of hers.

She also introduced me to the work of Elise Boulding. And Elise Boulding is, as some of you would know, one of the founding members of both Peace Studies and Futures Studies. She made an enormous contribution.

I was very disappointed with the *Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace* [2010]. They put her under Kenneth Boulding. She doesn't even have her own entry, even though she made an absolutely enormous contribution. Unfortunately, this is how things work in our world, right?

And I learned a lot of things from her. For example, the notion of the 200-year present, which is using the expanded, future-generations thinking, based on family thinking, based once again on women's ways of knowing, where you spend lots of time taking care of your family.

It is a 200-year present, which refers to our grandparents and our grandchildren: those who were born 100 years ago and are still alive today, and those born today who will be alive 100 years from now. In a nutshell, that's the notion of the expanded present.

And I think it's even more important now, with this instantaneous gratification and short-termism that we are all experiencing on a daily basis. I think that concept of hers is even more important now than when she wrote it.

Obviously, in the area of peace futures, she influenced me a lot. I read most, if not all, of her books. And she has this quote that I put up there: that "imagining a responsible future is seen to be based on both

knowing the past and gaining knowledge of other aspirations and cultures.” [Boulding, 1996, p. 223]

I think this is really important because, as futurists, we go forward, but we also need to go backward. And the further into the past we go, the more we find things that show us that perhaps our times are not so unprecedented, that perhaps polycrises were always around.

I myself don't remember a time when I did not live in a polycrisis. Shadi [Rouhshahbaz] is laughing; she feels the same. It's this sense that something is maybe normal, but maybe it isn't. And the further we go, the more complete a picture of our current reality we get.

As well it is important to look throughout space, and learn from different cultures. The World Futures Studies Federation, which introduced me to futures thinking and Futures Studies at the course in 1993, was a global organisation and was intentionally trying to bring those multiple voices from the margins.

Now, we talked a lot here about uncertainty. There is, I think, at least a 3,000-year-old tradition that deals with this, both at a cognitive level and at a practical level. It just uses different terminology. It's the Buddhist notion of impermanence.

And that notion of impermanence is both something that you cognitively grasp, but also something you can practise on a daily basis. What does that mean – that we all live in impermanent conditions? There are all sorts of practices, meditations and so on that help us deal with that uncertainty without going into freak-out mode.

So that's what I learned from Elise Boulding. And this is what I learned from Eleonora Masini.

Before I move any further, I want to go back to the framings and definitions, i.e., our conceptual framework here. I mean, why are we here at an Anticipation Conference? When we talk about the Discipline of Anticipation (DoA), and this is a definition by Riel Miller, Roberto Poli and Pierre Rossel (2008), we talk about “all efforts to ‘know the future’ in the sense of thinking about and ‘using-the-future’ [as] forms of anticipation.” “Equally the future is incorporated into all phenomena, conscious or unconscious, physical or ideational, as anticipation. ... The DoA covers all ‘ways of knowing’ the later-than-now as anticipation ...” (p. 52)

It is about all efforts, all phenomena, all ways of knowing the later-than-now being anticipation. Basically, I can talk about anything I want, right? All phenomena, all efforts and all ways of knowing are included.

You will notice in my presentation that I will give homage not just to Eleonora Masini, but also to a number of other Italian thinkers who influenced my thinking and, actually, the field of Futures Studies and the field of anticipation, I believe.

I would like to start with Antonio Gramsci, who paid a heavy price for his work, as those of you who know his biography would know.

And Gramsci asked this critical question – I mean, I'm paraphrasing. He did not ask that question. I'm asking on his behalf:

Are all forms of anticipation equal?

Keri [Facer] had this wonderful introduction on the first day of the conference and said, “We are all in this together.” However, I would like to argue that, yes, we are, but we also do come from different places.

I'm still recovering from that queue at Milan Airport. Some of us were there for hours; some of us went through those queues in minutes. Obviously, our societies are structured like that, right? We all carry various forms of privilege and various forms of marginalisation in different areas of our lives.

Gramsci talked about that. He talked about privileged forms. He used the term *cultural hegemony*. He talked about dominant systems of meaning, and I would like to argue that those go hand in hand with dominant or hegemonic temporalities.

I think we heard a lot here about those dominant, hegemonic temporalities over the last few days, and, in a nutshell, they could be defined as linear, industrial and digital.

This is why I think it's really critical to tap into **time literacy** as some sort of prerequisite, almost, for futures literacy – or as part of it. It needs to be part and parcel of what we do when we engage in anticipatory practices, because the epistemological framing of time acts as a boundary. It prefigures our perception of the future and delimits strategic action.

The way we see time is going to influence how we see the future. And, “the way we think about the future has a past.” (Gore, 2013, p. xviii) To exercise informed choices over our futures, we must first recognise that multiplicity of time perspectives.

Barbara Adam, in her many books (e.g., 1998), argued that the hegemonic time that we are currently inhabiting started at a particular time in history. There was this conceptual conjuncture between Newtonian science, neoclassical economics and the mechanical clock, and that created the illusion of certainty in a particular way. It created

the unquestioned assumption that the future unfolds sequentially and can be predicted and shaped.

This conception of time accompanied the industrial way of life. We are trying to move out of it, still struggling, but what would it mean if we did not connect this type of hegemonic time with the industrial way of life but, for example, with ecological principles? Because that seems to be the collective vision for our future, at least according to the UN's SDGs and a number of other organisations and groups.

Hegemonic time is, of course, characterised by chrononormativity; time as commodity; standardisation; exclusion and social expulsion; and cultural hegemony – meaning measuring and valuing a specific type of time as natural and normal. In a way, those who do not fit into it are excluded. There is even social expulsion if you don't fit quite well.

That has been very documented in Australia, for example, where I've lived for many decades. We think of the Indigenous population, Aboriginal Australians, and how they have been excluded from the system by virtue of dealing with time, considering time differently.

Jeremy Rifkin also writes about “Time Wars” (1987) and argues that a lot of our conflict is underpinned by the different ways we see time.

This is a type of temporal colonisation that occurs to this day, and it occurs to all of us. Any time anybody takes away our time – in those waiting queues, or when we are trying to do our business of just living, having to spend half a day dealing with that “spinning wheel of death,” on our devices, you know? – they take away our life.

It's not just our time; it's our life, because time is all we've got.

Temporal colonisation is a real problem. I wanted to ask whether it is a problem, but I've already made an argument that it is. And what I heard from you during the last two days is that, yes, indeed, it is a problem.

It is a problem in our governance, the way we govern. It is a problem in education. It is a problem as far as technology is concerned, the economy, and so on and so forth.

If it is a problem, we really need to start thinking about alternatives to it.

But never mind other people in governments and education, although many of us are from those sectors as well. I think our field of foresight and futures, and even anticipation, is also part of the problem in some ways. I think we do reinforce that temporal colonisation.

If you look at some of the language from organisations that are progressive, really, and that are trying to lead the way in transforming our condition towards something better, you will find all this language of “future-proofing”, of being “future-ready”, definitions of strategic foresight, et cetera, that I think, by their very definition, are unitemporal and unidirectional.

“Future-proofing an organization means anticipating change, increasing resilience, maintaining a competitive advantage, and mitigating risks.” (UN, 2024)

“The purpose of strategic foresight is to equip governments and societies with the capacity to explore and prepare for multiple plausible futures and associated opportunities and challenges, spurring new thinking and assessing that strategic plans and endeavours are future-ready.” (OECD, 2026)

That's what I think.

Thank you, Manuela, for referring to the research I've done on futures fallacies and cognitive biases, or the “predictable irrationality”, where we come up with certain patterns of thinking that are irrational, but predictably so, as Dan Ariely (2009) says. There is a whole body of research there and, obviously, I can't fully tap into it right now.

But I think it is important to see what it is that we actually want.

We have a way to expand those temporalities through different frames, perhaps moving away from the commonly practiced strategic foresight. Because strategic foresight, that is based on talking about something being “future-ready”, means that you obviously know what that future is.

Your certainty is based on knowing what the future will be. You're tapping into the predicted future, the projected future, which always reinforces the status quo. Right?

If you want to challenge that, that kind of “future-ready” language needs to be expanded towards something that is more narrative-based or transformative. I think narrative and transformative foresight, unlike strategic foresight, allow for multiple temporalities.

And I'll try to illustrate that.

The assumption here, obviously, is that with enough data we can accurately – this is the current version, although actually it's been around for decades – that, yes, maybe we can't predict so well, but if

we have a large enough set of data, data, data, we can actually come up with something tangible.

Again, somebody from our field may be a little bit guilty of that: Nate Silver, in his book *The Signal and the Noise*. He had a subtitle about why so many predictions fail, but some don't, right? And he argued in that text that if you have large sets of data, your predictions will be accurate.

Many of our organisations are focused on getting those absolutely massive amounts of small pieces of information, small units of information that all of us here probably know are biased one way or another, and saying, "Well, we are going to spend all this energy so that we can get that data and extrapolate into the future."

Silver argued the same thing until his own predictions failed.

Now, I talked about those biases, right? And psychologists have done, I feel, really solid work – very interesting work too – talking about some of those biases that, once again, all of us inhabit in one way or another.

Manuela [Celi] and Sirkka [Heinonen] and a few other people here like to talk about paradoxes.

Here is one: **the time paradox.**

But there is a cure too – which is what I think the business of futures thinking and Futures Studies should be about. Diagnosis, prognosis and therapy, as Johan Galtung used to like to say.

The psychologists Philip Zimbardo and John Boyd identify six dimensions of psychological time: past positive, past negative, present hedonistic, present fatalistic, future, and transcendental future.

Those are approaches that exist in all of our cultures and within all of us, but sometimes one orientation predominates, and that has a cost.

Even if you're future-oriented – like, I assume, if we did a test here, most of us would be future-oriented – we would look more in that direction than in other directions. That can also have a cost. A big cost: workaholism, missing the joy of the present, not being in the present moment.

The Six Dimensions of Psychological Time			
Dimension	Focus	Trait	Extreme Manifestation
Past Positive	The good old days.	Sentimental, nostalgic, maintains family/friend traditions.	Living entirely in memory.
Past Negative	Aversive history.	Regretful, focused on trauma or failure.	"Realist" pessimism, stuck in what went wrong.
Present Hedonistic	The immediate moment.	Sensation-seeking, avoids pain, novel experiences.	Reckless impulsivity, addiction.
Present Fatalistic	Pre-determined destiny.	Helplessness, external locus of control.	Apathy, depression.
Future	Anticipation & consequences.	Goal-setting, delayed gratification.	Workaholic, misses the joy of the present.
Transcendental-Future	Life after death.	Investing in the afterlife (e.g., religion/legacy).	Total disregard for current earthly conditions.

Figure: The Six Dimensions of Psychological Time – The Time Paradox and Cure <https://www.thetimeparadox.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/1999PuttingTimeInPerspective.pdf>

Summary Table by Notebook LM, prompts by IM.

We had a wonderful session on escapism yesterday [by Patric van der Duin], and I think René [Rohrbeck] as well talked about neurotic futures fantasising. Those are maybe slightly pathological engagements with the future. And why am I saying they're pathological? Because they create problems. At the individual level, they create mental health problems.

Here is my chart, retroactively done from the 1990s.

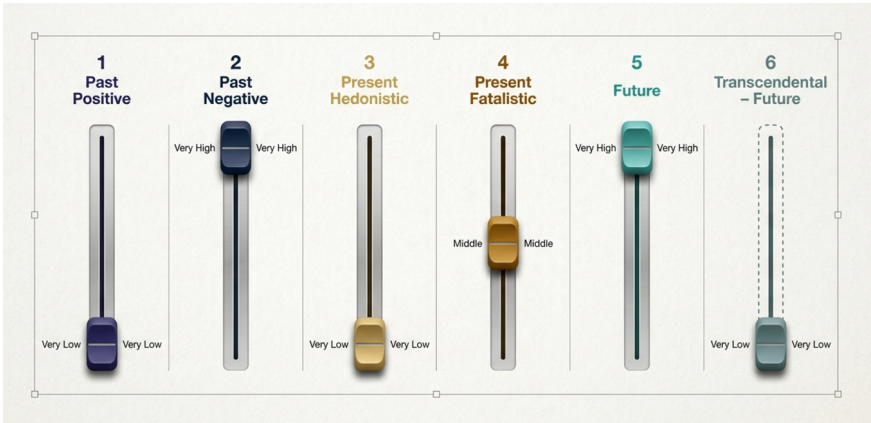


Image: Notebook LM, prompts by IM.

And I have to say, to argue a little bit with Patrick [van der Duin] – I don't know if he's here – **escapism was my saving grace.**

Just thinking that the future would be better was something that I held onto. And that [WFSF & UNESCO] futures course in 1993 gave me a way out of the dense and difficult present, and the dense and difficult past that we were constantly reminded of.

I think, as many people before me have argued, if you move into the future space, you have more hope because it's not fixed. There are possibilities out there, and you can still do something about it.

Most mental health conditions at the individual level would be about these relationships with time. If you are suffering from clinical depression, you will not see the future as positive. Your score there would be very, very low because there is no hope; there's just blackness and darkness. Some people then find a solution in suicide because they just can't bear that condition.

With the past negative and past positive, we know what that leads to: e.g., with the past positive to nostalgia, wanting to go back to the past. Political movements are based on this, right? You're all aware of that.

Then people who are present hedonistic or fatalistic forget to plan for the future. And when the future finally arrives – because the future is never about the future; it's always about the present – they get shocked.

The whole world was shocked by COVID. It was all *que sera, sera*, even though we had all the warnings from WHO and national governments for years and decades. But whenever a crisis would come, people would panic, and when the crisis would stop, like with Ebola, AIDS or SARS, everybody was like, “Oh, whatever.”

Even now, we are back to ‘normal,’ right? Even though pathogens are still around and even though more are coming our way, at least according to projected futures and if current trends continue.

This is the issue here.

As a solution, psychologists argue that if we want to improve on that, we need to have a **balanced time perspective** at the individual level.

What does that mean?

It doesn't mean that we should all be uniform in how we see time and have this perfectly positioned. Mental health is not about inhabiting a single ‘correct’ time zone. Instead, a balanced time perspective is the ability to flexibly shift temporal focus based on situational demands – and avoid getting trapped in any specific temporal frame, especially if no longer corresponding to the present context and circumstances. It means that we should use different time frames as appropriate, right?

It's about **temporal harmony**. Such harmony requires anchoring us in a positive past, working toward a structured future, while retaining the capacity to fully engage in the joyful present.

What I'm arguing is that we should perhaps do something similar at the collective level.

We are currently trapped in this hegemonic temporal frame. There has been a narrowing of imaginable futures through industrialisation, colonisation and globalisation into hegemonic linear time.

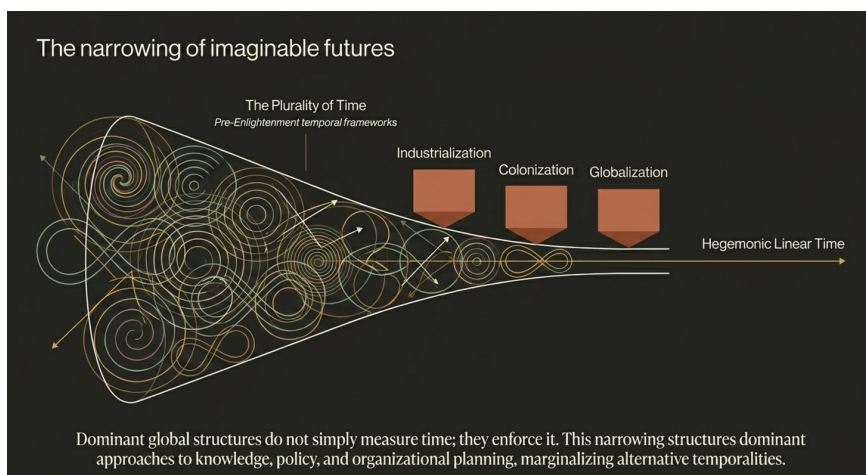


Image: Notebook LM, prompts by IM.

The question is: how do we go beyond hegemonic time?

I think one of the ways – not the only way, one of the ways – is to look at our values and our preferred futures.

I really enjoyed the manifesto from the Italian Institute for Futures Studies because they are very clear about who they are and what they want. I think this is really important.

If we live in conditions of uncertainty and impermanence, if we don't know exactly what the future is going to be, then having some clarity about the kind of future we prefer and the values that inform it becomes important.

We can also learn from our ancestors.

The Discipline of Anticipation may be new, but technologies of anticipation are ancient. They've been around for a very, very long time. We can see their material traces, and we can learn there because those conceptions exist pretty much everywhere in human consciousness, wherever we look.

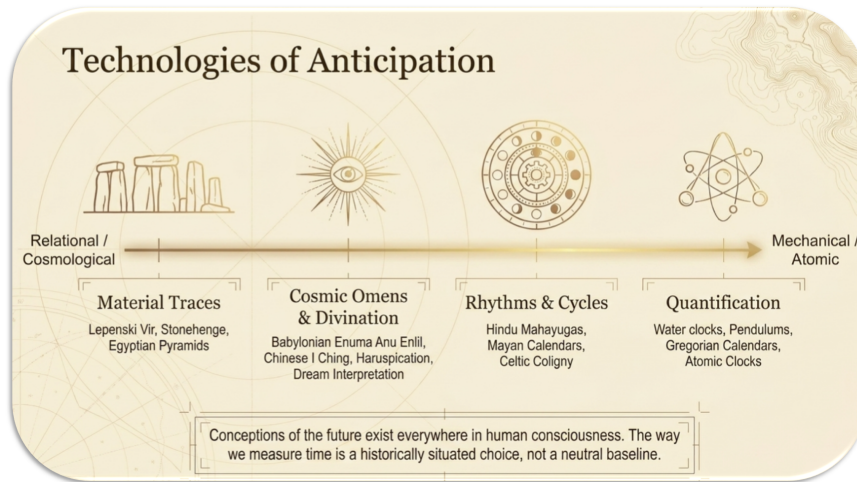


Image: Notebook LM, prompts by IM.

But because of those cognitive biases I mentioned – some cultural, some individual – we simply don't. We don't go out of our comfort zones and look elsewhere.

Masini argued, in Richard Slaughter's *The Knowledge Base of Futures Studies*, published in 1996, that to simplify and understand that complexity and the many ways of looking at anticipation, we can identify three basic patterns – civilisational concepts of time and future.

The first is **cyclical**, where we are looking at recurrent natural phases, and you have particular historical, cultural and civilisational roots there, as you can read in the image [below].

Then there is **linear**, in which the future, really for the first time in a particular time in history, becomes a separate domain to be controlled.

And then there is the **spiral**, starting from Giambattista Vico and others, where you have this evolutionary interplay of stability and change.

Because I was in Australia at the time, when I was writing my first set of articles on time, I added this **co-present and eternal** perspective, in which the future is intertwined with the past and present.

 Co-Present (Eternal)	 Cyclical	 Linear	 Spiral
View Intertwined with past/present	A recurring natural phase	A separate domain to be controlled	Evolutionary interplay of stability & change
Goal Continuity, responsibility, maintenance	Alignment, acceptance, regeneration	Progress, improvement, growth	Adaptation, emergence, transformation
Roots Indigenous (Aboriginal Everywhen), Pacific	Hindu/Buddhist (Kalpas), Macro-historians	Judaean-Christian, Enlightenment, Industrial	Vico, Complexity Science, Feminist/Decolonial

Image: Notebook LM, prompts by IM.

It's a very interesting notion where we are actually, as I said, the dreaming of our ancestors. We do not exist separately from them. We do not exist separately from everything that exists.

And we did hear about the biological notion of anticipation yesterday [a keynote by Fabio Scarano].

If you see yourself as separate from all these things, you get very different material artefacts, and design based on those principles is going to look very different.

If you see yourself as part of your ancestors and future generations, and actually everything that exists, you will create very different artefacts. You will create very different design. And that design may be to leave nature in its original condition rather than constantly trying to improve it, right?

Epistemology, ethics and material effects always go hand in hand.

Our cognitive frames always inform what we do and how we do it.

Now, what works at the individual level, I think, would be wonderful if we could start working to expand that to the cultural and civilisational level – to create some sort of **culturally and civilisationally balanced time perspective**.

That is about creating an inclusive, transformed, just and resilient global society of the future that does not privilege one type of time, like we have now – the type of time that is constantly being imposed on us.

Rather, it should utilise all cultural and civilisational temporal perspectives as appropriate.

I'm stealing from psychologists. My background is in sociology, so this is what I extrapolated from them.

Now, to show a little bit more about what I mean. I'm not sure how many of you were in this field in the 1990s, but some of us perhaps remember this group.

In the 1990s, everybody was obsessing over the year 2000. I myself was panicking. People were saying everything would stop working. You wouldn't be able to get money from the bank. People were hoarding cash because, apparently, when 1999 turned into 2000, the world as we knew it would end.

It was amazing.

In the 1990s, they [Foundation for the Future] said, "Year 2000? How boring. Let's imagine Humanity 3000."

And they did. They had quite a bit of money, and they funded lots of people to be part of the process. They came up with designs, paintings and material effects, and this is one of the images that they used.



Image credit: "The Prologue and the Promise" (1983) by Robert McCall (with assistance from Louise McCall) / Disney Enterprises, Inc. (Originally created for EPCOT's Horizons pavilion; later featured by the Foundation for the Future's Humanity 3000 series).

It was a large painting, so you can't see all the details here. But I think this is just a brilliant illustration of how that hegemonic idea of who we are as humans, who we are as a global society, and who we are in relation to past, present and future operates.

We have a past, which is there [to the left]. Then we have a future, which is there [to the right], and we are in the middle, of course.

It's very anthropocentric and very androcentric, because you can see where the sun is – above which gender the sun is.

You have a nuclear family, what feminists call a "cereal-package family". This is the notion of who we are supposed to be, even in our personal, intimate relationships.

And then we have this evolution of humans. Only recently have I started to see the images change, but for decades and decades, even in

most scientific books, when you see the evolution of humans, it's always the evolution of a man, right?

Because women, apparently, do not evolve.

Women stay connected with nature. They're ahistorical. They're part of that nature that should be conquered.

Go around Europe and you will see so many statues – material effects based on patriarchal imaginings – where women are naked and they're part of a waterfall, or they're part of this and that.

That is a material effect, something we created because of the epistemological framework of patriarchy.

We [women] are not our minds, apparently.

Amongst those humans creating futures, there are only two women. One is a scientist, Marie Curie. I guess they could not *not* include her. But she had to die to be there.

As one of my colleagues who did research on Serbian mythology said, “The only good woman is a dead woman.” She had to be there because, obviously, she paid a very heavy price for her research.

Another woman there is a warrior, Joan of Arc, who also paid a horrendous price.

Ladies, women, friends: if you want to be somewhere – an important place – you know what you need to do.

Just drop dead.

And, of course, no one here has bodies. Everybody is disembodied, so it's only our minds that create the future.

The only person who does have body parts is Pablo Picasso, who apparently couldn't paint with his nose.

I think this is a very powerful image because it summarises – and this is why design is important. We see it. It's something tangible. It's something that we can touch and feel immediately.

And we want to move away from this [type of imagery].

I talked about individual time perspectives. I talked about those four basic frameworks or patterns of time at the cultural and civilisational level. But I would like to add another dimension, because we are dealing with 5,000 years of patriarchy in the Western world. It's not globally 5,000 years, but at least in the Western world, it is.

Only for the last 100 years – which is a very short period in the life of a society – have we been seeing some changes happen.

If we want to make those changes, we can't stay – I mean, we can, but then we only get marginal change. And, as I said, I'm interested in transformative foresight.

If you want to transform something at a real level, you can't just count women, putting them in positions of power where they have to behave as men or worse. Sorry.

This is what we've seen happen all around our societies that are based on a particular cognitive framework of competition, domination, hierarchy and colonisation.

When you just put in numbers, staying at that superficial data level – or litany level in CLA terms – you don't get transformative change. You just get different bodies that operate in those spaces.

If you want to go deeper, I think, in addition to futures literacy, we need to do something about this time literacy, and we need to look beyond patriarchal temporalities.

Julia Kristeva wrote in 1979, I believe, about the “Order of the Father”. She argued that this temporal order – that we are calling dominant or hegemonic here today – is an order that privileges masculinised participation and visible productivity.

It's the time of project and history.

And that time excludes women's time, which is in the private domain, which doesn't count for anything. It's not paid, it's not counted, it's not valued. It is relational life, family spheres, and unseen care work.

It discounts embodiment, as we've seen in that previous image, and excludes nature and, obviously, Indigenous continuity. Natural rhythms that refuse mechanical quantification are not seen; civilization are framed as ‘backwards’ by the teleology of progress.

When you work at a university, for example, I remember once reading an article in which a colleague of ours argued that, to be successful, you need to be an unmarried man with a wife.

That means you have a wife who will take care of things at home, but you are ‘unmarried’ – you don't have any responsibilities in that family sphere.

This is the setup.

And it doesn't matter which gender enters the setup. The setup stays the same unless you do something about the very setup itself.

How do we do this?

We start reimagining this architecture of exclusion and start working towards temporal coexistence.

This doesn't mean that you suddenly switch to this or that. A balanced perspective means that these temporal frames coexist, overlap and interact within and across societies.

We use time as appropriate rather than time using us. It's a very different relationship with time. We are part of it rather than outside of it.

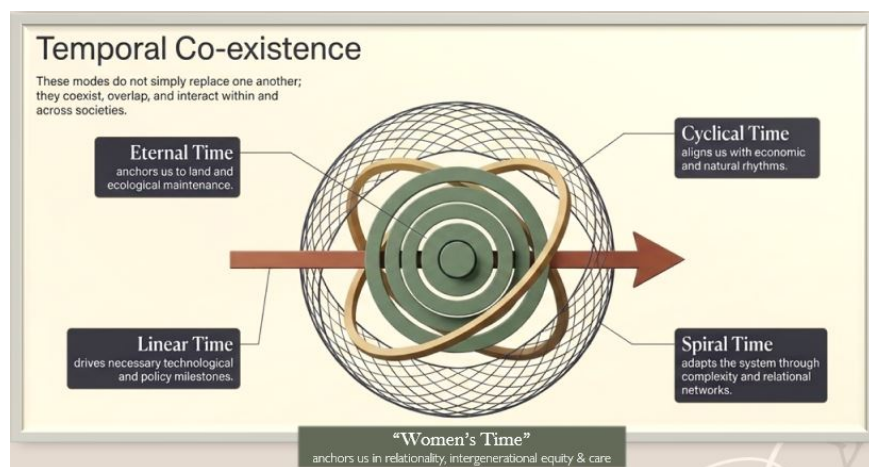


Image: Notebook LM, prompts by IM.

Eternal time, if we know how to evoke it.

Eternal time anchors us to land and ecological maintenance. Cyclical time aligns us with economic and natural returns. Linear time drives necessary technological and policy milestones. And spiral time adapts systems through complexity and relational networks.

Women's time, as I said, within a patriarchal framework was outside. But Kristeva and feminist thinkers on temporality are saying that women's time actually already embraces all those different temporal frames.

It also specifically anchors us in relationality, intergenerational equity and care.

Giambattista Vico, the macrohistorian, talked about the spiral evolution – and linear, maybe, in some ways – and argued that we moved from the Age of Gods, which was ruled by religion and fear, to the Age of Heroes, ruled by nobility and force, and the Age of Men, ruled by reason and equality. During the Age of Gods, power is viewed

as divine; civil society is born from a shared terror of nature. In the Age of Heroes, power is mythic; society is shaped and expanded by conquest and necessary violence. And in the Age of Men, power is codified by law and peace is achieved. However, hyper-rationality risks the Barbarism of Reflection – an individualist rot form within that can collapse the spiral back to the beginning.

Vico wrote all this some 250 years ago. If we try to paraphrase again – I'm paraphrasing Gramsci, paraphrasing Vico; I'm doing my best here – what has happened over the last 250 years?

We have seen the bifurcation of “project and history,” looking through feminist and decolonial macrohistorical lenses. We've seen a bifurcation in terms of the **Age of Machines**, which is the contemporary reality and, in some ways, actually a hyper-accelerated Age of Men. Here reason becomes automated and transactional. Human connectivity fractures under the weight of technological individualism, risking the very Barbarism of Reflection warned against.

On the other hand, the vision that I hear over and over again in most of our workshops – especially when working with young people and people who are, as Elise Boulding and Eleonora Masini argued, outside of those dominant frameworks, elsewhere – is the desire for the **Age of Gender and Cultural Partnership**. This is the projected upward continuation of the spiral. This age demands the complete rejection of the patriarchal divide, requiring a radical synthesis of the public and private spheres to restore human bonds.

Which brings me back to Marina Abramović and the kitchen, because that is a design. That is a material effect. It is about connection, about aesthetics, ethics, epistemologies and material practices.

Abramović (2017) says in one of her interviews:

“The kitchen was the centre of my world. The kitchen was the place where I would tell my grandmother my dreams. All the stories were told in the kitchen. All the secrets were told in the kitchen. All the pieces of advice regarding my life were given in the kitchen. All the future-telling, through the cups of black coffee, took place in the kitchen. It was the kind of place where the spiritual world and the daily world met and mixed. All my best memories came from there.”

What did patriarchy do with that?

It actually said the kitchen doesn't matter.

It made a division between **La Piazza**, the public square, where the public domain is what we count and what we relate to, and the private domain, **La Cucina**, where the growing of future generations takes place, where relationality and care take place.

To support it, there had to be not only a bifurcation of time but a bifurcation of space.



Image: Notebook LM, prompts by IM.

We've seen, as Kristeva writes, the **Order of the Father**, versus this new emerging model, the **Nurturant Parent Model** of intergenerational equity that George Lakoff (2004) talks about.

One of the best public examples of that public space is the man on the horse. You see him everywhere – everywhere around Europe.

It's about domination of nature, of other humans, of women. Is that an example [a material effect] of the Age of Heroes that Vico talks about?

La Piazza is also a place of finite action, the theatre of power and its climax. The public sphere is a space of discrete events, defined timelines, conquest, and measurable legacy. Power here is performed and externally recorded. Men exist as actors, soldiers, and citizens actively shaping the external environment. It is a domain concerned entirely with outputs – the completion of the project, the winning of the war, the passing of the law.

The private sphere actually operates on very different principles. There is the time of intergenerational connectivity. It is definitely slower. There is unseen labour, and there is a generative cycle happening there, with real people in real time meeting the needs of the most vulnerable. The private sphere is characterised by continuous, cyclical

labour, biological rhythms, and foundational human formation. While the square holds visible authority, the heart holds ultimate formative power. It shapes the raw material of youth into the human spirit. It is a domain concerned entirely with inputs – the slow, vital transfer of culture, language, and resilience from one generation to the next.

There is thus a theatre of the public sphere, **La Piazza**, the theatre of power, where the most powerful are rewarded. And then there is this other theatre, **La Cucina**, where the most vulnerable are taken care of.

What happens when **La Cucina enters La Piazza**?

You get very different material effects.

You get very different statues. You get very different KPIs, to use business language. You use a very different notion of what matters.

For example, this is a monument to the children of Lidice in the Czech Republic, by Marie Uchytlová – the memorial to the child victims of the war.



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lidice_CZ_children_of_Lidice.jpg

What I'm saying here is that **epistemology and ethics are always connected**, one way or another. It just depends on which cognitive frame you want to utilise.

Once you have a different framework, you create very different **material artefacts** in the public domain.



https://www.viory.video/en/videos/a3400_25082025/18-000-shoes-laid-out-in-utrecht-in-tribute-to-children-and-journalists-killed-in-gaza

The key question for us now is where to from here?

I think this is the question. That is always the question because, as I've said many times, and most of us keep saying over and over again, **the future is not about the future.**

It's about making **better decisions**, using the future as a resource to see where we **want to go**, having that **certainty of a preferred future** in times of uncertain possibilities.

Riane Eisler, the only female macrohistorian I know of, argues that we have two basic choices for our futures.

One is to continue on that **Dominator/Androcracy** path, and the other is to move towards **Partnership**, or what she terms **Gylany**.

And then she does something very cheeky.

Here is another paradox.

She actually says, yes, we do have these two kinds of choices, and they should not be seen as A and B options. They're like Weberian ideal models, for those of you who know Max Weber's work in sociology.

There are those ideal models. Of course, we exist on the continuum between the two.

She says, okay, here are the choices: we can align this way, we can align that way, we can be in the middle.

And then she says, well, actually, if we want to survive as a human civilisation, we only have one choice.

This is very interesting.

That doesn't mean that you suddenly have just one option for the future. Because between A and B, if you choose B based on a different cognitive framework, you can still have B1, B2, B3, B5.

This dichotomy between war and peace just absolutely boggles my mind, as if you either ‘do nothing’ re: a conflict or you have to use violent means, because you can have all sorts of peaceful, nonviolent ways of resolving conflict. There are millions of those strategies that people have already come up with, and there are experts here – Felipe [Koch], April [Ward], Keil [Eggers], many others – who actually work with that, who work with that notion that there are many, many different ways to solve conflict nonviolently.

That doesn't mean you just have one future. It's actually multiple.

But the framework is different.

And the framework, Eisler says, is based on our best hope to survive as humans on this planet. The planet will be fine once we are gone, but it is about us and our civilisation, our legacy and future generations.

Once again, because we are in Italy, I thought I'd rebrand Riane Eisler. Everybody's doing branding and rebranding these days.

I would like to identify those as two basic templates.

One is **Machiavellian**.

The other one is **Montessorian**.

And those two basic ideal models have very different views of power, violence, intergenerational equity and geographical scope.

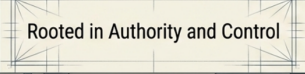
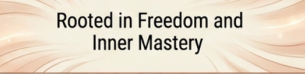
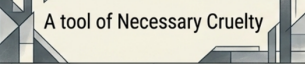
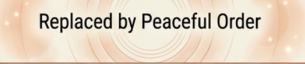
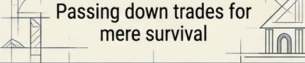
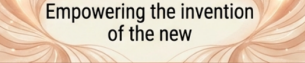
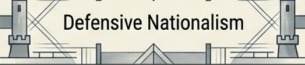
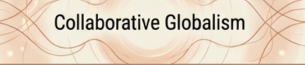
Dimension	Strategic Paradigm (Machiavelli)	Montessorian Paradigm (Montessori)
 View of Power	 Rooted in Authority and Control	 Rooted in Freedom and Inner Mastery
 View of Violence	 A tool of Necessary Cruelty	 Replaced by Peaceful Order
 Intergenerational Equity	 Passing down trades for mere survival	 Empowering the invention of the new
 Geographic Scope	 Defensive Nationalism	 Collaborative Globalism

Image: Notebook LM, prompts by IM.

That is critically important: geographical scope.

Because most of our initiatives exist within this defensive nationalism. Nationalism, colonialism and patriarchy – and, if you want to add capitalism, fine, and a few other ones – all are actually part of the pathologies of our time.

To address those pathologies that are creating all sorts of problems, in terms of how hot it is outside, how long we wait in a queue, or worse, we need to move towards something else.

And Montessori proposed that a while ago. She talked about collaborative globalism, and so did Masini and Boulding and many other thinkers.

We know what Machiavellian effects look like, what the material effects of Machiavellian politics, worldviews and frameworks look like. We know what the rule of top-down power, derived from strength and cunning looks like.

I said in last year in Trento [at the Anticipatory Governance 2025 conference], **this** [A Vision for the Future of Gaza, Truth Social Video, 2025, posted by D. Trump] **is one of the worst uses of anticipation and abuses of futures that I've ever seen.**

I still stand on that.

There is this notion often that somehow the image of the future will save us.

But even the image of the future can be toxic. There is no fantasy that is ideologically neutral – even with a gazillion data points.

How we imagine, what we participate in, is critical.

Right now, all over Europe, we are anticipating the future we apparently don't want, and I don't understand that. There is militarisation of the future through anticipation going on. Almost all parties are anticipating the world in which might rules over right and thus spending on warfare. And then they actively work on creating a militarised reality, such as a return of a compulsory military service for men and other similar policy measures.

This is why I actually started writing on futures fallacies. Why do we create strategies anticipating and aligning ourselves with the future we don't want? We don't know what the future will be like, but we do know about consequences.

And if you learn from history, you know what militarisation does to a society. We are already seeing effects in many countries in Europe, where social welfare is sacrificed for national defence and security.

Almost all parties are now anticipating a world in which “might makes right”, and thus depending on warfare, and then they actively work on creating that reality, right?

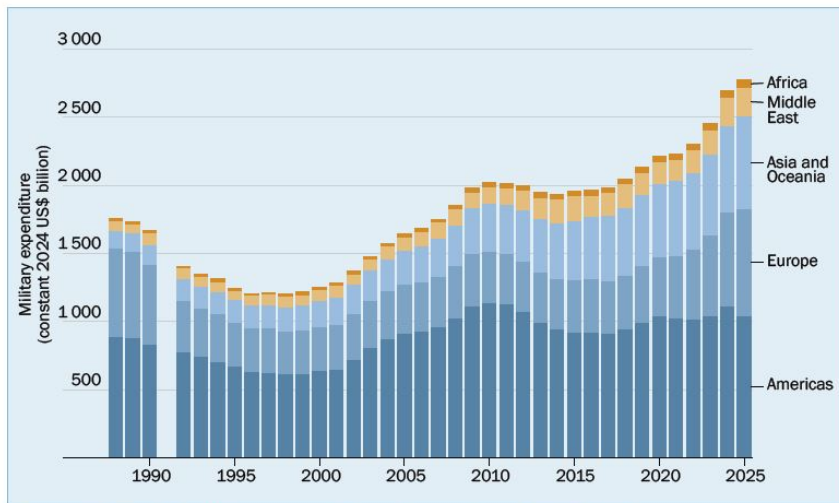


Figure 1. World military expenditure, by region, 1988–2025

Image (above): SIPRI Fact Sheet. Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2025. NOTE: Edging Toward 3,000 trillion? 14% increase in Europe. <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2026/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-world-military-expenditure-2025>

Self-fulfilling prophecies.

I haven't seen a scenario – maybe there are; please enlighten me – where there is some sort of working it out with Russia and welcoming it into the European family. I don't know. I haven't seen it.

To create different present and future material realities, we obviously need different epistemologies, ethics and aesthetics – and design.

That evolution of the spiral requires dismantling colonial and patriarchal architecture at a very deep level, redefining leadership, merging time, synthesising both the public and the private sphere. True power should no longer be defined merely by ruling the public square (La Piazza) but also by deeply honouring and integrating the unseen, generative labour of the hearth (La Cucina).

And we also know what that looks like.

We ran a workshop a few days ago, and one of our participants was working with CLA and her own personal metaphor – her personal metaphor in her organisation.

That's the tough question Sanna [Ketonen-Oksi] asked me. I know I'm running out of time, but I have to respond to Sanna.

She said, “What do we do? What do we do, right, when we find ourselves with Montessorian ethics in Machiavellian places?”

The workshop participant said she is struggling. She's in this organisation, and she's in a society where she can't say anything. She can't speak truth to power. And her role is that of Justitia. She's holding scales, she is holding justice, balancing.



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:Golden_Lady_Justice,_Bruges,_Belgium_%286204837462%29.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Golden_Lady_Justice,_Bruges,_Belgium_%286204837462%29.jpg)

And I said, "That's a lovely metaphor."

She said, "No, it's exhausting."

And it is very tiring.

Try to stand like this all your life. Try to go against dominant systems of meaning all the time. Try to embody that double-standpoint epistemology and work anywhere.

You will be exhausted. That's guaranteed.

You need lots of courage, and you need lots of work to do some inner power creation within yourself. And then, of course, align with, hopefully, similarly thinking people who support you and strengthen you.

And we are seeing it. We are seeing what those alternatives are when law and legal systems are concerned. We are seeing them in terms of rethinking economics and governments – another Italian thinker, Mariana Mazzucato, and Francesca Albanese, obviously. Rethinking economics and governance for the common good, upholding the rule of international law and speaking truth to power.

We are seeing it amongst young people who do not have uncertainty in terms of whether they do or do not want to have the right to the future.

They want the right to the future. **Diritto a un Futuro.**

They want it.

There is a certainty of a desired future that we can again tap into. And that is our saving grace once again, whether it's escapism or something actually more concrete that we can collectively work towards.

How do we get there?

I think through a humanistic perspective (Celi & Formia, 2017), obviously, rather than a nationalistic one. We need to unlearn and challenge traditional knowledge (Rodriguez Schon, 2024), which is, I think, what I argued in this presentation, and then make it come alive via a specific design practice (Celi & Colombi, 2020).

That is perhaps not the work of sociologists, peace and conflict researchers and futures thinkers, but of designers.

It is wonderful that so many designers are here because I hope you people can make it tangible and make it work.

In this process, we need to consciously choose the influences to uphold, in terms of going towards those visions that have been around for a while and that so many social movements of today, and so many participants in our workshops, share.

And then enhance – as I said, expand – that range.

Right?

I think this is our responsibility, the responsibility of this group here.

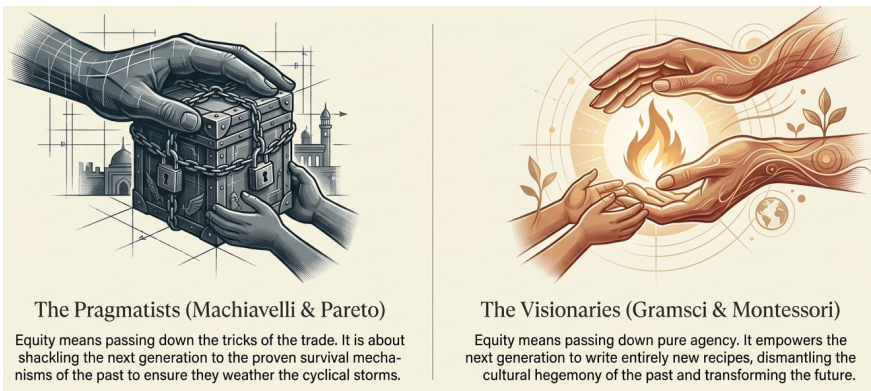


Image: Notebook LM, prompts by IM.

We've already talked about short-termism in terms of thinking about the future. It seems that our brains are a little bit designed that way.

But we also have short-termism when it comes to the past.

“Unprecedented times” and “polycrises” – this is only possible, I think, when we don't take into account what happened before.

But there were people before us who gave us some of the ingredients for how to anticipate visionary futures in dark times.

And I think, from what I've heard over the last two days, many people feel that we live in dark times, and they can sense even more darkness coming.

That's a heavy load, right?

Joanna Macy, Fred Polak, Elise Boulding and many, many others previously worked with that, saying that we need to imagine those visionary futures grounded in “a deeper spiritual awareness of the human condition” (Boulding, 1996, p. 229) – all of us in this together, as Keri [Facer] said – also grounded in “an intellectual awareness of human folly; a historical empathy with humans from earlier times”; and a further conscious development of twenty-first-century eutopias, of **“a clean, green world of abundance, joyfully shared” amongst all** (Boulding, 1996, p. 229).

I mean, it's there.

The visions are there. The strategies are there. The movements are there. The desires are there. The certainty of that coming world, in terms of the preferred future, is also there.

Now, to get there, obviously, there are different strategies.

I will close with Maria Montessori, who said that, to do that, we can't just rely on politics. We need to rely on education. We need to rely on all of us educating ourselves and then spreading that further, because that's where the work starts.

“*The question of peace cannot be discussed properly from a merely negative point of view, as politics ordinarily regards it, ... [rather] Inherent in the very meaning of the word peace is the positive notion of constructive social reform [and creation] of a different sort of [hu]man in order to have a different sort of society.*” (Montessori, 1949, p. xi)



And once that work is done, hopefully, we find ourselves in a nice kitchen – such as **La Cucina of the Anticipation Conference, Milano, 2026** – and I hope you can take this further with you.

What I argued in this presentation is that, in addition to futures literacy, time literacy should also inform anticipation and that we need to understand how time uses us and consciously create/allow for different types of time. This also means challenging conventional anticipatory frameworks and some strategic foresight practices. Ultimately, all this is grounded in **speaking truth to futures, based on relational and intergenerational equity**.

We can obviously continue conversations during lunch and during the tea break and so on.

What is that world, that image of the world? What would our preferred futures for 2036-2126 look like? What type of design/material practices would accompany its foundational epistemology and ethics”? And what types of time are needed? What might be the view from the Milano Anticipation conference 2026 moving forward?

I believe it is our responsibility to be very explicit about it, to create or facilitate those visions that appeal to people, and then to create some different types of temporalities around them, and very different designs and material practices.

That's it.

Thank you so much for listening.

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