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# **Feminist Futures**

Futures studies through the lens of feminist  
epistemologies

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# *Feminist Futures*

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Feminist Futures: Futures studies through the lens of feminist epistemologies

Feministiska framtider: Framtidsstudier utifrån ett feministiskt epistemologiskt perspektiv

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*For mom*

차혜련씨에게 이 논문을 바칩니다.

## *Abstract*

This study explores how futures studies could engage with critical feminist perspectives in an intrinsic manner and what *feminist futures* might mean. The study brings attention to the less discussed subject of epistemological basis in futures studies. Literature study and semi-structured interviews with practitioners and researchers working with feminist approaches in the fields related to futures development was deployed. I've analyzed Wendell Bell's discussion on epistemological foundation of futures studies from feminist epistemological perspective, and have suggested the potential of feminist epistemology of situated knowledges and partial objectivity for futures studies. Based on the findings from the semi-structured interviews, an alternative feminist scenario set in Swedish society in the year of 2050 in the format of a fiction is presented with the aim to provide a detailed and situated narrative of political and daily lives in feminist futures. The feminist futures scenario should not be understood as *the* singular feminist future suggested for implementation. The intention is to demonstrate how the visionary dimensions of feminist studies could be articulated in various forms of futures studies, and to open up space for rich debates on envisioning *feminist futures*.

## *Sammanfattning*

Denna studie utforskar hur framtidsstudier skulle kunna anta ett kritiskt feministiskt perspektiv på ett djuplodande sätt och vad feministiska framtider skulle kunna innebära. Litteraturstudier och semistrukturerade intervjuer med utövare och forskare som arbetar med feministiska tillvägagångssätt inom fält relaterade till framtidsutveckling har genomförts. Jag har analyserat Wendell Bells diskussion om den epistemologiska grunden för framtidsstudier utifrån ett feministiskt epistemologiskt perspektiv, och har föreslagit feministisk epistemologi om situerad kunskap och partiell objektivitet som potentiell epistemologi för framtidsstudier. Utifrån fynden i de semistrukturerade intervjuerna presenteras ett alternativt feministiskt scenario för ett svenskt samhälle år 2050 i ett fiktivt format med syftet att ge ett detaljerat och situerat narrativ om det politiska och dagliga livet inom feministiska framtider. Det feministiska framtidsscenarioet bör inte läsas som den enda feministiska framtiden avsedd för implementering. Avsikten är att visa hur feministiska studiers visionära dimensioner kan uttryckas på olika sätt i framtidsstudier och ge utrymme för en bred debatt om hur feministiska framtider kan gestaltas.

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## *Prologue : The future is female (?)*

It was around last year that I started to notice a slogan appearing. It was printed on the eco bag hanging on the shoulder of a girl passing by, on the t-shirt worn by a mannequin in shop windows, and as a hashtag on Instagram feed. 'THE FUTURE IS FEMALE'. The slogan caught my attention. There was something about it, whether it was the assertive tone of the slogan with the use of present tense *is* instead of saying the future *will be* female or the future *may be* female, or ambiguous feeling about the adjective 'female'. I couldn't tell if I liked the slogan or not. On one hand, I wanted to embrace the message and its boldness as a newly born feminist. After all, it's about time that the female part of world claim its right to the future. On the other hand, I still wasn't sure if I understood the full meaning of the message. What makes the future *female*? What does it look like? Does it make me a bad feminist if I don't approve the message? While girls kept posting their photos with the t-shirts on with the hashtag #thefutureisfemale, the uneasiness I felt towards the slogan kept me seeing the slogan with a question mark.

At the same time, there was certain energy beneath the slogan that made me sympathized with it. Despite the dubious feeling around the word *female*, the phrase made its attempt to shape the future, the territory yet to come. It was a condensed version of a futures scenario, a story, summarized to a simple sentence. I felt the urge to follow up with the investigation on the untold part of this scenario. The problematic part was the F word, *female*, which is mostly related to the biological sex. As much as I want the future to be way more equal and fairer place for female members of the world to live in than it is now, I couldn't agree with assigning a character to the future that is deeply connected to the binary category of biological sex. While keeping its transformative thought and hopeful energy towards the future, the scenario should be less

excluding, less reminding of the binary category, but rather going beyond and transgress the category. An alternative articulation was needed in order to go on with the investigation.

As the question deserves a whole study dedicated to itself, I decided to settle with an alternative, incomplete phrase that emerged in my mind for the investigation: *Feminist Futures*. The phrase still keeps the F word, but it is less excluding than the former one. Also the future is instead plural *futures* in order to avoid deterministic and essentializing view on what the future might/shall look like, and on what the feminist future might/shall look like. In following chapters I shall keep asking what the combination of two F words *Feminist Futures* might mean, and in which way we — who think the question is relevant and worth investigating — could imagine feminist futures. The task of understanding and making the meaning of the two words combined would require the conversation between the two worlds — feminist studies and futures studies as well.

This study consists of three chapters. In the first chapter I will introduce the purpose of the study and the research questions, theories and methods I chose to carry out the study. In the second chapter I will discuss the relationship between the two fields, feminist studies and futures studies. In the third chapter, I will make a critical feminist analysis of selected texts from existing futures scenarios, and present an alternative feminist futures scenario as an attempt to demonstrate how feminist futures studies might look like, and present the findings from the semi-structured interviews on *feminist futures* as well.

# Chapter One

## 1.1. Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how futures studies could engage with critical feminist perspectives in an intrinsic manner and to make a sense of what *feminist futures* might mean.

Chapter Two will therefore focus on the relationship between futures studies and feminist theories and I will make an attempt to develop a critical discussion on the epistemological basis of futures studies through the lens of feminist epistemologies . Before going on, I first have to justify why I have chosen to focus on the issue of epistemology as means of looking into the relationship between futures studies and feminist theories, which will enable me to give context to the research questions.

I believe that the question that I want to investigate here has a transdisciplinary character, and that it can't be equaled with adding a chapter of feminism to futures studies or vice versa. It can't be done with mere juxtaposition of each field's interest either. To talk about what *feminist futures* might mean, it's not enough to focus on what is being told by feminism and futures studies while not questioning how they are telling their stories. Each field has its own way of telling its stories. It is a specific way that a discipline articulates itself with, and uses to claim the legitimacy of its scientific knowledge production, in Donna Haraway's words, its story-telling practice (Haraway, 1989;4). In order to understand how one might be able to tell a story(-ies) of *feminist futures*, we may need to understand the way feminist studies and futures studies tell their stories. In other words, we need to look into how each discipline *thinks*. A dialogue between futures studies and feminism that is truly transdisciplinary should therefore deal with the issue of epistemologies.

In Chapter Three, I will carry out a feminist analysis of selected texts from existing futures scenarios and present an alternative feminist futures scenario as an attempt to apply feminist thinking technologies to futures studies.

To put the purpose of this study into research question, it could be summarized into the following three questions:

- Is there feminist perspectives in the epistemological foundation of futures studies? If so, what are they?
- Is there any drawback in the epistemological foundation of futures studies seen from feminist perspectives? If so, what are they?
- How could futures studies engage in building alternative visions of feminist futures that is not universalizing and essentializing?

## **1.2. Research approach, delimitation and situatedness**

### ***Research approach***

This study has qualitative, reflexive research approach. This research approach allows for ambiguity concerning interpretive possibilities and pays serious attention to the relationship between research subject and the way of knowledge production (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). The study takes up a poststructural position that “knowledge” produced through research is no longer considered as “truth” or “true” statements about the “reality”, but rather plays a role in the making of “reality” (Bacchi&Goodwin, 2016:15). This means that researcher should reflect on the performativity and reality producing effects of her/his research practices (Lykke, 2010;131). In line with this position, this study stands with a view that research as producing activity of

“knowledge” should be understood as a political and partial practice. Last but not least, this study is rooted in feminist epistemologies that aims for objectivity as positioned rationality (Haraway, 1988:590).

### ***Delimitation***

This study is situated in the context of futures studies and planning research in Swedish academia. It focuses on Swedish society as the main site of investigation on feminist futures. This is because Sweden as a welfare state is an interesting case to look at based on the effort of its society at large towards promoting equality. The current Swedish government has proclaimed itself as the first feminist government in the world (“A Feminist Government”, 2015) and declared that gender equality is central to the priorities of the Government. Another reason to narrow down the scope of the discussion to Swedish society is because I believe it is important to locate the discussion in localized context where the research subject/object can claim partial perspective. I will elaborate on this in the following section on situatedness.

The resource deployed for the study is not strictly confined to, but highly influenced by the geographical boundary of Sweden and the academic environment where I carried out the study. For instance, as a case material for analytical practice I chose futures scenarios from a futures studies project *Beyond GDP growth – Scenarios for sustainable building and planning* (Svenfelt et al., 2015) where the Division of Environmental Strategies Research (fms) in KTH has played a significant role. Apart from the profile of the project that suited my interest, proximity and accessibility of the material was important factor for the choice. As for the expert interview, the profile of the interviewees was limited to the ones who live and work in Sweden.

Another delimitation of this study is the specific perspective it takes in order to facilitate the transdisciplinary investigation on the question of how futures studies could engage with feminist studies. The study takes up a position of looking into futures studies with the critical lens of feminist studies, but not the other way around. One reason behind this is the postdisciplinary character of feminist studies. While feminist studies is understood as an independent academic discipline, another important understanding on feminist studies is that it is “pointing toward alternative—trans-and postdisciplinary—modes of working and organizing knowledge production” (Lykke, 2010:19). Therefore it was more interesting for me to take the transversal approach of feminist studies and have a critical eye on the modes of working and organizing knowledge production in futures studies, rather than looking into feminist studies with the lens of futures studies, which could have been another way to investigate the question of *feminist futures*.

### ***Situatedness***

Adopting feminist epistemological viewpoint means acknowledging the situatedness of knowledge production and the knowing subject herself (Lykke, 2010:5; Haraway,1988). So here I shall give an account of location, embodiment and partial perspective of myself as the research subject. I’m a cisgender, able-bodied, ‘not-a-girl-not-yet-a-woman’ in mid 20s, and was born and raised in a middle-class family in South Korea in 1990’s. I had five years of university education in the discipline of Human Geography and Pedagogy. I have moved to Sweden about two years ago where I was introduced to feminist/gender/critical studies in the context of planning research for the first time. My position as a stranger in Swedish society and newcomer to feminist studies may have an impact on the perspective of this study, which may appear as fresh but also less critical. My privileged position as a cisgender, abled person with middle class background may



influence this study to be less aware of the inequalities and prejudices that I haven't been subjected to.

### **1.3. Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework that I chose for this study is feminist studies together with futures studies. Since there are multiple feminisms, which can't be summarized into a single standpoint that could be claimed as the 'true' one, I had to first reflect on the strands of feminist theories that would be helpful for this study. To do this, I consulted Danish-Swedish gender studies scholar Nina Lykke's *Feminist Studies: A Guide to Intersectional Theory, Methodology and Writing* (2010) so that I could navigate myself and position this study among diverse landscape of feminist theories. The reason I chose Lykke's guide on feminist studies as my main compass is because first of all, as a newcomer to the field of feminist/gender/women's studies, I found her way of explaining and articulating different strands of feminisms quite accessible and pedagogically helpful. Second, substantial part of the book is committed to the discussion on the question of epistemology, methodology and writing in Feminist Studies and how they are interwoven to one another. I find this discussion not only relevant but also crucial to the core of this study. Lastly, it also claims to cover the key issues in current international debates on feminist theory, which makes it a thorough introduction.

In this study I'm following Lykke's use of the term 'Feminist Studies' to refer to the general field encompassing feminist/gender/women's studies. Lykke consciously made a choice to use the label Feminist Studies as an umbrella terminology to include broad spectrum of feminist theories, while avoiding problematic epistemological implications. The label 'Women's Studies' might imply its fixation on 'women's standpoint', leaving the category of women and two-gender system unquestioned. The label 'Gender Studies' on the other hand, by fixing gender as an object of

study, might indicate the idea of separating gender from sex and embodiment, which could be questioned from some strands of postmodern feminist thoughts (Lykke, 2010:11-13). Lykke draws on Judith Butler's problematization of 'women' as the political subject of feminism in her book *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 2011), where she problematizes the universalizing and illusionary effect of the category of 'women' as a shared political ground and argues for the critical reflection on the core political identities of 'women' as political subjects based on their different localizations in feminism. Lykke takes this argumentation of Butler to her discussion on Feminist Studies and gender/sex as an object of study, and argues that the undertaking of Feminist Studies could be understood as critical reflections and problematization on the categories such as 'women', 'gender', and 'sex' (Lykke, 2010:32-34).

Since this study aims at examining the epistemological foundation of futures studies from feminist perspectives, I find the discussion on feminist epistemologies particularly relevant for this study. Lykke introduces her revised version of Sandra Harding's widely used classification of three feminist epistemological position (Harding, 1986): *feminist empiricism*, *feminist standpoint epistemology*, *postmodern feminist (anti-) epistemology* and *postconstructionist feminist epistemology* (Lykke, 2010;126). While four strands are sometimes seen as historical development of feminist epistemologies, Lykke sees them as rather existing in parallel in the history of feminist studies, at times overlapping into each other. Below is the summary of Lykke's classification of feminist epistemologies.

The main question for feminist empiricism is adequate representation of women in scientific research practices. It aims at revealing and criticizing gender bias in research where men are equaled as universal norm. The focus is therefore making women's experiences and perspectives equally represented as men's in the research models. From feminist empiricist epistemological point of view, the traditional positivist empiricist epistemology is not problematic, as long as the rule of equal representation of 'female' and 'male' in research practices is strictly followed.

Feminist standpoint epistemology sees women's experiences and perspectives as a starting point for scientific discipline. It assigns epistemologically privileged subject position to women in general, or group of women that is marginalized and oppressed in relation to their intersectionality such as class, ethnicity or race. Combined with reflexivity on the knower's position and her relation to the context of research, feminist standpoint epistemology argues for stronger objectivity than that of traditional positivist science.

Feminist postmodern (anti-) epistemology on the other hand, criticizes feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint epistemology for their naive use of categories 'women' and 'men'. From feminist postmodern (anti-) epistemological perspective, non-critical way of using the category 'women' as a unified identity is highly problematic since it confirms the presupposed heteronormative gender/sex categories and hegemonic two-gender model. The notion of 'experience' as a solid empirical evidence and the individual as a fixed, stable ego is also questioned. Instead, it rather focuses on understanding the discursive, linguistic construction of gendered, radicalized and sexualized subjects.

Postconstructionist feminist epistemology or feminist postconstructionism is an umbrella term used by Lykke to refer to the strands of feminist theories that transgress feminist postmodern (anti-) epistemology and feminist de/constructionism. While feminist de/constructionism is still crucial to feminist thought in that it enabled to understand gender as sociocultural construction separated from biological determinism and cultural essentialism, it has been criticized by postconstructionist and corpomaterialist feminists that it fails to address the effects of prediscursive bodily materiality (Ibid.;107-8). Postconstructionist feminist epistemology criticizes both the ideal of disembodiment of traditional positivist epistemology and relativism of postmodern (anti-) epistemology. Haraway used the term 'god-trick' to break the illusion of infinite and unrestricted vision of the knower in positivist epistemology, "a conquering gaze from

nowhere” (Haraway, 1988;581) that claims to see everything. She calls out “the unmarked positions of Man and White” hiding behind this faceless, bodiless gaze that represents itself as objective and neutral. In order to be able to talk about objectivity in science, Haraway argues that we must undo the god-trick by reclaiming the vision that has a body, situated in a particular location, which will allow a partial perspective and accountability for what it sees, hence partial objectivity. In this way, postconstructionist feminist epistemology aims at partial and localized objectivity of knowledge producing practice that is situated and embodied.

#### **1.4. Research methods**

##### ***Literature review***

Literature review was carried out in parallel to identifying and refining research questions. I mainly used Google Scholar and KTH Primo as search engine. I had several aims while carrying out literature review. One of the initial aims was to identify if there’s feminist engagement in futures studies. Accordingly, I aimed to identify leading thinkers and important works on the topic of feminist future or feminist engagement in visioning futures. Consequently the following aim of the literature review was to make a review of feminist critique on the futures studies. Another important aim was to navigate myself among different strands of feminist theories and to identify which schools of thoughts are interesting for this study. Finally, I aimed to critically digest different strands of thoughts on the topic and apply this understanding to refining research questions and discussion of the study. I started with searching for academic articles and books related to the topic of feminist engagements in futures studies, for instance with the key word ‘feminist future(s)’, which defined the scope of the literature review as the field of feminist studies and futures studies.

After the final stage of refining research questions, I searched for academic articles and books which discuss epistemological question of futures studies.

### *Semi-structured interview*

As an assisting instrument for exploring the question of what feminist futures might mean and the building of alternative feminist futures scenario, I chose to consult practitioners and researchers who work with feminist approaches in the fields related to planning and futures development in Sweden. The potential candidates for the interview were selected based on their expertise and reputation on one's feminist/gender approaches in the field related to futures development including planning, governance, economy, built environment and transport system, which are also the main aspects consisting Beyond GDP scenarios. Listing potential candidates for the interview started with consulting my supervisor Ulrika Gunnarsson-Östling. She recommended a city planner in Stockholm City who's working with gender mainstreaming and a transport planner/environment consultant in a private company who's working with feminist/gender approaches, and also to screen Swedish Government website to find potential candidates since the current government declared as a feminist government. Later I expanded the scope of search down to local governments in Sweden as well. Additionally, a snowball method was deployed where interviewees recommended other possible interviewees, or the contacted candidate herself/himself wasn't available but redirected me to other possible interviewees. Eventually, invitations were sent out to 27 people and 3 organizations in Sweden<sup>1</sup> during the period between 26th May 2017 and 21st June 2017. 13 people agreed to participate in the interview but one person couldn't make it during the time frame set for the interview. Eventually 11 people participated in interview in person, and one person answered the questions by e-mail

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<sup>1</sup> Feministiskt Initiativ, Kvinnors Byggforum, Svenska Bostäder

since the interviewee was abroad at the time. The professions of the interviewees varied within activist, architect, city planner, consultant, coordinator in housing company, political adviser in the national government, politician in the city council, professor and researcher.

As mentioned above, main topics for the semi-structured interviews on *feminist futures* were inspired by the aspects that have been formulated and used as sub-headings of each scenario in *Beyond GDP growth – Scenarios for sustainable building and planning*. The original aspects were identified by the research team as relevant to explore in the futures scenarios that do not focus on economic growth, which are as follows: governance and planning aspects; economic aspects; the household forms, consumption and power relations of everyday life; time use and welfare; mobility aspects; human settlement aspects (Svenfelt et al., 2015;7-13). I have simplified the main topics for the semi-structured interviews on *feminist futures* based on these aspects from Beyond GDP, which I titled as: Governance and Planning; Economic and Welfare System; Built Environment and Transport; and Everyday Lives. Each interview consisted of a combination of these topics according to the profile, expertise and interests of the interviewee (see Appendix 1-8). The first half of the interview focused on identifying specific feminist issues the interviewee finds most important for futures development in Swedish society. The second half of the interview focused on interviewee's personal imagination of her/his own feminist future. There were occasional follow-up questions in case when some comments needed further elaboration or when certain interesting topic that was not initially included in the interview was raised by the interviewee. The interview guide and the questions were sent to the interviewee in prior to the interview so that the interviewee could have a look on the questions and prepare the answers if she/he would prefer to. One interview took about 44 min on average. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed for the analysis.

The reason why I chose to conduct semi-structured interview in addition to literature study is because I wanted to collect localized, personal and embodied feminist imaginations that are situated in here-and-now in Sweden 2017 besides the master narratives of feminist theories from the literature. There were of course other possible methods, such as focus group or participatory workshop. The reason why I chose semi-structured interview over those options is because I expected to get more in-depth opinions and personal imagination on one's feminist futures in the setting of individual face-to-face interview. Since there are multiple feminist viewpoints, I wanted to decrease the chance of some participants getting discouraged on articulating her/his own feminist futures in the presence of others. Another reason was that the amount of time and resource allowed for this study was rather limited to gather all the participants for focus group or workshop on a single occasion.

### ***Analytical framework: The WPR approach***

To critically analyze the Beyond GDP scenarios in Chapter Three, I chose to take up and adjust “What’s the Problem Represented to be?”(the WPR approach) by Carol Bacchi (Bacchi&Goodwin, 2016) as an analytic tool. In the following I will first introduce the WPR approach and explain why it is adequate choice for a critical feminist analytical practice.

The WPR approach is an analytic strategy that offers a way to think critically about otherwise commonly accepted categories and governing practices. WPR counters the view that “objects” are clearly fixed objects and people are “just humans”, and “things” are “natural”. Instead, it brings critical attention to how “things” have come to be, and “made” and “done” in continuous development. In other word, WPR shifts attention to the politics which is involved in the way “things” are, made and done. Bacchi argues that this very manners in which “things” are constituted shapes worlds and lives. According to her, “this expansive understanding of politics

extends well... to include the *heterogeneous strategic relations and practices* that shape who we are and how we live (Bacchi&Goodwin, 2016:14)". This is based on a poststructural perspective that rejects essentialism which attributes an essence to "things", "people", or "subjects" as singular entities. From a poststructural perspective, no phenomena is singular or fixed, but should rather be seen as "combinations or patterned networks of diverse elements and relations that are coordinated, arranged, combined, or patterned to *appear* as a convergence (Bacchi&Goodwin, 2016:14)".

WPR defies the notion that problems just exist outside the governments, waiting to be addressed. Rather, governmental practices produce problems first, which is followed by certain solutions to address themselves. In line with this view, WPR sees governmental practices as "productive" activities in the sense that the governments themselves produce "problem" as particular kinds of problems to be addressed. This productive activities would involve production of "subjects", "objects", and "places" and accompany certain effects with themselves. The underlying goal of WPR is to make the politics of these productive practices visible.

The simple idea that WPR starts from, Bacchi explains, is that any form of proposal implies that one thinks something should be changed, which thereby indicates what one thinks as a "problem". Therefore WPR is looking after a "proposal" or "proposed solution" so that implicit problem representation could be read between the lines. In this sense, it is suggested that a material that could benefit from adopting WPR analysis should be possibly understood as a loose form of proposal or a guide to conduct (Bacchi&Goodwin, 2016:18).

The reason why I see WPR as an adequate analytical tool for the critical analysis of Beyond GDP scenarios is based on the prescriptive characteristic of the scenarios. The four normative backcasting scenarios in Beyond GDP could be understood as a form of proposal in the sense that they are based on four "sustainability targets" and entail sets of strategies, which involves certain



changes in the way of organizing lives and society, in order to attain the targets. As explained above, a proposal for change indicates a certain representation of problem. It is argued that WPR enables “working backwards” from a proposal to how a “problem” is represented in such material, hence providing opportunity to critically reflect on the underlying assumptions of the proposal (Bacchi&Goodwin, 2016:17). WPR approach consists of six questions and a task to apply those six questions to one’s own proposal as presented below (Bacchi&Goodwin, 2016:20):

Question 1: What’s the problem represented to be in a specific policy or policies?

Question 2: What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the “problem”(*problem representation*)?

Question 3: How has this representation of the “problem” come about?

Question 4: What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the “problem” be conceptualized differently?

Question 5: What effects (discursive, subjectification, lived) are produced by this representation of the “problem”?

Question 6: How and where has this representation of the “problem” been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted and replaced?

Step 7: Apply this list of questions to your own problem representation.

The problem representation in *Beyond GDP* may partly be revealing due to the nature of its normative backcasting scenario building process where sustainability targets are firstly set, upon which then the scenarios are built and offer a set of target-fulfilling images of the future as the result of the study (Börjeson et al., 2006;729). Nevertheless, I will attempt to examine whether the problem representations in the target-fulfilling images in *Beyond GDP* have left anything unproblematic or silenced, and to discuss the effects produced by suggested images of the future in the scenarios from feminist perspectives.

## *Chapter Two*

### **2.1. Feminism and futures studies : Their troubled history**

Although futures studies and feminist studies both are greatly concerned with the subject of future, there has been little interaction between the two fields. While futures studies and feminist studies share common interest in the question of what is yet to come, dialogue between the two disciplines is rarely seen. Several scholars have called attention to this lack of relationship between feminist studies and futures studies and expressed concerns about the consequences of lacking feminist engagement in the thinking and imagining of futures (Milojevic & Inayatullah, 1998; Milojević, 2008; Gunnarsson-Östling, 2011; Bergman et al., 2014). The critique on the lack of feminist oriented approaches in futures studies could be seen as twofold, which I will elaborate in more detail below.

One major feminist criticism on futures studies is the inadequate representation of ‘woman/women’ and non-Westerners in the field of futures studies. The general exclusion of women and non-Westerners from the field of futures studies has also resulted in feminist issues out of focus or sidelined as ‘special’ in futures studies. The case that the professional futures studies activities have been dominated by Western male academics is mirrored on the trend of mainstream futures studies, which is characterized by the hyper technological and scientific orientation; techno utopianism and social dystopianism; biased understanding of progress through science and technology, but also war and warfare; disproportionate focus on power relationships and on the impact of new technologies on our societies (Milojević, 2008:330). Ziauddin Sardar (1993) criticized this ‘colonizing tendency’ embedded in the foundation of futures studies and pointed out how the field has become another academic instrument to subjugate and marginalize non-Western cultures.

The other feminist criticism is about the general lack of critical and reflexive perspectives in futures studies. The field emerged during the World War II and post-war era where positivist approach was dominating science, which accordingly accounts for the case that the majority of pioneering futurists were trained in positivist academic tradition. This makes the general knowledge framework of the field inherently connected to that of traditional science and hence fail to engage with feminist cognitive frames (Milojević & Inayatullah, 1998; Milojević, 2008). It is pointed out that there has been little effort paid in questioning underlying assumptions or in discussing who sets the agenda in futures studies. Consequently, current power relations and gender roles often remain same as today without being rethought or problematized in futures scenarios (Gunnarsson-Östling, 2011). Helena Bergman and co-authors (2014) argue that the majority of futures studies is ignoring the responsibility that comes with engaging in scientific knowledge production. Against this line of criticism, they call for “a fundamental need to address issues connected to the epistemological basis of futures studies, and a more thorough discussion about the knowledge claims of these fields (Bergman et al., 2014;66)”. In the following section 2.2. I will follow up on this question.

Besides the major feminist critiques on futures studies presented above, there’s also a strand of feminist skepticism on the notion of imagining and planning for the future (Bergman et al., 2014). The suspicion towards feminist engagement in futures studies is related to the fear of suggesting universal and essentializing visions on the idea of progress. However, this shouldn’t be the reason for feminist studies to shy away from engaging in thinking and imagining futures.

Frigga Haug (2000) laments over how commodity society has undermined one’s capacity to dream of utopia to the level where one has to relearn how to dream of one. When her students were asked to envision their own utopias, their wishes weren’t something extravagant. Their utopias were where the most immediate necessities in everyday lives were met: kindergartens,

cheap public transport system that is working, affordable apartments (Haug, 2000:59). Conceiving of feminist futures up against the reality of today's patriarchal capitalist society where survival has become a private affair (Haug, 2000:65) requires conscious efforts and radical hope, simply not to give in to the pressure of keeping our utopias modest. Feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti argues as well that the visionary dimension of feminist theories is necessary "in order to secure the one element that advanced capitalism is systemically depriving us all of: the present, as the launching pad for sustainable becoming or transformations" (Braidotti, 2009:8). This is the very reason why there is a fundamental need for feminist intervention in futures studies. If we don't make deliberate efforts to envision feminist utopias, we would dream according to what reality allows. After all, "science has been utopian and visionary from the start; that is one reason "we" need it" (Haraway, 1988:585).

The discussion on troubled relationship between feminist studies and futures studies points to the dilemma and hence a challenge: how could feminist studies contribute to futures studies with positive, alternative visions of futures in contrast to hegemonic male, Western images of the future while avoiding suggesting another universalizing and essentializing vision? Although there isn't an immediate and thorough answer for this question yet, examples of critical feminist practices in futures studies striving to open up space for alternative visions could be found.

In the recent publication *Feminist Futures of Spatial Practices* (2017), Karin Bradley, Ulrika Gunnarsson-Östling and Meike Shalk with Jenny Andreasson analyze Stockholm's official vision for the year 2030 and rewrote the vision based on their futurist feminist political ecology perspective. The aim of their exercise to rewrite the vision is not to present a singular vision of the future, but to demonstrate how futures could be imagined and articulated differently based on theoretical and normative perspectives. By "spelling out" an alternative vision of futures and its normative basis (Bradley et al., 2017:310), their futurist feminist practice brings conflicting visions

and norms to light, hence makes space for debate on desired futures. In the same publication Ramia Mazé and Josefin Wangel (2017) present an intersectional critical essay between futures studies and design, where they critically examine how singular, technocratic understanding of ‘the future’ and ‘time’ has reproduced and reinforced social norms, hence closing up the future. They argue that both design and futures studies can serve as critical practices to counter the hegemonic, grand, universal narrative and instead open up (im)possibilities of futures through everyday practices positioned and situated with specific subjectivities.

## **2.2. Through the lens of feminist epistemologies: A letter to Wendell**

In this section I attempt to develop a discussion on the epistemologies of futures studies through the lens of feminist epistemologies, led by the first two research questions presented in 1.1.:

Is there feminist perspectives in the epistemological foundation of futures studies? If so, what are they?

Is there any drawback in the epistemological foundation of futures studies seen from feminist perspectives? If so, what are they?

For this, I turn (or *talk*) to one of the most influential futurists Wendell Bell and his reflection on the epistemological foundation of futures studies presented in the classical textbook *Foundations of futures studies* (Bell, 2004). The reason why I have selected Bell’s work on the epistemological foundation of futures studies as a basis to explore my research questions is because, first, Bell is considered as the pioneer of the field and his work on the epistemological and theoretical foundations of futures studies is received as one of a founder (Aligica, 2011), which makes the work one of representative examples in the field. Second, epistemological question has not yet

much frequently been discussed topic in the field of futures studies and therefore there are not rich work on the subject to choose from. Bell's discussion is one of the more extensive works that exist, which allows more room to expand discussion. However, this choice of case material delimits this study where the stance on epistemological question of futures studies is described in one way, which is the standpoint suggested by Bell. Nonetheless, I do not intend to suggest that Bell's viewpoint should be understood as representing a single, fixed stance of futures studies on its epistemological foundation. As discussed in the previous section 2.1, there are already many critical practices in futures studies engaging with a variety of understanding of epistemological basis of futures studies.

For instance, Sohail Inayatullah presents four types of futures studies which are based on different epistemological approaches; the predictive, the interpretive, the critical, and participatory action learning (Inayatullah, 2013;42-45). According to Inayatullah, for example, the critical type of futures studies is based on poststructuralist approach, which aims to problematize the discourse behind certain futures and make its working visible, thereby asking which future is silenced at the price of certain future put forward, and using other images and scenarios of the futures as means to critique the present. Although not every epistemological foundation of each type of futures studies is explicitly discussed in Inayatullah's discussion, by juxtaposing different types of futures studies he illuminates that different understandings of knowledge claims in futures studies coexist and thereby allows debate on one's choice of type of futures studies.

I chose to present the discussion in the form of a letter, inspired by an example of feminist writing in Brady Burroughs' *Architectural Flirtations : A Love Storey* (2016). Brady Burroughs presented a collection of personal letter *Dear Aldo*, that she wrote to the architect Aldo Rossi as a medium through which she presented reflexive positioning and contextualization of her PhD project and

invited the ideas of Aldo Rossi into new contexts by engaging his writing in a dialogue (Burroughs, 2016:198). Here I attempt to engage Wendell Bell's writing on the epistemological foundation of futures studies in a conversation with feminist epistemologies by writing a letter to him.

19 September 2017, Stockholm

Dear Wendell,

You admitted that an epistemology for futures studies that we could more or less agree upon doesn't exist yet. But as you said, we both know that all futurist work with some epistemology, whether they are aware of it or not. And I think it is important to talk about epistemologies we use in futures studies, or any other kind of knowledge production. Because it explains our way of thinking, and by that we can take some responsibility in our claims for 'truth'. I think we can both agree on that. So I read your reflection on the epistemological foundation of futures studies and it got me thinkin', and here I'm writing a letter to you.

You started with discussing the two strands of epistemologies that have most influenced futurists; positivism and post-positivism. While you rejected both theories of knowledge as the adequate epistemology for futures studies, I must say, you sounded at times quite upset, especially when you were talking about post-positivism. You didn't seem happy about the chaos, confusion and all those nonsense that post-positivists have caused in the community of serious thinkers. To quote you here, if I may, you were worried that post-positivist approach would abolish not only "causality, determinism, necessity, objectivity, and rationality..., but also humanism, liberal democracy, responsibility, truth itself and, we can add, futures thinking"<sup>2</sup>. I mean,

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<sup>2</sup> Bell, 2004;236

serious issues are at stake here. And please don't take me wrong, because I do care about those things you said. As a feminist, I do care about humanism, liberal democracy, responsibility, some truth, how we think of future, but also objectivity and rationality. So this letter stands on our common ground, if you will.

However, I was still confused about your reasoning because you somehow put post-positivism under the label of postmodernism<sup>3</sup>, hence your critiques against post-positivism got mixed with those against postmodernism. I mean, when you were referring to post-positivism, you were talking about the earlier critics of positivism in 1960s and 1970s like Khun, Feyerabend, Hanson and Toulmin<sup>4</sup>, the 'historical relativists' who emphasized the socially and historically conditioned, and thereby relative character of scientific knowledge<sup>5</sup>. But when you were rejecting post-positivism, you were in fact dismissing post-positivism/postmodernism as one big group of trouble makers without giving critical reflection on postmodernism nor the link between two schools. Although it is not my intention to defend postmodernism here—I think it is also too broad label to call out—, it left me curious about the reason why you came to make this classification.

After giving your reflection on the past of epistemology of futures studies, you conclude that "any futurist who remain seduced by antipositivist ideas, as well as all serious thinkers, ought to be motivated to move beyond postpositivism to a theory of knowledge that has sounder foundations and more useful consequences"<sup>6</sup>. And as a 'sounder and more useful' theory of knowledge, you suggested critical realism as the successive epistemology for futures studies. I understood your choice as an attempt to stabilize and balance the epistemological foundation of futures studies between the demise of positivism and the trap of relativism in postmodernism. Feminists had encountered same

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.;235

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.;199-200

<sup>5</sup> Alvesson, M., & Sköldberg, K, 2009;18

<sup>6</sup> Bell, 2004:205



dilemma as you did between the totalizing view of positivist epistemology and the relativism of postmodern epistemology. Donna Haraway described totalization and relativism 'the perfect mirror twins' that "deny the stakes in location, embodiment, and partial perspective"<sup>7</sup>. (I assume you are familiar with Donna's writing?)

Oh Wendell, but why does your endorsement of critical realism give me the feeling that you are not willing to let of go of positivist ideal of reality? While both of us agree upon the pursuit of 'truth', or at least some sort of truth as the primary goal of scientific inquiry, your conviction in "ontological realism"<sup>8</sup> seems to make you think that any theories of knowledge that defies or questions the objective nature of reality would lead to the abandonment of pursuit of 'truth' by allowing subjective, relative views on truth. But Wendell, I have to contest your view that questioning the objective nature necessarily leads to "the alternative, ontological nihilism"<sup>9</sup>. I believe that conviction in the existence of a single, objective reality is dangerous because it assumes the positivist ideals of disembodiment<sup>10</sup>, the god trick, a vision that can see everything from above in neutral and objective sense<sup>11</sup>, which disregards the fact that every vision has a body, hence a partial perspective.

Against this background I find Sandra Harding's insight about critical realism project illuminating, when she pointed out that critical realism sees partiality as "only a necessary evil, not as a scientific and epistemological resource".<sup>12</sup> The goal of critical realism to represent a single reality in a culture-free way is in her view not only unattainable but also undesirable. In this context she also raised another important question on the production of

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<sup>7</sup> Haraway, 1988;584

<sup>8</sup> Bell, 2004;211

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.;220

<sup>10</sup> Lykke, 2010;138

<sup>11</sup> Haraway, 1988;581

<sup>12</sup> Harding, 2003;153

representations as the main goal of scientific inquiry, to which critical realism is highly devoted. She forcefully argues that intervention in natural and social worlds as the effects of science should be understood as fundamental conception of science as much as the production of representations.<sup>13</sup> In other words, we should pay more serious attention to the reality-producing effects of scientific inquiries.

Dear Wendell, this might be where our views differ with each other. I believe that partiality of cultures is the key to the production of knowledge<sup>14</sup>, not an inconvenience that we have to overcome with falsification on our way to a single structure of reality that stands for everyone.<sup>15</sup> For many feminist scholars, to acknowledge the specific historical, societal and bodily material context of the knower and its interconnectedness with her/his knowledge producing practices is core to their epistemological perspectives.<sup>16</sup> In order to claim objectivity and to account for political, moralist ground of our knowledge producing activities, we have to fight against the tendency as researching subject to look down from above and talk with value-neutral tones. We have to reclaim our vision in a body that can look up from the bottom. The vision that can reflect on its specific location, embodiment and partial perspective will then allow us 'strong objectivity'.<sup>17</sup>

So dear Wendell, here I would like to suggest a feminist epistemology of situated knowledges and partial perspectives as an epistemology for futures studies, which builds knowledge production on "a mobile multiplicity of critical localizations in the partial perspectives of different subjugated groups and not in any a priori defined and fixed categories".<sup>18</sup> Many feminist scholars have further developed this idea of situated knowledges, which could

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*;156

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*;155

<sup>15</sup> Bell, 2004;225

<sup>16</sup> Lykke, 2010;127

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*;130

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*;135

be discussed under the umbrella term of postconstructionist feminist epistemology. Examples are Nina Yural-Davis's "situated imagination", Rosi Braidotti's "feminist figurations", Donna Haraway's "posthuman cyborg feminism", and Karen Barad's "postconstructionist onto-epistme-ology".<sup>19</sup> I think they all have crucial implications for knowledge producing practices, and perhaps especially more so for futures studies. For instance, the notion of feminist figurations suggested by Rosi Braidotti and Donna Haraway seems to have a great potential to be translated into the thinking technology of futures studies. Feminist figurations are not a mere concept but phenomenon that balance "between lived social reality and (science) fiction"<sup>20</sup>, which is described as "political fiction" by Braidotti.<sup>21</sup> Figurations challenge the traditional science's way of separating reason from imagination. It is "a figuratively formed vision encompassing the subject's process of intellectual, emotional and bodily change towards something other than the status quo".<sup>22</sup> I find the visionary aspect of feminist figurations that is firmly rooted on the lived reality of subjects very relevant to futures studies, especially when it comes to an aim of futures studies to offer alternative visions.

So I'd like to conclude this letter here on our common ground and our differences. What we both believe, I suppose, is that futures studies should serve as action-oriented knowledge producing practices where imagining alternative visions and making spaces for contesting images of futures take great part. And I wanted to stress that through the lens of postconstructionist feminist epistemology, partiality and difference of our knowledge claims is as essential as commonality for our accounts of reality<sup>23</sup>. They should be seen as the source of knowledge production where we transgress the totalizing vision of positivism and relativist claims of postmodernism. I proposed that feminist epistemologies could be promising thinking technologies for futures studies in

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.;133-142

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.;39

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.;38

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Harding, 2003;156

the sense that they help us to achieve strong objectivity in our futures thinking by reclaiming bodies of our visions(do you get the double meaning?) and root them in lived realities.

Well, speaking of lived reality, mine tells me that I have a deadline quite soon. I think that's a cue for me to go write Chapter Three in panic.

Sincerely,

JiHyeon

## Chapter Three

While Chapter Two was a critique on the epistemological foundation of futures studies from feminist perspectives on theoretical level, Chapter Three is devoted to the actual application of feminist studies in futures studies through two different format. One is a feminist analytical practice of exemplar futures scenarios, and the other is an alternative feminist futures scenario. So this chapter shall be understood as an attempt to demonstrate an example of how *feminist futures* (studies) might look like, and to further answer the third research question:

How could feminist studies contribute to futures studies with positive, alternative visions of futures in contrast to hegemonic male, Western images of the future while avoiding suggesting another universalizing and essentializing vision?

However, it is important to note that the results presented here should not be understood as *the* singular feminist future suggested for implementation. The intention is to demonstrate how the visionary dimensions of feminist studies could be articulated in various forms of futures studies, and to open up space for rich debates on envisioning *feminist futures*.

### 3.1. A feminist analysis of Beyond GDP scenarios

*Beyond GDP-growth: Scenarios for sustainable building and planning* (“Beyond GDP”) is an example of present-day discussion on futures development in Swedish society with strong focus on sustainable development. It is an ongoing research project that has started in spring 2014 and will run until December 2018, which involves researchers from various disciplines such as environmental system analysis, futures studies, sociology, urban studies, political science, social anthropology, economics and human ecology, and partners from Swedish society including municipalities and non

governmental organizations. Based on critical perspective on the conventional concept of growth and its consequences for social and ecological systems, test version of four normative backcasting scenarios have been developed with four sustainability targets for Sweden in 2050: *Collaborative Economy*, *Local Self-Sufficiency*, *Automation for Quality of Life*, and *Circular Economy in the Welfare State*. The four sustainability targets are as follows (Svenfelt et al., 2016;5-6):

#### 1. Climate

Sweden's consumption may contribute a maximum of two tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents of greenhouse gases per person per year. In addition, Sweden's net emissions of greenhouse gases from production are to be zero.

#### 2. Power, influence and participation

Power, influence and participation in society is justly distributed and independent of factors such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious affiliation, age, degrees of disability and level of income.

#### 3. Land use

The amount of land used for consumption by Swedes shall be reduced by 50 per cent compared with 2015. Consumption may then use a maximum of 1.8 global hectares per person.

#### 4. Welfare/resource security

Residents of Sweden shall have adequate access to resources that can create opportunities for housing, education, social care and social security as well as favourable conditions for good health. These resources and services are allocated according to principles of justice.

Beyond GDP's explicit concern for socio-ecologically sustainable development and quality of life as a primary goal may share a common ground with some feminist perspectives on futures

development that argue for a new economy based on the radical heterogeneity where social wellbeing is more centered than growth or profitability is (Gibson-Graham, 2011). Beyond GDP aims to offer a set of target-fulfilling images of the future as the result of the study. Each scenario in Beyond GDP entails different images of the future striving for four sustainability targets. However, authors acknowledge that it is not clear yet if the current test version meets the four sustainability targets, hence the need of further analysis of target-fulfillment (Svenfelt et al., 2016;62). Against this background, I will analyze selected text from Beyond GDP based on Bacchi's WPR approach.

### ***'Social capital' in Collaborative Economy***

Although it is quite hard to imagine the total obliteration of any kind of power relations in a near future of any human society, what's crucial is to pay careful attention to what is left unproblematic and being silenced in a new setting of power relations, and to constantly reevaluate what it would mean from perspectives of 'the subjugated' (Haraway, 1988). While some of the power relations described in Beyond GDP scenarios suggest potentially new forms of power relation compared to today, they still allude potential of oppression and social hierarchy.

In *Collaborative Economy*, 'social capital' is the key to the power. In this future society, one's social capital such as the extent and quality of one's social networks or being 'socially smart' is important to cope well and to guarantee one's welfare. What might be left unproblematic here is the power relations that are based on the idea of competition and self-promotion. The lived effect of these images of futures is the risk to exacerbate today's trend where the line between work and life is more and more blurred and one's absolute availability and 24/7 mode of existence through online presence is demanded. From some feminist perspective, this would mean that the sphere of

economic production will continue to rest on and exploit the sphere of social reproductive activities (Fraser, 2016).

One episode of the British science fiction anthology series *Black Mirror* (2016) depicts a future society where everyone can rate the interaction with one other and their social media posts in the scale of five stars through social network platform. Here, ratings as an indicator of one's social capital have serious lived effect on the life and death of people, in forms of rights to housing, jobs, mobility, and even medical treatment. This system makes people focus on superficial presentation of themselves and discourage honesty in communication. Although this is an exaggerated portrayal of a society where the combination of emphasis on social capital and the technological development takes a dystopian turn, it also serves as a futures scenario that we might want to avoid.

### ***'Justice' in Local Self-Sufficiency***

In the scenario *Local Self-Sufficiency*, 'problem' of justice is a matter of procedural equality, where everybody has the opportunity to contribute to the economy with a minimum level of economic security. Beneath this problem representation is the assumption that economic fairness is a matter of individual's ability or inability. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation is greater socio-economic variations between individuals and groups. The lived effect of this problem representation is that the less abled bodies may be worse off and not always get the resources they would need. Another effect of this problem representation could be stigmatization on less abled bodies where people with less capability to produce will have to accept the inequalities as the consequence of their lack of ability. Given that the provision of basic welfare is left to the local commonality system and families in this scenario, another lived effect



could be women taking up more unpaid care work, if today's power relations would still persist in this scenario.

### ***'Participation' in Automation for Quality of Life***

In the scenario *Automation for Quality of Life*, 'problem' of participation and empowerment is a matter of digital technological development. In this scenario, digital technology enables people to participate and have influence on the system. The underlying assumption is value-neutrality of digital technologies. What may be left unproblematic in this problem representation is the politics of digital technologies. The effect of this problem representation could involve digitalized form of oppression of the gendered, sexualized or racialized subjugated subjects such as online harassment and hate speech, and its silencing effect. Sky Croeser (2016) argues that we should be critical about the implication of individualist libertarianism or liberal ideals in this specific context of digital democracy, where the right to free speech often serves as defending argument for online harassment towards the marginalized group in digital liberal platform.

### ***'Nature' in Circular Economy in the Welfare State***

In the scenario *Circular Economy in the Welfare State*, 'nature' and 'ecosystem' is integrated into the economy. Ecosystem is mainly seen important due to its function to circulate carbon and nitrogen, and can be kept at a great distance from people. People enjoy 'the untouched nature' and 'nature experiences' outside the cities. The underlying assumption here is the binary thinking that is fully human centered and divides the world into human/nonhuman, culture/nature. The effect of this binary thinking may be the subjugation and exploitation of 'nature'. J.K Gibson-Graham (2011)'s feminist project of belonging suggests thinking "connection", which involves alternative ethics of connecting ourselves with "the more than human". Gibson-Graham introduces two

ethical projects of thinking connection. One involves “an affect of love and an ethic of care”, with which one recognizes kinship and reciprocity between human and the world, and how changing condition of human is coextensive with that of the world. The second project involves embracing “vital materialism” where human and nonhuman are perceived as different configurations of substances that belong within the materiality of one’s own and others. This point of view rejects positioning human as superior or discrete being, but rather focuses on the behavior of agentic assemblages. The feminist project of belonging embraces up-close, piecing-it-together, participatory approaches as *strategy* to understand and perform the world better. The strategy aims for *being in* the world in the act of learning as an subject-object, that is a “becoming world”, instead of learning about a separate object from the perspective of a disconnected subject.

### **3.2. Findings from the semi-structured interviews on feminist futures**

In this section I present the findings from the semi-structured interviews on *feminist futures*. As explained in section 1.4, main topic for each interview was a combination of the aspects related to futures development that does not focus on economic growth — Governance and Planning; Economic and Welfare System; Built Environment and Transport; and Everyday Lives —, according to the interest and the expertise of the interviewee. First, the transcribed interviews have been re-categorized according to these main topics, which is displayed below in the format of table (see table 1-5). The statements from the interviews are slightly rendered into a written form so that it is easier and clearer for the reader. After presenting the primary form of data gathered from the interviews, I will reflect upon what we could learn from the findings.

**Table 1. Governance and Planning in Feminist Futures**

- There is a heavy emphasis on democracy and transparency in the decision-making process and planning process.
- The decision-making process is characterized with openness towards the differences and strong will to learn.
- Both men and women are in the positions with power.
- One won't be discriminated against because she is a woman.
- "Leave the man behind" : governance refuse the idea of man as the norm and lift up what has been considered as female and not important.
- Women of color has the same kind of freedom as white women.
- Politics give different groups of society better cultural status which goes along with having rights and access to financial system.
- The power relations would be constantly reevaluated. They are less hierarchical, more negotiable, equitable, and diverse.
- There are no arbitrary presuppositions related to certain characteristics lying behind power relations, such as certain age, looks or gender/sex.
- Feminist city planning brings women to the tenant dialogue and helps to empower each other.
- City planning process focus on achieving equal representation of the population.
- There is more local governance and the freedom to take the measures that you think you need in your area.
- There is a big discursive shift in the possibilities to nurture new forms of masculinity.
- The trans, intersex and queer movements have successfully managed to nurture a cultural acceptance for a world view where sex and gender practices are open enough for anything to fit into, and move across, any category.
- There's a shift in the current laws and discourse around refugees, and the possibilities to build a sustainable and open future together.
- The indigenous Sápmi population has gained sovereignty over its traditional territories and the curriculum at Swedish schools is now including and dealing with the darker episodes in Swedish history.

**Table 2. Economic and Welfare System in Feminist Futures**

- The economic system is equally divided between men and women.
- The gender division in the labor market has obliterated itself.
- Gender analysis for every budget proposal in governmental bodies is mandatory.
- Women and men have more equal terms at work.
- Women and men take equal responsibility to take care of their home, children and families.
- Fathers would take paternal leaves as mothers do.
- There are more men working with elderly care.
- Everyone is involved in the caring diagram. Partners equally share domestic and emotional work.
- The value of caring profession is raised up.
- The structural racism in the labor market has obliterated itself.
- Feminist anti-discrimination analysis for every budget proposal in governmental bodies is mandatory.
- There is feminist anti-discrimination laws and incentives in labor and housing markets (ie. a ban on wage differences based on gender practices, ethnicity or race).
- Sexist, racist or ableist commercials are banned altogether.
- Economy helps us live, but it isn't the thing that we live for.
- Economy functions on another logic than the capitalism.
- The legislation for local and democratic ownership of capital and economic power is implemented (ie. cooperative ownership, democratic banks and credit unions).
- The economic ownership models is based on a legal framework where humans belong to nature rather than the other way around.
- Long-term auditing structures focusing on democratic and ecological parameters of economic activities rather than short-term economic results
- Shorter working week.(ie. 6 hour-workday, 20 hours a week)
- There is a regulation on minimum and maximum pay for a reasonable spectrum of earning.
- Ban on profit-seeking activities in sectors related to public procurement including daycare, education, health care, elder care, housing, public transport, retirement funds, research, arts and culture.
- “the idea of utopian future where you would go fishing in the morning and write poetry in the afternoon”:  
undoing the specialization of labor and being able to do what one wants to do or is good at, while many people are being involved in sustainable farming with the help of contemporary methods
- “Re-industrialization at a small scale”: it is more visible where food and products are coming from, and people are more engaged in the production.

**Table 3. Built Environment in Feminist Futures**

- The sense of security is achieved not by surveillance or locks or fences, but the sense of ‘caring’, where one can feel that the space is being taken care of.
- Centre is build for both men and women to move freely on equal term without experiencing fear, being uncomfortable or feeling unsafe.
- “If the space is good for women, it is also good for men.”
- The laundry rooms in the basement have big open windows so it’s visible from outside and women won’t be afraid to go down there.
- Public spaces are safe for women in general, and for women with certain cultural/religious backgrounds where women are expected to dress in certain way or be at home.
- There are activities that attracts children and families, which makes women often follow their children to the public spaces or the outside environment.
- There are more women in the public space, which automatically create a sense of security.
- Architecture enables women of minority to partake.
- Public spaces are safe for everyone and expanding.
- As means to promote the sense of belonging to the place of different groups of people, there is a law in relation to the detail plan that people have the right to design the use of the place, which is temporary, for example 5/10/15 years.
- How different bodies with different level of ability engages with buildings are taken into account in the design of built environment.
- The appearance of the public is not privatized or restricted.
- Adverts and commercials are banned from public spaces and replaces by art.
- Virtual reality and digital arenas will be also equal public space.
- The countryside are repopulated and people can choose whether they want to live in the city or not.
- It would be possible to appropriate structures built for other purposes and put it to different kind of use, to create doors through walls and put things in communication with each other.
- You would be able to co-inhabit the places with other people.

**Table 4. Transport in Feminist Futures**

- People travel less with cars, because cars are mainly used by men and without doubt take up more of common/ shared space.
- With night buses, if your house is far from the bus stop, you could ask the bus driver to get you off near your house if it's on the way.
- The driving school in the centre will have female tutors, since driving with a female tutor is often easier for women to be empowered and be in peace.
- Cars are absent from the cities and public transit is fully paid by taxes rather than fees, the network of bike paths have developed.
- In the winter I wouldn't need to step over huge mountains of snow in the sidewalks where the cars are zooming by.
- The choice for traveling is equal between different groups.
- One is not restricted by one's wealth or bodily condition in one's choice of traveling.
- How different bodies - women, men, children, the elderly - response to noise, pollution and vibration from different transport system is considered.
- People who are not fit enough to bike uphill in Slussen will be able to lead the bike.
- The transport system is planned to support people to take care of their old parents, not only to support the parents to take care of their children.
- Automatization in transport system will serve for every group.
- Access to virtual reality is another type of mobility that allows one to interact with others, and this mobility will be equal for every gender.

**Table 5. Everyday Lives in Feminist Futures**

- “Imperialist, white supremacist, heterosexist, capitalist patriarchy” has obliterated itself, and it’s been replaced by an ethically conscious and equitable social order.
- Men’s violence to women is gone.
- Men in groups is not a scary thing and finance ministers don’t get away with sexist behavior.
- Everyday is moving away from assumptions and norms, and towards more critical thinking, generosity and understanding.
- People operate on a love ethic.
- Values are constantly reevaluated.
- Relationships, care and good humor is everywhere.
- There is no assigned gender.
- People know more about why they act the way they do in relation to their sexual differences.
- We don’t need to talk about feminism anymore.
- We would come with another term that includes understanding masculinities and criticizing stable norms related to them.

A few themes have emerged as I analyzed the transcripts. I will discuss the implications of these themes with the excerpts from the interviews in relation to the theories presented in this study. Q stands for the question posed by myself, and R stands for the response by the interviewee. Excerpts are presented with the profile and the initial of the interviewee in the beginning of the quote. Quotes are numbered so that they could be referred to in the discussion.

### ***Difficulty of imagining futures in long term***

- Quote 1, from the interview with *B*, teacher/researcher in Architecture

Q: So now the question comes to your personal imagination. Please imagine your feminist future that you would prefer in the year 2050, Sweden. Can you imagine new social relations or household forms in your feminist future? And if yes, what are they?

R: Um. This one was a difficult question for me. In 2050 I would be 80, if I live that long. Uh, and here I have to be honest and say that I have difficulty imagining and thinking about the future that long ahead. Because I'm very much a person who believes in dealing with here-and-now, or in the near future, maybe not that long ahead, which I think at the moment is in crisis. [omitted] So I would say that I really believe in small steps toward a feminist future. [omitted] And I think for me, thirty years from now becomes like science fiction. And I prefer pulp fiction. I think the difference for me is that when it becomes too far for me to have some kind of real idea that I'm addressing, it becomes fantasy and almost like a wish list, but it doesn't help right now. And that for me, I think I'm interested in, okay, how can we make real differences. There's so much needs to be done, and there's so many people who need changes now. And in order to make something better in thirty years, what we do now counts. [the rest omitted]

One realization came to me after the interviews were conducted. The interviews were designed with the assumption that the interviewees would be familiar with visioning *feminist futures*. However, it turned out that some interviewees weren't necessarily familiar with the notion of visioning futures, especially when the suggested time frame was far ahead. While the interviewees work with feminist approaches in the fields related to futures development including architecture, planning, policy making, politics and research, some interviewees found the idea of imagining *feminist futures* in a longer term such as 30 years ahead rather difficult. The reason behind this difficulty expressed by some interviewees was that they put bigger emphasis on dealing with here and now, carefully paying attention to and understanding what is actually going on today, articulating it in a strong way, and eventually the small step towards *feminist futures* that would make substantial difference in today's reality. I find this point of view not in complete conflict with futures studies, but rather supporting the implication of feminist epistemologies in futures studies. The visions and images of futures we create should be firmly based on the critical reflection on lived reality today and the reality producing effects of knowledge producing practices. The



difficulty that some interviewees expressed with imagining futures in a long-term also suggests a possibility where futures studies can complement the hands-on perspective of practitioners in the field of futures development with more radical, longer-term futures thinking in systemic ways.

### ***Skepticism on envisioning a feminist future***

- Quote 2 from the interview with *A*, activist

Q: Now please imagine your feminist future that you would prefer in the year 2050, Sweden. How do you imagine a feminist governance in your feminist future in Sweden 2050?

R: I assume that this question is asked from an angle where “feminist future” means a success for various feminist struggles and not just “the future from a feminist perspective”. The first interpretation of the question asks me about a more or less realistic utopia, whereas the second is open to a more dystopian image. I choose the first and more utopian interpretation. [the rest omitted]

- Quote 3 from the interview with *C*, professor in Urban Theory

Q: What is feminist future for you?

R: Well, I think that I have a problem with the idea that it would be feminist future. Um, one of my PhD students, he is looking at masculinities. And I think that is also very troubling and concerning, and, a lot of feminist theories assumes that there’s kind of stable norm that is male. I think that men have, are as tormented as women are in this society. [omitted] Um, so, I would never say that I’m not a feminist, but I think that as long as feminism by the label becomes marginalized, or that this idea that it only concerns half the population, I think there’s a problem there that needs to be resolved. [the rest omitted]

While for some interviewees it was simply hard to imagine that far ahead into future, some found the idea of imagining *feminist futures* problematic. Some interviewees found the notion of

setting out a vision from certain feminist perspective risky, and expressed their concern of falling into the trap of *a* feminist fantasy and its dystopian potential. This reflects part of the feminist skepticism on feminist engagement with futures studies that has been mentioned previously in section 2.1, where the risk of setting up another hegemonic, universalizing and essentializing vision was pointed out. However, I understood the skepticism expressed by the interviewees not as to dismiss the need of feminist engagement in visioning futures, since they still stressed the need to have faith in our ability to hope and create in order to work towards futures and found this exercise of imagining feminist futures as a reminder of what they are working for. I interpret their concern as a strong reminder against narrow understanding of feminist approaches and its potential effect of excluding certain feminist struggles or certain groups, for instance, ‘men as the other half of the population’ as in Quote 3. In similar vein, many interviewees emphasized the anti-exclusive/discriminatory character of feminist approaches, which is based on the importance of intersectionality in their understanding of feminism.

### ***Different feminist epistemologies in feminist futures***

- Quote 4, from the interview with B, political adviser for Gender Equality in the Ministry

Q: What is feminist future for you?

R: [omitted] It shouldn't really matter if you're a woman or a man. You should have the equal opportunities to create a life where you can take care of your full potential to do something good both for yourself and society. [omitted] for me it is as important that you as a young boy, young men, men, anyone, should have the same rights also to do choices that maybe traditionally women-like. [omitted] I think one of the keys is to take into account the rest of, which is half of the population on earth, to try to get some kind of change, a positive change. For me it's extremely provoking to see pictures of all the international meetings all over the world. When you do the

family photos, either it's only men, or men in suits and there might be one or two women. And for me it's completely unacceptable. It can't continue like that. [the rest omitted]

- Quote 5, from the interview with N, coordinator for social sustainability in a housing company working with feminist city planning and tenant dialogue (translated from Swedish to English)

Q: What does it mean for you to have feminist approaches in your occupation?

R: [omitted] So we sat down... what do we have to do to get women to this platform? Is it the cultural aspect that plays a part in this platform so that women do not dare to speak? [omitted] We have to ask our tenants, what is important to them? Some thought that the centre was not attractive and that no women went to the centre. A lot of them experienced that it was not safe for women. Therefore we introduced a feminist point of view. How do you want your yard? Why are you afraid in your neighborhood? Which spaces scare the women? The laundry room is an example - people wanted open windows so the physical obstacles for that were removed. This is from the point of view of the women. This is important. [the rest omitted]

- Quote 6 from the interview with C, consultant/researcher working with gender equality in infrastructure planning and strategic environmental assessment

Q: As a practitioner and researcher with feminist approaches, what do you think is important feminist/gender issues for the transport system in Sweden?

R: [omitted] generally that is a big bias in the models when you see traffic prognosis or forecasts for 2050 and so on. It's actually an assumption in that we're traveling, we're happy today. Are we now? Maybe not. We know that how especially women don't always travel as they want, they travel as they have resources for. While men generally have more money, therefore they have bigger choice. Bigger selection of modes to travel. [omitted] And health is also... [omitted] Because we constantly calculate noise and air pollution. So we know very much. But [omitted] we assume that all bodies, all people are the same. But now, we also know that women and men physiologically actually do react differently to these. [omitted] But now, we've got into the goal (one of the gender

equality policy goals of the Swedish Government<sup>24</sup>) in December, suddenly we can say, okay, this is acceptable for this type of bodies, but not this type of bodies. And then suddenly people go, are we just going to do adult men and women? Shouldn't we look at children? Yes, we can take small bodies too! (laughter) And then someone said, how about elderly bodies? Yes, I can do the elderly bodies, too. [the rest omitted]

- Quote 7, from the interview with B, teacher/researcher in Architecture

Q: What do you think is important feminist/gender issues for the use and design of built environment, based on your experience?

R: [omitted] I think the most important for me is recognizing an intersectional feminist approach. And with that, I would add, having feminist issues [is to] move away from this idea of equality towards equity. Because I think equality, which is very typical I think in feminist projects, equality in Swedish is jämställdhet, I think it sets up an opposition. And it focuses on men and women, it focuses on gender and it focuses on a binary. And I think that removes the focus from a lot of other issues of power and oppression that exist. So I would say first is the equity. [the rest omitted]

When the transcribed interviews were analyzed, I could see that different understanding of feminism/feminist approaches underly the statements of each interviewee. In connection with the four positions of feminist epistemologies discussed in the theoretical framework of this study, it turned out that the points of views expressed in the interviews were based on different feminist epistemologies. Sometimes one interviewee's responses consisted of more than one feminist epistemology. For instance, many interviewees mentioned equal distribution of power, equal use of physical space, and equal terms in economic system between men and women as requisite for their feminist futures, as in Quote 4. The frame of these feminist futures is based on feminist empiricism, which aims for adequate representation of women as men.

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<sup>24</sup> Gender equal health. Women and men, girls and boys must have the same conditions for a good health and be offered care on equal terms. Retrieved from <http://www.government.se/government-policy/gender-equality/goals-and-visions/>

On the other hand, as in Quote 5, the statements from the interview with *N* who works for feminist city planning in the area where major part of tenants have immigrant backgrounds are closer to the feminist standpoint epistemology, where epistemologically privileged subject position is given to women in general, or group of women who are marginalized in relation to their intersectionality such as class, ethnicity, religion or cultural backgrounds. In *N*'s frame of reference, lived effect in the form of experience of women with certain cultural backgrounds being oppressed from speaking up in the presence of men, feeling unsafe or scared at the public square or in laundry rooms, and being discouraged to leave the house is most relevant and urgent problem to deal with in her feminist approach to city planning. The point of view expressed in Quote 6 could be interpreted as rooted in feminist standpoint epistemology as well. Interviewee *C*, consultant/researcher working with gender equality in transport planning commented that for her, gender equal transport system means where men and women can have equal opportunity to choose and use different modes of transport regardless of one's economic status, age, or bodily function. While this idea seems to be based on the binary category of 'men' and 'women', the aim is to take into account the empirical evidence of how different bodies of women, men, the elderly and children experience noise, pollution and vibration differently and to reflect that into transport planning in order to achieve more equal experience.

Last but not least, some interviewees stressed the need to transgress the hegemonic two-gender model in one's feminist approaches, as in Quote 7. Recognizing and calling out how intersectionality such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, age, class or mother tongue works as excluding and discriminating mechanism in power relations was therefore mentioned as important part of their feminist approaches. Interviewee *K*, consultant working with questions related to gender, mentioned that in her feminist future, there won't be assigned gender, and that people will have better understanding about themselves in relation to their sexual differences.

Interviewee *A*, activist, and The interviewee *C*, professor in Urban Theory, commented that there will be better understanding of masculinities, trans-, intersex-, and queer sexuality and also critique against stable norms related to masculinities in their feminist futures. In this context, their feminist futures were characterized with their words such as critical thinking, negotiable, equitable and less hierarchical power relations, generosity, understanding and a love ethic. These images of feminist futures could be put somewhere between postmodern feminist (anti-) epistemology and postconstructionist feminist epistemology, in that they criticize the unproblematic use of the category ‘women’ and ‘men’, but at the same time acknowledge bodily materiality of the subjugated and its embodied effects on lives.

### ***Caring in feminist futures***

- Quote 8 from the interview with *E*, architect

Q: As a practitioner with feminist approaches, what do you think is important feminist/gender issues for the use and design of built environment in Sweden?

R: I think what’s important is that the space should be maintained and that you can feel it. The feeling that someone is taking care of this space. If you feel that this space is taken care of, then you would feel safe. It’s not the sense of security achieved by surveillance or locks or fences. [the rest omitted]

- Quote 9 from the interview with *H*, professor in Architecture

Q: In your feminist future, what kind of new functions in the human settlement do you imagine/desire?

R: [omitted] Maybe this goes back again to some of those ambitions for rethinking collective living, rethinking the commons, I mean these are all themes that we’re familiar with, they are not new, but maybe it isn’t even a question of new, [omitted] But to reformulate approach to mending

and caring, and what we've got worked, how can we make it work bit better, no radical vision. [omitted] the whole approach of slowing down, paying attention to the existing infrastructures, seeing weak and slowly knit back into them, being alert to different kind of local communities and their needs, entering into real sincere dialogue. [the rest omitted]

The notion of caring was repeatedly mentioned in the interviews in various contexts. In the interviews on Built Environment, as in Quote 8, caring as in the sense that one could feel that the space is being taken care of was raised as important feminist approach for the sense of safety in the built environment. The interviewee *E*, architect, further emphasized that the sense of caring should be integrated into the actual contract of development project so that the responsibility of taking care of the area, public toilets, public kitchen, etc. can be extended to different institutions, such as municipalities or builders. Another point raised was the importance of caring as a feminist approach to mend, maintain and make the already existing infrastructure work better, and to pay closer attention to the different needs of local communities, as in Quote 9. So here, caring is understood not only as effort for maintenance and repair, but also the act of caring in the sense of 'caring for someone' where one carefully listens to the needs of local communities, engages in dialogues and tries to understand what is really needed.

In the interviews on Economic and Welfare System, every interviewee commented that caring work should be equally shared between genders, whether it is housework or professional work in caring sector, and that caring professions should have higher pay than today in feminist futures. In some interviewees' images of feminist futures, this was combined with the alternative forms of economy than capitalism where the economic system and working week is radically restructured around the lifted value of caring, where we slow down everyday lives and have time to pitch in for everyday care. The interviewee *C*, professor in Urban Theory, emphasized the importance of understanding how capitalism completely depends on, exploits and commodifies the sphere of

social reproduction which is everything that has to do with care, all the housework and services that are provided for free, which ensures that there's society and makes sure that lives could go on.

The interviewee *H*, professor in Architecture, referred to Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's work on 'Matters of Care' in the interview as she brought up the notion of caring. Puig de la Bellacasa's writing on the notion of 'thinking with care' provides a bridge between the notion of caring and the feminist epistemology of situated knowledges that was discussed in the previous chapters of this study (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012). From re-reading Donna Haraway's writing on situated knowledges, Puig de la Bellacasa points out that "knowledge is situated means that knowing and thinking are inconceivable without a multitude of relations that also make possible the worlds we think with" (Ibid.;198). She argues that to care is to create relation, and to recognize the inevitable interdependency of ours in this world. However, she also warns against idealizing notion of caring that is based on normative moralistic standards;

From a feminist perspective there are further reasons why normative moralistic visions of care will not do. Caring is more than an affective-ethical state: it involves material engagement in labours to sustain interdependent worlds, labours that are often associated with exploitation and domination. In this sense, the meanings of caring are not straightforward. Interdependency is not a contract but a condition; even a pre-condition. For all this, we must be careful not to become nostalgic for an idealised caring world: caring or being cared for is not necessarily rewarding and comforting. A feminist inspired vision of caring cannot be grounded in the longing for a smooth harmonious world, but in vital ethico-affective everyday practical *doings* that engage with the inescapable troubles of interdependent existences. (Ibid.)

Against the idea of Puig de la Bellacasa, I interpret the notion of caring raised in the interviews as a mode of thinking for critical feminist everyday practices, which may span from the field of architecture to the field of futures studies, based on the act of building, acknowledging



and maintaining interdependent relations. Puig de la Bellacasa describes this act of building, acknowledging and maintaining the relations in the context of knowledge producing practices as “thinking with” (Ibid.;199) and “writing-with” (Ibid.;202). According to her, the style of thinking-with and writing-with resists isolated form of academic thinking, and instead “populates” a world by creating interest between different works of thoughts and building relations and community, which would make each work stronger (Ibid.).

### **3.3. A feminist futures scenario**

The findings from the semi-structured interviews on *feminist futures* are deployed to build an alternative feminist futures scenario. I chose to articulate an alternative feminist futures scenario in the format of ‘political fiction’, with the aim of presenting detailed images of political and daily life in this future. Each part of the scenario touches the themes of Governance and Planning, Built Environment and Transport, Economic and Welfare System, and Everyday Lives in *feminist futures* that are based on the situated imaginations of 12 interviewees.

## *Feminist Futures*

*It is when there's no feminism.*

*Imperialist, white supremacist, heterosexist, capitalist patriarchy is gone.*

*What replaces them is a love ethic, where everyday lives operate on generosity, equity and compassion.*

*Monday, March 14, 2050*

Today I'm attending a place-making workshop in our neighborhood with my flatmates E and K. We've been writing on the Forum that the Neighborhood Council should direct its fund to change the space right by the metro station, and finally it's happening. It started when K and I complained over one dinner how we can't identify with the art installation outside the metro, E firmly refused to call the structure in the space 'art installation'.

"If they really think that's beautiful, they can take it and shove it in their front yard. I mean, don't do some lame job and say this 'art' is good enough for these people."

"Powerfully said. But what would be the alternative?"

"Come on. Anything can be better than that."

As we arrive at the workshop, the place is already buzzing with the sound of people talking. Many people brought their kids along. I recognize a group of teenagers whom I saw shooting their music video at the vacant lot by the neighborhood center few weeks ago. I think they're so cool. I'm curious what their visions are about the space. We pick up the tablet devices by the door. The first page is the usual anonymous registration form where we tick off boxes for the Neighborhood Council to do the representation analysis. K reads aloud the form, probably just to provoke E.

“I identify as... *Lesbian/Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Straight, I don't know, Not listed, I don't want to answer.*

Hmm. Can I write ‘I don't know how I feel today’ next to *Not listed?*”

“Please. Have some sympathy for the statisticians.”

One person, I guess from the Neighborhood Council, starts to talk in the middle of the room.

“...so, this place will be re-designed for temporary use for next ten years, then the use of the place will be reevaluated here in the Neighborhood Council. So that means we will meet again. Now if you see the contract, there's some check list that you may want to have in mind today when we're making sketch about the space. Let's see...”

I swipe the tablet to see the contract. There's a check list at the bottom of the contract.

*Accessibility, lighting, maintenance, noise, pollution, public toilet, public kitchen,* and so on. I think of a playground in another neighborhood that has been designed by people with disabilities. I read that the playground has so many little details that people with normal eyesight won't even notice. It's supposed to be different feelings for different bodies. I wish we could also do something cool like that with this place.

*Wednesday, May 11, 2050*

Today I'm taking my bike to go to my mom's place. She's doing a stand up comedy show in her house this evening. I take the middle lane where you're supposed to go slower. I have slight pain in my thigh from teaching kids Taekwondo yesterday, so I will take it easy. When I reach the uphill in Slussen, some people in my lane get off their bikes and lead them. I do the same.

I park my bike and walk through the houses towards where mom lives. On the ground floor I see some people doing their laundry through the big window. As I approach the door, a gang of children rush out the door screaming, yelling and laughing. I shook my head and go in. I see mom coming from main living room.

“Mom, how do you live with those little monsters?”

“Why, it’s nice! I just sent them to do the groceries.”

“Monsters doing groceries.”

Mom lives in the collective housing. Her house used to be a school building that has higher ceiling, which I like. She shares a floor with five other grown-ups and three children. She herself has a small cosy room to herself.

“Did you take the subway to come here?”

“No, I came with bike today.”

“But subway is nice! It’s..”

“I know, I know. It’s free and adjusted to female bodies and everything.”

Mom is an old ‘feminist’. She used to work as transport system engineer back in her days. She always tells me how horrible sometimes it was for her to ride on a subway, that she felt so dizzy and nauseous. Now we know it was because of the noise and the vibration that had different impact on different bodies, but mom thought for a very long time that she was just too weak, until she started her work on critical assessment of the impact of transport modules on different bodies. Actually I’m so proud of her. I can’t imagine how whiny I would have been if the subways were as she describes.

“So what have you been up to?”

“You know, the usual. Teaching kids, working in the allotment, taking a course on wallpaper mending at school, and of course, making film... we’ve been shooting the redesigning project in the neighborhood. You know, the space outside the subway station.”

“Wonderful. I’m so glad that you are changing it.”

“I know, right? What have you been up to?”

“Well you know. Potato field in the morning and writing poetry in the evening and all that.”

“Right. All that jazz... But what about this evening? I’m so excited! What will you open with?”

“Well, I don’t want to spoil the fun now. Maybe some feminist joke. Once upon a time, there was a finance minister...”

“Mom... Masculinists will find it not funny. And they will be there, I tell you. They’re everywhere. I’m dating one.”

“Well, masculinist with good humor will find it funny.”

“Whatever you say.”

I give her a peck on the forehead.

### 3.4. Discussion

Through this study I aimed to explore how futures studies could engage with critical feminist perspectives in a more intrinsic manner and to make a sense of what *feminist futures* might mean. I have used literature study and semi-structured interviews with practitioners and researchers working with feminist approaches in the fields related to futures development. The purpose of the study was formulated into three research questions:

- Is there feminist perspectives in the epistemological foundation of futures studies? If so, what are they?
- Is there any drawback in the epistemological foundation of futures studies seen from feminist perspectives? If so, what are they?
- How could futures studies engage in building alternative visions of feminist futures that is not universalizing and essentializing?

In Chapter Two, as an attempt to answer the first two research questions, I have examined the history of relationship between feminist perspectives and futures studies through literature study. Although there is a risk of falling into the trap of universalizing and essentializing vision of a feminist future, I've argued that the visionary aspect of feminist approaches and critical feminist epistemologies are still needed in futures studies. To explore the second and the third research question, I have analyzed Wendell Bell's discussion on epistemological foundation of futures studies from feminist epistemological perspective in the form of a letter, with the attempt to integrate feminist writing method in this study as well. Through the discussion I've suggested the potential of postconstructionist feminist epistemology of situated knowledges and partial objectivity as epistemology for futures studies. However, as discussed in section 2.2. in prior to the letter to Wendell, the choice of Wendell Bell's writing as a case material to examine from feminist

perspectives has delimited the stance of futures studies on its epistemological approaches in this study. I have to emphasize here again that futures studies practices cannot be represented with only one epistemological approach. There are many futures studies practices that have engaged with critical and reflexive epistemological approach that is sensitive to feminist/gender questions, part of which was presented in section 2.1. and section 2.2. By carrying out a feminist critique against a specific example of epistemological discussion in the field of futures studies, what this study achieved is a contribution to the less discussed question of the basis of knowledge production in futures studies from feminist perspectives, which invites more discussion on the subject. In order to address the third research question, I chose to demonstrate my own examples of feminist futures studies. In Chapter Three, I've analyzed the selected texts from Beyond GDP scenarios as a feminist critical analytical practice. Based on feminist perspectives, I've addressed the implications of new form of power relations from perspectives of the subjugated, binary thinking that results in dividing practice between culture and nature, and the politics of digital technologies in these futures scenarios. However, it was a challenging task to apply WPR approach to the scenario with the aim of finding problem representations and underlying assumptions that is interesting from feminist perspective, since there was no explicit description related to 'gender/sex', 'women', 'men' or 'gender (in)equality' in the scenarios.

As another form of feminist futures studies practice, I've conducted semi-structured interviews on the question of *feminist futures* with 12 practitioners and researchers. The findings from the interviews have been firstly presented in the tables 1-5. The tables may be read as a 'feminist to-do list' situated in the year 2017, Sweden, or as a reminder of what we are missing today. From analyzing the interviews in connection with the theoretical framework of this study, several themes have appeared as interesting.

First, imagining *feminist futures* in a long-term didn't come always easily from the interviewees, although they work with feminist approaches in the field related to futures development. This points to the need of radical, long-term, systemic futures thinking for visioning feminist futures which could be complemented with the support of futures studies.

Second, many interviewees warned against visioning a feminist future that is based on a narrow understanding of feminist struggles. In this sense, *feminist futures* concern not only 'women' as the half of the population, but rather focus on the anti-exclusive/discriminatory, equitable character of feminist approaches.

In a similar vein, points of views expressed in the interviews consisted of multiple feminist epistemologies. Surely, women and men would have equal opportunities in every sector of society in *feminist futures* of every interviewee, but in some interviewees' *feminist futures*, it is also when we have transgressed the hegemonic two-gender model and power relations are free of not only your sex but all other aspects of intersectionality, and we would have come up with another term than gender equality or feminism. I interpret these different feminist epistemologies co-existing in individuals as not self-conflicting, but rather connected to the political, local context of each interviewee where she/he has to deal with complex situations that would require more than just one understanding of feminist approaches.

Lastly, the notion of caring appeared as vital condition for *feminist futures*. While the importance of the usual notion of caring as the everyday effort for maintenance of one's lives and surroundings was raised, another notion of caring as the effort to build and acknowledge the interdependent relations and to create common interest and collectives has been brought into light in connection with the feminist epistemology of situated knowledges. In this context, the notion of caring could be understood as a mode of thinking for critical feminist everyday practices.



Based on the findings from the interviews, I've written an alternative feminist scenario in the format of a fiction with the aim to provide a more detailed and situated narrative of political and daily lives in feminist futures. The alternative feminist futures scenario could be understood as an attempt to materialize an answer for the third research question. The visions in this feminist futures scenario aren't meant to be understood as the singular, essential vision to be implemented, but they shed different light to existing norms in today's lives, and may invite critical engagement on these images of futures. The challenge in presenting a feminist futures scenario in the format of fiction was to imply feminist imaginaries without using abstract description. As a result I couldn't include certain aspects raised in the semi-structured interviews such as economic democracy, obliteration of gender division and structural racism in the labor and housing market, or equally shared domestic and emotional work between partners. One possible form to address this challenge that I've faced may be a format of futures scenario consisting of both abstract description and fictional narrative. The aspects of lives in the imagined future could be described in the form of scenario skeleton, for instance, as in the table 1-5 where the aspects of governance, planning, economic and welfare system, built environment and transport system and everyday lives in feminist futures are explained in a conceptual way. Then the fictional form of futures scenario could add flesh to the scenario skeleton as it gives concrete local, political context to the conceptual ideas.

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Appendix 1: List of types of interview

Interview type	Interviewees' occupation
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>BL</b> (Built Environment + Everyday lives)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Architect/researcher Associate professor Architect/consultant</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>EL</b> (Economic and Welfare System + Everyday lives)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Consultant Associate professor Professor</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GBL</b> (Governance and Planning + Built Environment + Everyday lives)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Coordinator in housing company City planner</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GEL</b> (Governance and Planning + Economic and Welfare System + Everyday lives)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Activist Political adviser</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GTL</b> (Governance and Planning + Transport + Everyday lives)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Politician</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>TBL</b> (Transport + Built Environment + Everyday lives)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Consultant/researcher</p>

## Appendix 2: Introduction for semi-structured interview

Thank you for taking time to talk about future development of Swedish society from feminist perspectives. My name is Jihyun An, and I'm from South Korea. I studied human geography before in Seoul, and currently I'm writing my master thesis in the school of architecture and built environment in KTH, with the supervision by Ulrika Gunnarsson-Östling. To briefly introduce the purpose of my thesis, I am analyzing already existing futures scenarios from a feminist theoretical point of view and I will generate an alternative feminist future scenario, in order to create a discussion on the role of feminist perspectives in the field of futures studies and urban planning practices for sustainable development.

The results from today's interview will be used for the generation of an alternative feminist future scenario for Swedish society in 2050. You were contacted because you have been working in the field that is related to planning and development in one way or another, and most importantly because you are engaged with feminist approaches in your work.

There are no wrong answers but rather differing points of view. One might have different perspective or approach on what feminist future should look like, and I think that could be just as one of the most interesting parts of the conversation.

If you don't mind, I will record the session because I don't want to miss any of your comments. I hope that's okay. People often say very helpful things in these discussions and I can't write fast enough to get them all down.

Well, let's begin with the first question.

### Appendix 3: Interview guide for type BL

Q1. Tell me what you do and what your background is.

Q2. What does it mean for you to take feminist approaches in your occupation?

Q3. As a practitioner[researcher] with feminist approaches, what do you think is important feminist/gender issues for the use and design of built environment in Sweden?

Next questions would require some of your personal imagination. Now please imagine your feminist future that you would prefer in the year 2050, Sweden.

Q4. As a practitioner[researcher] with feminist approaches, can you imagine new social relations or household forms?

Q5. In your feminist future, what kind of new functions in the human settlement do you imagine/desire?

Q6. In your feminist future, what is different in everyday life compared to how it is today? Can you give examples?

Q7. What is feminist future for you?

#### Appendix 4: Interview guide for type EL

Q1. Tell me what you do and what your background is.

Q2. What does it mean for you to take feminist approaches in your occupation?

Q3. As a researcher[practitioner] with feminist approaches, what do you think is important feminist/gender issues for the economic system in Sweden?

Q4. What's your feminist approaches in dealing with social or economic risk of individuals in Swedish society?

Next questions would require some of your personal imagination. Now please imagine your feminist future that you would prefer in the year 2050, Sweden.

Q5. As a researcher[practitioner] with feminist approaches, how do you imagine the economic system in your feminist future in Sweden 2050?

Q6. As a researcher[practitioner] with feminist approaches, how do you imagine the welfare system in your feminist future in Sweden 2050?

Q7. In your feminist future, how does a working week look like?

Q8. In your feminist future, what is different in everyday life compared to how it is today? Can you give examples?

Q9. What is feminist future for you?



## Appendix 5: Interview guide for type GBL

Q1. Tell me what you do and what your background is.

Q2. What does it mean for you to take feminist approaches in your occupation?

Q3(MN). As a practitioner with feminist approaches, what do you think is important feminist/gender issues for planning and governance, based on your experience?

Q3(NG). As a practitioner with feminist approaches, what do you think is important feminist/gender issues for the use and design of built environment, based on your experience?

Q4. As a practitioner with feminist approaches, who do you think should be the key actors in the decision making and planning process in Sweden? (You could give an example of already existing actors, for example organizations, institutions or network, or it could be new type or form of actors)

Next questions would require some of your personal imagination. Now please imagine your feminist future that you would prefer in the year 2050, Sweden.

Q5(MN). In your feminist future in 2050, Sweden, how do you imagine the decision making and planning process to look like? And what kind of norms or values do you think characterize the decision making and planning processes?

Q5(NG). In your feminist future, what kind of new functions in the human settlement do you imagine/desire?

Q6. Can you imagine new social relations or household forms in your feminist future? What are they?

Q7. In your feminist future, what is different in everyday life compared to how it is today? Can you give examples?

Q8. What is feminist future for you?

## Appendix 6: Interview guide for type GEL

Q1. Tell me what you do and what your background is.

Q2. What does it mean for you to take feminist approaches in your occupation?

Q3. As a practitioner with feminist approaches, what do you think is important feminist/gender issues for the governance system in Sweden?

Q4. As a practitioner with feminist approaches, what do you think is important feminist/gender issues for the economic and welfare system in Sweden?

Next questions would require some of your personal imagination. Now please imagine your feminist future that you would prefer in the year 2050, Sweden.

Q5. How do you imagine a feminist governance in your feminist future in Sweden 2050?

Q6. How do you imagine the economic and welfare system in your feminist future in Sweden 2050?

Q7. In your feminist future, how does a working week look like?

Q8. In your feminist future, what is different in everyday life compared to how it is today? Can you give examples?

Q9. What is feminist future for you?

## Appendix 7: Interview guide for type GTL

Q1. Tell me what you do and what your background is.

Q2. What does it mean for you to take feminist approaches in your occupation?

Q3. How does your feminist approach translate into the work with transport system?

Q4. As a practitioner with feminist approaches, what do you think is important feminist/gender issues for the governance system in Sweden?

Next questions would require some of your personal imagination. Now please imagine your feminist future that you would prefer in the year 2050, Sweden.

Q5. How do you imagine a feminist governance in your feminist future in Sweden 2050?

Q6. In your feminist future, what is different in everyday life compared to how it is today? Can you give examples?

Q7. What is feminist future for you?

## Appendix 8: Interview guide for type TBL

Q1. Tell me what you do and what your background is.

Q2. What does it mean for you to take feminist approaches in your occupation?

Q3. As a practitioner and researcher with feminist approaches, what do you think is important feminist/gender issues for the transport system in Sweden?

Next questions would require some of your personal imagination. Now please imagine your feminist future that you would prefer in the year 2050, Sweden.

Q4. As a practitioner and researcher with feminist approaches, how would you want the transport system in Sweden to be?

Q5. In your feminist future, what kind of new functions in the human settlement do you imagine/desire?

Q6. In your feminist future, what is different in everyday life compared to how it is today? Can you give examples?

Q7. What is feminist future for you?