

PROVIDENTIA'S PROSPECTUS

18 TRENDS
FUTURISTAS
ARE WATCHING
IN 2018



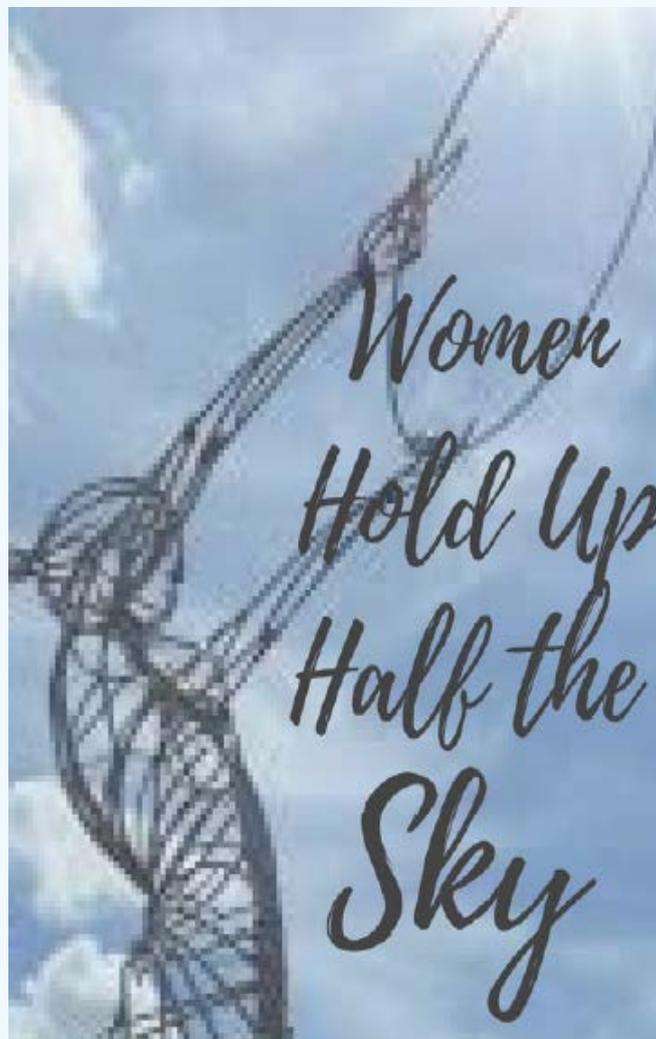
CURATED BY
DR. CLAIRE A. NELSON

The Rationale

It is not usual to hear of futurists being described as “titans”, and certainly women futurists are rarely among those viewed as the titans of futures studies. Indeed, though ‘Phoebe’ was revered by the Greeks as the Titan of Prophecy, we futurists hesitate to take up the mantle of being a titan for we are not in the business of prophecy and crystal ball gazing. Rather we gather evidence of the emerging patterns and signaling landmarks in the landscape around us that provide foresight about the future that is emerging. Which means if we were to have a patron saint, it would more likely be ‘Providentia’ – known as the Roman Goddess of Forethought – a kind of cousin to ‘Phoebe’.

This being a new year, pundits, cognoscenti and the ‘futurazzi’ -- that is to say those who set the tone for the ‘business of futuring’ by making the news first -- are producing the usual round up of ‘predictions’ and/or trends to watch. Such trends are typically of interest to ‘captains of industry’ and ‘policy leaders’ who are engaged in policy posturing and strategic planning for their organizations, enterprises, or sectors. As such a panoramic view would surely provide the best foresight.

Given the dearth of women’s voices among the ‘futurazzi’, I thought it would be interesting to roundup what woman futurists (usually found among the ‘futurarti’ that is those of the leaned class who study the future) are seeing as the emerging patterns and signs in the landscape of 2018; and so I reached out to 9 women futurists aka ‘futuristas’ around the world to secure their views. Each was asked to pick out three trends that they were watching. There were no guidelines other than to limit their answers to around 150 words.



I then organized what I received into six categories: Political, Economic, Social, Health, Environmental, and Technological. In homage to our patron saint, “Voila! Providentia’s Prospectus”.

The following is a compendium of 18 trends (not by rank) that women around the world are watching for in 2018.

In the realm of political issues:



YOUNG WOMEN'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

1 Women's role in leadership growing

In a follow-on from the global women's march that took place in January, 2017, and the "#MeToo" movement and other related events, women's ambitions for leadership around the world may see an upward blip in 2018, and perhaps beyond. Certainly more women will run for local and federal office (in the US) this year, and more women will join the leadership class as opportunities continue to open across all sectors, including sports (e.g. global games like the FIFA Women's World Cup), will see women opening their own paths. Women will seek to expand their influence in all areas, leading to long-term changes in policies and practices.

2 Rising insecurity

Ethno-supremacism, Marxist guerrilla movements, Islamic extremism, far right and far left extremism, populism, ethno-nationalism, and cyberattacks still remain as main turbulences that threaten global and regional peace, stability and present major obstacles to a more inclusive and just world as a result of the failure of leadership to address systematic inequalities and injustice in a polarized world. The rise of authoritarianism and tightening of censorship will drag progression of civil rights and damp freedom across the world, causing increased fear, anger, and xenophobia.

3 Increasing incidences of fake news & social unrest

Fake news will continue to be spread for the purpose of disinformation, propaganda aimed at political and economic power-seeking ends. The channels and the mechanisms, by which they are spread, will be improved. The processes of globalization, the big data phenomenon, and the lack of mechanisms for interpreting it, and the weakening of the definitions and understandings of truth, all strengthen the favorable soil for the spreading of fake news. These tendencies are all results of the decentralization and the erosion of power on the part of established institutions and authorities. In this 'post-truth,' era where unverifiable information proliferates and is maintained by uncontrolled social networks, we can expect to see a worldwide expansion of armies of trolls who seek to manipulate local and global public opinion | flooding media and networks indiscriminately. As a result, there will be an increase in social unrest, especially in countries where there will be electoral campaigns. Reasons for street mobilization will vary widely and include intervention for social justice, peace, security and development, despite continued apathy towards political elections in several Latin American and Caribbean countries, as a result of increased lack of trust in the political elite owing to growing transparency that reveals corruption and inefficiency in government.

With respect to economic matters:

4

Increasing formal unemployment and employment in the informal economy.

An ongoing trend of using AI/robotics to take over tasks and jobs previously done by humans will continue. In the developed economies, such as the US, perhaps spurred by the 2017 Tax Act, more workers will try their luck in the gig economy, working as independent contractors. The growth of the gig economy tends to continue the shift of responsibility for healthcare, benefits, and retirement savings to individuals and away from employers, with long-term consequences. The degree to which employers rely on freelance or adjunct workers increases the areas of critical uncertainty for everyone. People are seeing new, more meaningful ways to work and thrive and, as industry associations step up activities to help their members navigate a changing workforce by providing continuing learning and professional development, and help them pursue emerging business and employment opportunities. In the developing economies increasing informality will also prevail.

In Africa, e.g. the working age population (15 – 64 year olds) is projected to grow by 150% in the next 12 years. However, continent-wide, only three million formal jobs are created annually despite the ten to twelve million youth that enter the workforce each year. It is projected that high youth unemployment will in 2018 increase rural to urban migration; swell slum populations in cities; and increase the number of women in vulnerable employment which includes child labor, self-employment, non-paid care work, sex exploitation, illegal migrant work, and informal employment. This in turn is likely to deepen women's poverty on the continent (particularly among young women), increase violence against women and increase the violations of women's basic rights.

5

Decline in the use of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a measure of economic well-being and increasing attention to alternatives to growth as an economic meme measure

While Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which measures wealth and economic activity is one of the most well-known, powerful statistics in the world, driving a gamut of government policy, the fact is GDP figures do not reflect the reality of life for most people. GDP is failing to provide a sound economic paradigm from which to address the main challenges of our times. It is ceasing to be a measure of meaningful progress, and becoming part of the problem of economic inequality, climate change and social deprivation. The trend is growing to decrease the importance of GDP (which even the Financial

Times now makes a case against, see notes); and placing greater emphasis on alternative development approaches and new metrics of economic performance and well-being.

A growing number of voices are calling "growth" a toxic meme that limits our thinking and planning and is increasingly becoming recognized as being unsustainable. Alternative voices are urging us to use our intelligence to change our thinking and offering us evidence as to why we should heed the '2017 World Scientists' warning to humanity, in which over 15,000 scientists updated their 1992 warning, calling on individuals and governments to take the difficult decisions we need to help civilization survive. Changing the paradigm will challenge deeply held social and cultural beliefs and practices relating to population growth, resource overuse and many other issues. Everyone should read their paper (see Notes), consider alternatives such as a 'steady state economy', and see how they might apply this in their own lives.



6

Increasing attention to inequality and opportunity creation

Inequality continues to manifest itself in many arenas in the USA: education, employment, housing, healthcare,

immigration, policing, economic opportunity, and wealth creation. Some American industry associations are inspired to mitigate their own contributions to inequality and work to create access and opportunity. They see American inequality as the grand challenge of our time for associations. A growing number of local authorities, global conglomerates, and associations are starting to pursue policies aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion. This is happening despite the political tribalism that persists and is pushing for xenophobic immigration policies, trade restrictions, and diplomatic rules that perpetuate polarization. Countervailing forces increasingly call for institutions that can cultivate social cohesion at the community, national and international levels, to ensure a 'livable' future.

With respect to social issues:



7

Rising need for aged care services

Demographic changes are driving significant growth in the number of aging people in all matured economies and societies. This will put more and more pressure on many public health systems. Dementia will become a critically important health issue because researches indicate that the percentage of population suffering from dementia increases in proportion to the aging of societies. Demand for building long term care systems that are socially acceptable and financially sustainable will rise significantly in the decades to come.

8

Increase in older workforce in USA

The 65+ workforce was the fastest growing segment of the US workforce in 2017 and this will continue. From economic necessity or desire, more workers will plan to stay in the workforce well beyond their traditional retirement years. Healthy older people will increasingly be building new businesses, working on their personal health and fitness, and living active, engaged lives. Perhaps US society's fears that aging is a drag on the economy will not turn out to be true in the long-term.

9

Increasing conservative backlash on women's rights

The conservative backlash against women's rights over their bodies continues with the USA and Brazil as prime examples. No woman takes the decision to abort a baby lightly, and it should be her decision, not the decision of those in power, which are usually males. In Australia the laws vary from state to state, but most women will be able to access an abortion. They still need to be prepared to go through the time-consuming and often humiliating process of 'proving' they need one. Resist, resist, resist all the way.

In the realm of health:

10 Rise in chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Africa

Although communicable diseases remain a concern for Africa, the burden of disease is in fact shifting due to expanded prevention and treatment. Concurrent lifestyle and environmental changes across the continent such as consumption of energy dense foods, the increasing consumption of alcohol and tobacco as well as decreasing physical activity due to the sedentary nature of work, modernized modes of transportation, and increased urbanization are ushering in the rise of non-communicable diseases (NCD's) i.e. cancer, cardiovascular diseases, hypertension and diabetes. These are expected to be on the rise on the continent in 2018 and will disproportionately affect women.

11 The rise of the microbiome in medicine

Coming from nowhere and heading towards an explosion of research, applications and potential solutions for health issues such as diabetes, obesity, Alzheimer's, auto-immune conditions and autism, is knowledge about humans' microbiome. In particular the microorganisms living in our gut which help us digest food, produce beneficial and harmful chemicals, control infections by pathogens, regulate our immune system, and even control some emotions. The science around our microbiome is in its early stages, but has progressed far beyond pro-biotics and food fermentation fads – it is a trend well worth watching.

12 Increasing depression globally, especially in women

Depression affects more than 300 million people all over the world, with women being a majority. It results from a complex interaction of social, psychological and biological factors. In Mexico e.g., economic problems are the number reason. The following political-economic events can lead to increased depression: threat of wars, increase in climate catastrophes and loss of life, changes in trade rules that impact economic opportunity e.g. NAFTA renegotiation, uninspiring electoral contests, and monetary and fiscal policies that impact employment opportunities.



With respect to environmental matters:

13

Decreasing attention to climate change policies among conservatives

The denial by governments and fossil-fuel-lobbied politicians that human actions are major contributing factors to climate change, and their continuing refusal to phase out fossil fuels, will hamper effective climate actions globally and domestically as nations continue to defer or cut back sustainable environmental policies – especially energy related.

14

Increasing climate events and catastrophes

Increasingly, large-scale death and destruction will occur due to aggressive climate changes including floods, mudslides, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, hurricanes, and tsunamis. These disruptive socio-organizational phenomena will not come in isolation, but will multiply their effects when several occur together. Humanity's ability to prevent or recover from such disasters will be reveal our increasingly fragile and decreased resilience, despite all the efforts made by governments and international aid associations to take care of them. This in turn will impact the financial industries both the insurance sector and the real estate and infrastructure investment sector in diverse and possibly divergent ways.



15

Increasing attention to ocean contamination and improvements needed for solid waste management especially plastic

The increasing visibility of plastic wastes in the oceans is bringing home to more consumers the devastating consequences of improper waste management especially in middle income countries of the Caribbean and Africa and middle income communities in Asia, as even poor fisher folk and fishing communities are being affected by contaminated beaches and estuaries and urban coastlines. There are increasing calls for improvements in solid waste management, for recycling improvements, and for tougher laws. There is also a rise in environmental movements in urban areas within developing countries and increasing pressure on governments, especially from youth and women's movements, to ban non-decomposable plastics.

In the realm of the technological

16

Increasing penetration of mobile technologies in Africa

While only 10% of global Internet users came from Africa, the phenomenal growth of the mobile economy has expanded internet access throughout the continent by 8,503% between 2000 and 2017. Although there is a 7% gender gap with more men than women likely to own a bank account; and women on average are about 10% less likely to own a mobile phone than men, in one study, 88% of women indicated that mobile phones enabled them to increase their economic participation. In 2018, we anticipate a higher penetration of mobile phones, which will broaden African women's access to financial services, help mobilize greater household savings and help marshal capital for investments among women in the continent.

17

Increasing adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and ICT across all sectors and societies

The subject of the artificial intelligence is a mighty megatrend, around which so many forecasts are built, as are anticipations for how we will live in the future, that AI might well be considered a self-fulfilling prophecy. Yet AI improvements may prove to be risky for industries, which plan their production, design, and marketing. In 2018, expect breakthroughs concerning AI in the spheres of machine learning, as well as in both Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR). There will also be growing adoption of ICT technologies by all sectors across all societies globally including finance (e.g., bitcoin), and health tech (e.g., telemedicine). These in turn will lead to increase in cybercrime, and increasingly complex crimes which are more difficult to control. From identity thefts to virtual kidnappings, new crimes will emerge in keeping with rate of uptake of increasingly sophisticated technology that can also be exploited by criminals and hackers.

18

Ascent of renewable energy adoption owing to the rise of battery longevity, charging speed, efficiency and infrastructure

Nearly every day sees a new announcement around battery technology driven by the ascent of renewable energy, electric vehicles and omnipresent personal devices viz; 'Super aluminium-graphene battery has a 5-second charging time;' 'Mercedes Benz makes new home battery modules to compete with Tesla Powerwall;' 'Ten giga-battery scale factory projects in China, Europe and USA;' 'Air-Breathing Aqueous Sulphur Flow Battery for breakthrough ultralow cost energy storage;' 'Solid State Battery Electric cars could have over 600 mile range in 2020-2024;' etc., etc. This will continue to be true in 2018 and, despite the climate naysayers, s look for increasing use of renewable technologies in both the transportation and construction industries. We also see a rising trend for the use of so-called "waste-heat" from in industrial processes as a power source.



CAVEATS

‘Praemonitus, Praemunitus’ – ‘Forewarned is forearmed’

No one prophesied the roar made by women around the world who stood up by the millions to declare a new agenda on January 21, 2017. That Women’s March on Washington morphed into a worldwide protest with some 3-5 million people participating in over 400 marches in the USA and some 673 more across every continent – even as far south as Antarctica. While, many of the rallies were originally aimed at signaling deflection points with the new American Presidential administration, the overarching goals of the rallies were to advocate legislation and policies regarding human rights and other issues, including women’s rights, immigration reform, healthcare reform, reproductive rights, the natural environment, LGBTQ rights, racial equality, freedom of religion, and workers’ rights. It was the largest single-day protest in U.S. history a signal of the rising tide of “unreasonable” women who refuse to be sidelined – a sign of things to come.

The above trends represent the perspectives of a few women futurists – some of whom would count themselves among the ‘unreasonable women’ who are trying to change the shape of our shared future. Hopefully, watching these trends will help you face the future with more sense, or if not, at the very least help to reduce the future shock and anxiety you have about the encroaching uncertainties. It might be worthwhile to seek out like-minded friends in your micro-clans to exchange ideas about how these trends may impact you and identify coping or winning strategies. Or you might ignore them all together, avoid the news of any further lists of things to watch, while escaping to one of the newest of designer retreats in virtual or actual reality. Take note, there is a reason why Ayahuasca retreats are booming, and states everywhere are seeking to cash in on the cannabis industry. Somewhere over the rainbow on the causal plane, I foresee ‘Providentia wearing a Mona Lisa smile’.



NOTES:

Financial Times Notes on GDP

<https://www.ft.com/content/765781fe-f136-11e7-b220-857e26d1aca4>

Scientists on Growth as an Economic Meme

<https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/67/12/1026/4605229>

About the Microbiome

<http://www.gutmicrobiotaforhealth.com/en/news-watch/>

Ayahuasca Retreats

<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2016/jun/07/peru-ayahuasca-drink-boom-amazon-spirituality-healing>

Women’s March in Antarctica

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2017/01/21/womens-march-on-washington-antarctica/96882184/>

ABOUT THE FUTURISTAS



Guillermina Baena Paz Ph.D. (Mexico)

Dr. Guillermina Maria Eugenia Baena Paz is Vice President of IberoAmerican Region of the World Futures Studies Federation. She is also Manager of the Seminary of Prospective Studies of the National Autonomous University of Mexico; a Writer and Consultant:

<http://investigacion.politicas.unam.mx/semprospectiva> and www.prospectiva.mx

Tanja Hichert (South Africa)

Tanja Hichert (MBA, M.Phil Futures Studies cum laude) is a futurist based in Cape Town, South Africa who works all over the world. In addition to running [Hichert & Associates](#), she is a research associate at Stellenbosch University's [Centre for Complex Systems in Transition](#), serves on the board of the [Association of Professional Futurists](#), and is a co-founder of the [Foresight for Development](#) platform.



Jennifer Jarratt (USA)

Jennifer Jarratt, is Co-founder and Principal, Leading Futurists LLC, Washington, DC. Jennifer has been working since 1984 on wide-ranging futures activities. She is a recognized leading thinker and author among futurists on human resources and social/demographic change.

Patricia Kelly (Australia)

Dr Patricia Kelly, SFSEDA, works with the Division of Information Technology, Engineering and the Environment at the University of South Australia. She supports staff and students through transformative education; embedding teamwork, intercultural skills, ethics and sustainability into the engineering program.



June Lo (Australia)

June Lo, is a futurist based in Sydney. She is the author of the Future of Food: Food for a healthy, sustainable and diversified future (2013), the Future of Peace (2014), the Future of Family (2015), the Future of Sustainable Developments: 5 Questions (2016) and the Future of Sustainable Developments-Sequel (2017).



Alethia Berenice Montero Baena (Mexico)

Alethia Montero Baena is a Psychofuturartist, WFS Mexican Chapter Director, Forward Theater pioneer in LA, Co-creator of Psychoprospective, WFSF, APF member, national and international lecturer, workshop coordinator, teacher.

Marsha Rhea, CAE (USA)

Marsha Rhea, is President, Signature I, LLC (USA). Signature i helps leaders of associations and nonprofits discover, plan and do their signature work in the world. I tend to look for large patterns of change that raise important questions about our future. We are facing unresolved questions in three areas that directly concern my association clients.



Katindi Sivi-Njonjo (Kenya)

Founder and lead consultant, LongView Consult - specializes in socio-economic research, policy analysis, foresight strategy. Longview consult exists to help people develop the art of re-perceiving - to recognize that life will change, must change and has changed. Old perceptions are no longer valid but new ones are possible.

Mariana Todovora Ph.D. (Bulgaria)

Dr. Mariana Todorova (Future Studies), is an Assistant Professor at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. She was a Member of Parliament and Deputy Chair Person of her parliamentary group, and previously managed a local office of the European Parliament in Bulgaria. A former advisor to the President of the Republic of Bulgaria, Todorova currently serves as head of the Bulgarian Node of Millennium project.



ABOUT THE CURATOR



Claire A. Nelson Ph.D. (USA)

Dr. Claire Nelson is a Futurist and Sustainability Engineer and is Ideation Leader of The Futures Forum, a research and education and consultancy practice based in metro Washington DC. She is recognized as a leading thinker on the nexus between strategic foresight and development planning. A member of the Editorial Board of the Journal of Futures Studies, her public interest project involves the role of futures studies in addressing grand global challenges, corporate social responsibility and the Agenda 2030 SDGs, and transmedia storytelling.



OUR PROPOSITION

At The Futures Forum, we believe that the key to creating sustainable futures is the ability of decision makers to understand and treat with the dynamics of exponential change for organizations, institutions and communities at the local, national and global levels.

OUR GPS

thefuturesforum@gmail.com

www.thefuturesforum.org

202.634.2510

@sagientfuturist

© January 2018

