

The Family of the Future: An Analysis of Scenario Studies on Families

by *Vanessa Watkins and Cornelia Daheim*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Does the currently booming discourse on the future bring new and diverse ideas about the future of the family with it? In a comparison of 10 current future-oriented studies (backgrounds range from corporate to academic), all studies see socio-demographic developments as key to the future of the family (demographics, new living arrangements, migration etc.). None of the scenarios paints a future without families or a revival of extended family principles, but ideas range from an ongoing pluralization of living forms and styles to a re-traditionalization of the family to a diffusion of its borders. The subjects of social gaps and social security as well as the compatibility of work, family, and free time, especially from a perspective of gender roles, are also considered as key. But the striking lack of really “new” visions on the future of the family in these studies can at least partially be explained as a societal phenomenon of a time that is still focused on visions of the last decades and that is at the same time critical of utopias and visions as such. Furthermore, the family is not regarded as a driving force of societal change, but as a dependent element, and the lack of visions is also a consequence of the low interest of social sciences and humanities in questions of the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Vanessa Watkins is senior foresight consultant at Z_punkt's Cologne office. She consults public and corporate clients, such as BASF, Henkel, and Deutsche Telekom in innovation and scenario projects. She currently also contributes her expertise to an EU project on innovation futures in Europe and researches future global challenges for the think tank Millennium Project. Her academic focus lies on changes in values and lifestyles as well as socio-cultural transformations. Before entering the field of

futures research she graduated with excellence from the University of Lüneburg in cultural theory, art and visual studies, and cultural informatics, and was employed at the Institute for Cultural Theory.

Cornelia Daheim is Z_punkt's managing director. She supervises projects for key customers from several industries and within the framework of European research networks. She is founder and head of the Millennium Project's German node and corresponding member of the European Foresight Monitoring Network. She majored in literature studies, English, and Psychology.

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INTRODUCTION

Will the booming debate on the future also result in new, diverse ideas on the future of the family? This article intends to present an overview of existing future visions from trend and futures research. First off, the result: Futurology has little to say about the family. However, it is worth the trouble to take a close look at what little material there is. In the conclusion to this article, we have outlined our theories on the reasons for this dearth of visionary and pragmatic designs on the future of families.

For this article, we limited ourselves to analyzing scenario studies that, as a rule, are either explorative or projective. This restriction was to ensure that all statements could be compared with each other. Also, our scenario database—an archive of all freely available scenario studies published since 1990 (250 in total)—provides sufficient material. Scenarios offer coherent descriptions of future conditions; i.e., they consider several trends simultaneously and, based on these, create portraits of alternative possible futures. In addition to restrict-

Vanessa Watkins is senior foresight consultant at Z_punkt's Cologne office.
E-mail watkins@z-punkt.de.

Cornelia Daheim is managing director of Z_punkt: The Foresight Company.
E-mail daheim@z-punkt.de.

ing ourselves to scenario studies, criteria for selection were a good balance of authors' backgrounds (i.e., scenarios from the science and business communities and public institutions), medium time horizon (post-2020 and pre-2030), and strong relevance to the topic. Only 10 of the archived scenarios touch upon the issue of families, and a mere six of these give concrete statements on their possible future. Following extended further research, we decided to also include scenario studies with short time horizons (2010–2015), three trend-based articles or essays with short descriptions of family scenarios, and a 1972 study on the "Future of Marriage." This article is now based on a total of 10 studies. (See Table 1, pp. 128-129.)

Only three of these are fully focused on the "future of families." The others focus on various issues and only touch upon the impact on families. Three authors have a look at the future of women and, in this context, also write about families. Two studies use everyday family life to illustrate the advantages of future communication technologies. Both were commissioned by corporate clients.

ANALYZING THE SCENARIO STUDIES

The 10 scenario studies may vary widely, yet their drivers are in parts similar. One factor that plays a role in all studies could be summarized as "socio-demographic developments." This is not surprising, as some demographic parameters can be easily described in quantitative terms and extrapolated into the future, for instance by forecasting future rates of birth and migration. A majority of the scenarios mention the aging of the global (and specifically European) population. More than half of the scenarios address the pluralization of family types—i.e., decoupling of parenthood and marriage, increasing numbers of single parents, single-person households, multicultural families, or families with migration backgrounds. Less often mentioned is the increase of other forms of communal living, such as multigenerational households, homosexual partnerships, or communes with family-type responsibilities. None of the scenarios imag-

ines a future without families.

Below are three subchapters that focus on the most interesting differences, beginning with the organization of labor and the much-debated career–life balance, followed by the widening social divide and its effect on families. Finally, we present an outlook on future family structures and social value change.

Balancing Work and Family Life

Almost all scenarios comment on the currently much-deplored difficulty of balancing family, work, and leisure. There is overwhelming consensus that any desirable future should achieve a better balance among these three key aspects of life. Disagreement exists on how this is to be realized, the role played by technology, whether one solution would be men assuming more responsibility for transductive labor (homemaking and raising children), or if we should aspire to comprehensively reorganize working life.

A majority (seven of 10) of the scenarios considers the organization of labor a factor that will impact tomorrow's families. These scenarios can be roughly divided into those that see a solution for balancing issues in a convergence of working and private lives and those that describe a comprehensive restructuring of the organization of labor.

In "Family and Daily Life in 2017," Birthe Linddal Hansen and Julie Kronstrom of the Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies put the case for convergence: One scenario assumption says that, no later than 2017, a majority of Europeans will be employed in the knowledge and service sector. Core organizational tasks will be handled by technologies (not described in detail) while the European labor force focuses on more sophisticated activities. In the course of this development, boundaries between work, leisure, and family life dissolve. Work is no longer tied to set times and places, but may be adapted to one's life situation: "Moving toward 2017, we will increasingly stop thinking of our life as dichotomies. Instead, we will see work, leisure

and family life as things that are related and that cannot be separated” (Hansen 2006).

The RAND Corporation’s scenario study “Living Tomorrow,” commissioned by Deutsche Telekom, also looks to technology to fix the balancing issue: Instant messaging, wireless and video-supported BlackBerrys, as well as, naturally, e-mail make it possible to work anywhere in the world and maintain contact with one’s family: “[W]orking from home is also normal. [Workers] have access (secured by digital identity systems with combined biometric and voice recognition) to the same advanced configurations as at work: large digital flat screens and fast connection to IT infrastructures. This helps balance family, friends and work commitments” (Rand 2005, 26). In 2015, the growing pressure of an increasingly service-oriented German economy forces more and more couples to live apart for longer periods of time. Yet here, too, the authors see a solution in high-tech communication: Parents may log into their kids’ screen and help with homework or provide support. Consequently, the scenario states, “sheer physical proximity need not be an absolute prerequisite for family cohesion.” Wordings are carefully kept gender-free, but it remains unclear whether this development is accompanied by a dissolution of the traditional father and mother roles (RAND 2005, 14).

The belief that tearing down existing barriers between work and personal life, seasoned with a little high tech, would do wonders for future family life is also the focus of the TNS infratest scenario “Speed, Networks, and Risk” (commissioned by Siemens AG), one of the two “Horizons2020” scenarios. Here, too, boundaries between work and leisure have blurred, yet the descriptions are considerably more critical in tone: “The home is no longer a place where people occasionally complete urgent work or the classic home office of yesteryear, but a regular place of work, alongside the office. Ubiquitous working is also commonplace, with many people now working on the fly, using lounge areas in malls, train stations and airports and even their own cars as an ‘out-of-office office’” (TNS infratest 2005, 113).

The authors of “Speed, Networks, and Risk” see the market take on a defining social role in Europe: Deregulation of markets lets the European economy enjoy an extended boom, but society has to pay the price of an increased social divide. This also impacts on the wish to balance work and family life. Only people with skills that are in high demand are able to tailor their work time models to suit the needs of their family situation (TNS infratest 2005, 84f.). They are also commonly able to punctuate their working lives with extended breaks, either for continuing education or personal growth experiences. “Less valuable” workers hardly seem to have the opportunity to do so, even though this is only hinted at in the scenario. However, the authors repeatedly emphasize that only wealthier segments are able to afford employing several domestic helpers and have two or more homes (“concierge living” and “couples living apart together” are mentioned). Furthermore, the authors conclude that the emphasis on partnerships revolving around raising children and the family’s role as the “germ cell” of society will lessen considerably (TNS infratest 2005, 102).

“Equality, Freedom, and Modesty,” the second “Horizons2020” scenario, is explicitly labeled as child-friendly, describing a rudimentarily reorganized world of work. The scenario is characterized by a strong state, rather weak economic growth, and a strong feeling of solidarity within the population. So what would, in the eyes of the authors, be a child and family-friendly solution to the balancing issue? The catchphrase is “rediscovery of the joy of taking things slowly.” By 2020, work has become generally less intensive, and many firms have introduced a kind of “siesta culture” (staff may take two to three hours off during the day) and job-sharing models. Also, “governments have set up sufficient childcare facilities to enable people to successfully reconcile career and family life in all European countries” (TNS infratest 2005, 30).

Heike Kahlert of the Centre for Gender Studies and Feminist Futures Studies adds the aspect of explicit gender equality to the basic concept of “Equality, Freedom, and Modesty” and arrives at these

conditions somewhat differently. Her scenario, titled “The Detraditionalisation of Patriarchy in the 21st Century,” is part of the intuitive scenario process “Zukunftsbilder.” She describes how, following widespread shock over falling birthrates, the German government introduces comprehensive child-care facilities, all-day schools, and democratic sharing of child-rearing responsibilities between social and biological parents. “A wide variety of homo- and heterosexual and/or multigenerational forms of living and loving fully replaced the ideal of the nuclear family” (Kahlert 2004, 127). By 2031, it has long become clear that there isn’t sufficient work for everyone in Europe, shrinking populations and growing corporate profits notwithstanding. New labor models with radically shorter working hours, job sharing, job rotation, and time accounts prevail everywhere and across all generations (Kahlert 2004, 127). It is striking how—in the face of widely diverging worldviews—there are few differences with regard to suggestions for balancing careers and family life between a study commissioned by Siemens and that of a member of the Centre for Gender Studies and Feminist Future Studies.

In their 1996 scenario study *The Future of Women*, Americans Pamela McCorduck and Nancy Ramsey do not differ fundamentally from the above, yet they deliberate on the social obstacles that hinder a successful introduction of family-friendly measures in corporate environments. Many employees, they write, have for quite some time had the opportunity to benefit from family-friendly corporate policies, but most people were afraid to use them, believing (correctly) that their managers would question their commitment and ambition. In their “Age of Equality” scenario, this fact motivates an ever-growing number of firms to open formerly family-specific offers to *all* employees, irrespective of family status and position. These offers include, e.g., a shift from time-focused to results-focused corporate cultures, flexible working hours organized in team-internal agreements, the option of taking unused sick days as leave days, and on-premises child-care facilities, cleaning businesses, health centers,

pharmacies, and ATMs (McCorduck and Ramsey 1996, 114).

McCorduck and Ramsey become more radical with a future event where some countries start paying (mostly) women for work that they had previously done for nothing: principally tasks such as “cooking, cleaning, washing, taking care of children, the sick, and the old. The reality of even token pay brought men into the business of caregiving, especially as they grew older” (McCorduck and Ramsey 1996, 83).

“Creative Societies,” one of five visions for Europe written in 1999 by the European Commission’s Forward Studies Unit, also focuses on the restructuring of labor. By 2010, a central European government enables people to take on activities that offer an alternative to traditional work: “All Europeans were given the right to devote several years of their working life to collectively useful tasks that would not find a buyer in a strict market economy: services of general interest, cultural events, work in non-profit-making associations, services for the poor or even rearing children. This entitlement has been set at five years full-time throughout the Union. It is left to individuals to decide how to split this time up over their lifetime, depending on their plans and commitments (some will prefer to take periods of sabbatical leave, others will continue to work but will set aside a third or a quarter of their time for nonremunerable activities). Depending on the country, between 7 and 15% of Europeans are taking advantage of this facility” (European Commission 1999, 42). In addition, a European Directive on lifelong working time management lets people move easily among the business, public, and nonprofit sectors and periods of training and sabbatical by guaranteeing universal social protection.

Increasing Social Divides and the Impact on the Family

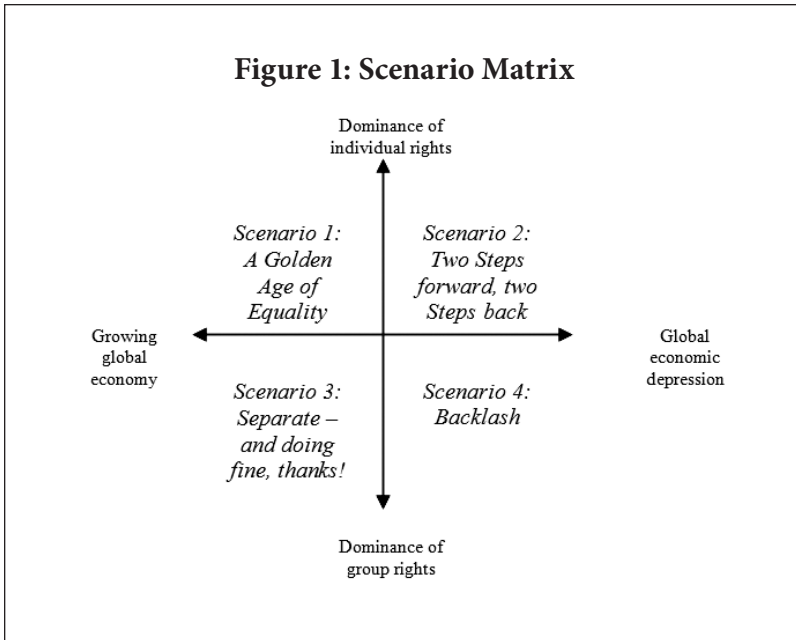
In the future, the pressure on social protection systems in Western societies will grow—a statement echoed by most of the studies, with one-half of them discussing the danger of a widening social di-

vide and its impact on families. Four of the five scenario studies explicitly state that increased social inequality particularly affects women. The four studies that see a connection between social equality and a gender-equitable family life are *The Future of Women*, “Zukunftsbilder,” “Great Transition,” and “Horizons2020.” The *Europe*-scenarios of the European Commission discuss the impact of a social rift without explicitly mentioning the role of women.

In their scenarios in *The Future of Women*, McCorduck and Ramsey engage most intensively with the relationship between social inequality and gender relations and its impact on families, and even base the design of their four scenarios on it. The first driving force is “development of the global economy.” The second driving force describes the “tensions between individual and group rights.” This very basic structure results in four scenarios for 2015 (see Figure 1).¹ The authors connect the degree of social inequality on national and international level with the economic, horizontal axis. Two scenarios (“Backlash” and “Two Steps Forward, Two Steps Back”) describe a world suffering under economic depression and with a strong growth of global poverty. The consequences are a major increase in global migration, an aggravated global security situation, and growing unemployment. In Western industrial nations, social protection systems are dismantled, hurting first and foremost socially vulnerable families, in particular female family members, single parents, and female pensioners living alone.

The vertical axis shows the significance of religious, political, or national rights, affecting how strongly states push for free access to education and information, how rigorously domestic violence offences are prosecuted, or how ownership is managed within families.

It’s interesting that the scenarios with dominating group rights (“Backlash” and “Separate—and doing fine, thanks!”) both depict social spheres strongly segregated by gender. The scenario “Backlash” describes how, as the result of a global depression, religious and fun-



damentalist groups grow in strength and women experience dramatic restrictions of their personal rights. Public and domestic violence skyrocket, and by 2015,² women have largely been squeezed out of the public sphere. Notwithstanding the fact that only very few families are able to survive on one wage alone, female employment is socially discredited and not politically encouraged. Women who have to work nonetheless are paid less and are the first to be fired.

The scenario “Separate—and doing fine, thanks!” shows a society with dominating group rights in times of a global boom. In 2015, equality remains a notional political objective in Western industrial nations, yet actually takes low priority. Following an extended, unsuccessful struggle for gender equality, women withdraw and create a “parallel society” of sorts: “It began to seem as if women had psychologically checked out: Out of the economy, out of the day-to-day issues of politics, even out of traditional worship and arts. Their energies went into women’s versions of these structures, and the adventure and risk of living separately gave them unique zest” (McCorduck

and Ramsey 1996, 191).

A rapidly growing number of women prefer to use the help of modern reproductive medicine to practice independent family planning. Marriage offers few advantages and too many disadvantages, from economic and legal restrictions to the fact that men's and women's ideas of partnership, love, and education diverge so strongly that there is but little common ground left.³ Hence, many women raise their children on their own or together with female members of their family of origin. In addition, a growing number of women work in female-led companies, having been frustrated by "glass ceilings" that deny access to the top executive positions. They send their daughters to girls' schools, hire only female trades people, see only female doctors, and drop out from participating in public, male-dominated life.

McCorduck and Ramsey have a clear message: Gender equality has to be actively pursued and defended by authorities and institutions, or power structures won't change. If society comes under increased economic pressure—which enhances social divides—it will always be its weakest members who suffer. In almost all societies, women are part of this group. Traditionally, they are responsible for unpaid family work, and where they suffer, so do children and those in need of care. An excerpt from "Backlash" in 2015 describes this causal relationship as follows:

All across the industrialized world, demographers had noted the steady rise in single-person and single-parent households for the last three decades of the twentieth century. (...) But few societies made provisions for this large group of women-headed households, and none was adequate. Single mothers still struggled to find affordable childcare while they worked, and they were burdened with household responsibilities they could barely meet. (...) By the second decade of the new century, large numbers of women were entering old age without any organized outside help to speak of. Governmental agencies lacked the funds

and expertise to offer the kind of help needed, and daughters, those standbys of the elderly, were no longer available to offer care. It was common to see frail great-grandmothers looking in futility for help to grandmothers, who in turn looked for help to mothers, a generation of women run ragged by their multiple obligations to husband, children, and their own job (McCorduck 1996, 43).

The scenarios *Zukunftsbilder* of the Centre for Gender Studies and Feminist Futures Studies and “Great Transition” of the Global Scenario Group (GSG) may be less explicit when it comes to describing the dramatic impacts of an increasing social divide on socially disadvantaged families, but in principle see the same connection. One example comes from the Delphi survey conducted by Karola Maltry et al. for the book *Zukunftsbilder*: Most participating experts assume that, overall, personal circumstances of women will improve, but a widening gap will exist between well-qualified and well-paid women and underprivileged women. They expect a double or multiple burden for socially disadvantaged women—in addition to their own domestic obligations, they will have to shoulder the family responsibilities of affluent women (Maltry et al. 2004, 22 f.).

In its scenario “The Great Transition,” the GSG also emphasizes the connection between social justice and gender justice. Focusing on the role of policy makers, the GSG advances the view that social justice can be achieved by guaranteeing a basic income. The authors think that this measure would both fight poverty and strengthen the economic independency of women, and in this way promote gender justice (SEI/GSG 2002, 63).

“Horizons2020,” the study commissioned by Siemens, differs from the other studies that link social justice and a more gender-equitable family life. There may be consensus that gender equality will benefit from increasing social justice, but the TNS infratest scenario “Speed, Networks, and Risk” in “Horizons2020” does not share

the reverse conclusion—i.e., that increased social divides will hit female family members the hardest. Rather, its authors describe a dissolution of gender roles.

However, the scenario offers no explanation for this “hybridization of gender roles.” The study’s dissimilar position is most likely not the result of different data or diverging assumptions on the impacts of an increasing social divide. Rather, the authors probably see no conflict between growing inequality in society and a dissolution of traditional roles. It could be that the dissolution of gender roles highlights the fact that their market-oriented scenario focuses on the individual (and not the community). The increased instability and fluidity of social prestige is also conferred on gender roles and identities.

Family Structures and Social Value Change

As has been mentioned above, the scenarios’ most conspicuous common ground consists of their assumptions on socio-demographic developments, but the authors differ in their conclusions. The latter range from extrapolating the oft-described trend toward a pluralization of lifestyles to a re-traditionalization of families or their partial dissolution.

A large majority of the scenarios describes worlds that continue to grant great social significance to the family in the future. In her book *The Future of Family*, Christina Hardyment motivates this as follows:

Despite increases in cohabitation, divorce and single parenthood, the family is still what matters most to the vast majority of people [...] “Married couples and single parents are equally likely to put family members before themselves and see family life as more important than their individual careers,” concluded Cambridge researcher Jacqueline Scott after a trawl through 1997 social attitudes data (Hardyment 1998, S. 28 f.).

Against this backdrop, and inferred from a large number of historical studies and analyses of today's families, Hardyment develops a future vision of the "maypole family." This future family has few aunts, uncles, or cousins, and it seems ever more unlikely that the nuclear family will survive much longer in its original constellation. Typically, Hardyment says, families will have a long, four-generational stem, stabilized by a changing number of "family strands" in the form of lifelong friends, in-laws, and children from remarriages, godparents and godchildren:

Let's take an image from folklore and christen it 'maypole family': long and thin, and with any number of strands winding and unwinding around it. A powerful and supportive structure, it will be, in the vast majority of cases, the first resort in a crisis (Hardyment 1998, 56).

This image of tomorrow's family shines through in most scenario studies, be it one option among many ("Horizons2020," *The Future of Women, Zukunftsbilder*) or as an implicit assumption not described in detail ("Living Tomorrow," in parts also "Family Life & Daily Life in 2017").

Another interesting aspect of Hardyment's study should be mentioned here. She writes that, in recent decades, use of the contraceptive Pill deferred parenthood by some 10 years, from the early 20s to the early 30s. Hardyment assumes that advanced medical options for a more flexible conception period will result in a second shift by at least 10 years, which might solve the issue of balancing career and family almost "on its own":

Parenthood could be a signal for semi-retirement; the prelude to the second life after fifty that is becoming such a marked feature of society. The tensions of women's juggling act between work and family would disappear. Retired and semi-retired parents could also take more positive part in the schooling process

itself (Hardyment 1998, 40).

Hardyment considers an increased interconnection of education and conception periods—e.g., by actively promoting an integration of higher education and having children—as one alternative to parenthood as a form of early retirement.

In the book *Zukunftsbilder*, Nina Köllhofer proclaims the dissolution of the traditional nuclear family. As a well-established future lifestyle, she describes the “Lifecom-Femfamily,” a family-like, legally fully responsible living unit in a globalized, sustainable world:

Only few traditional nuclear families based on blood ties remain. [...] Like most members of the Progressive Global Generation, we—my ‘lifecom-femfamily’—live in a flexible multiperson household consisting of several units, occasionally subdivided according to career demands, since the ‘Mobiles’ among us operate in different LifecomS around the world (Köllhofer 2004, 189).

Partnerships revolving around children have also fallen out of favor in the “Horizons2020” scenario “Speed, Networks, and Risk.” However, there are no details as to how reproduction and child rearing are handled (TSN infratest 2005, 102).

The last interpretation of social value change is the re-traditionalization of family structures mentioned above. McCorduck and Ramsey give the most detailed description of this possible development, but it is also presented by Christopher B. Jones and Karola Maltry and her colleagues. This re-traditionalization could be based on arguments that are already well established, easily evident in an excerpt of the RAND Corporation’s study “Living Tomorrow.” Here, women’s increased demands are identified as the main driving force behind changed family structures in 2015:

[O]ther [family] models have become increasingly common. Couples have fewer children, as more women postpone moth-

erhood to achieve professional and personal objectives. More people live alone or with partners outside marriage, and there are more single parent families (RAND 2005, 14).

It is precisely this linking of women's ambitions with the structural change of families that is the driving force in McCorduck and Ramsey's re-traditionalization scenario "Backlash." In the name of family values, women become scapegoats and are held responsible for a society's moral decline:

For at least these two decades, Christian and Islamic fundamentalist religious leaders in the West and Middle East alike had already found a fascinated following when, disguised in various code words, such as "family values" or "true faith" they implied that most of the troubles people were suffering—crime, poverty (...) failing schools, adolescent anomie, tribal violence—could be laid squarely at the feet of women. It was women's unseemly, even unnatural, ambition for themselves that had caused them to neglect their duty to their husband and children and upset the old, peaceful, and God-ordained order (McCorduck 1996, 22f.).

Heike Kahlert, author of the scenario study *Zukunftsbilder*, outlines in her scenario "Re-traditionalisation of the Patriarchy" how the fixation of gender mainstreaming on the concept of gender difference promotes the resurgence of conservative gender images. In the basic income payment rankings, long-term or full-time housewives or homemakers are correspondingly rewarded. The costs have to be borne by the childless, with women having to pay a "birth tax" (Kahlert 2004, 128).

THEORIES ON THE UTOPIAN VACUUM "FAMILY"

One insight of this article, already perceptible in the long search for suitable scenario studies but also reconfirmed in the analysis of

the 10 available scenarios, is the remarkable quantitative and qualitative dearth—with few exceptions—of novel visions for the family in futurology.

It is interesting that in their studies several of the scenarios' authors arrive at a similar conclusion. In 1972, Professor Jessie Bernhard concluded from her research on utopias discussing the future marriage that “strangely enough, most writers of utopias—practically all of whom are men—have paid remarkably little attention to marriage. That in itself is revealing” (Bernard 1972, 186). On the other hand, she finds visionary elements in the writings of the women's movement of her time.

Twenty-four years later, Pamela McCorduck and Nancy Ramsey come to a very similar résumé in their enquiry into futures research: “The Official Future will not take place. For women this is good news, because they are conspicuously absent from the Official Future. Study the work of such respected futurists as Paul Kennedy (*Preparing for the Twenty-First Century*) or Peter Drucker (*Post-Capitalist Society*) and ask yourself where half the world's population goes after it gives birth to ever more children” (McCorduck and Ramsey 1996, 5).

And yet again eight years later, in 2004, Karola Maltry and her colleagues contemplate whether the down-home, yet rather uninspired results of their Delphi survey on the future of women might indicate a general absence of visions for the future in today's feminist movement and conclude:

The fact that the specific conceptions of everyday life in 30 years' time differ so little from the reality of today's everyday life fits the overall trend: For women, our participants envisioned professional and family lives which were better, yet not fundamentally different. The predicted diversity of life is painted less as a new quality of societal life, but rather as an acquired and necessary social tolerance (Maltry et al. 2004, 57).

Why do so few visions of the future of women, of marriage and families exist? Or, if one may put the question more broadly: Why does there tend to be such a lack of social and cultural approaches in futures research?

In conclusion, we offer three theories.

Thesis 1: Long-term thinking correlates with political or social periods of radical change. We're still stuck with realizing visions from the 1970s.

In their introduction to *Zukunftsbilder*, Karola Maltry et al. advance the theory that, in times of political upheaval, few people ask whether thinking about the future is a sensible or “serious” activity. They find proof in the wealth of utopian writing from the 1970s:

However, the more a social movement ages, the more professional her policymaking and writings become, the less legitimate seem the speculative statements, the heroic fantasies, the great dreams and far-reaching, inspiring utopian visions handed down from the movement's dawn. Reformist strategies and scientific thought patterns take centre stage (Maltry et al. 2004, 12).

If we transfer this statement of Karola Maltry et al. to our subject, it seems likely that the absence of family utopias may stem from the fact that, for families, the period of new beginnings dates back even further. If the experts participating in the 2004 Delphi survey describe utopias identical to that of Jessie Bernhard in 1973—i.e., that child care and homemaking duties will be shared more equally—these demands are no less justified, yet can no longer be considered visionary, previously unthought and unheard-of novel concepts. This overall dearth of new concepts can be explained, at least in parts, by the fact that the visions and guiding principles of the 1970s have not yet been fully realized, or are still being realized, and that no new social movement has generated new visions. Still, one may reasonably ask whether deliberating on the future (in terms of optimistic utopian vi-

sions) makes sense. However, the situation is different with scenario studies, which integrate the findings of social sciences—e.g. on social barriers and glass ceilings. Scenarios such as McCorduck and Ramsey’s “Age of Equality” show that a perspective informed by science and focused on reform strategies need not be in conflict with thinking in long-time horizons and alternative futures. The usefulness of this combination is evident in their scenarios’ systematic development, and, in four clearly distinguished alternative visions, at least offers a hint on the wide-ranging changes imaginable for the future of families—and how far-reaching the implications could be not only for our social lives, but also for the economy, if we, on the one hand, factor in existing trends and the findings of social sciences, and on the other hand use these to systematically develop “new” future worlds.

Thesis 2: Future is equated with what’s new and different. On the hunt for would-be novelties we often overlook development paths which a more precise analysis of the present would render visible.

In his book *Übermorgen: Zukunftsvorstellungen als Elemente der gesellschaftliche Konstruktion von Wirklichkeit* (*Beyond Tomorrow: Visions of the Future as Elements in the Social Construction of Reality*), Gereon Uerz traces back occidental ideas of the future, valid to the modern age, to the Judean-Christian idea of salvation. Judaism and Christianity bring a vision of a coming state toward which the world moves and which differs profoundly from our past and present. Modern forward thinking also shares key qualities of “the New” and “the Different.” “In consequence, we examine the future, with very few exceptions, from the perspective of change, innovation, or renovation” (Uerz 2006, 422).

We believe that, when it comes to families, futurology’s strong focus on what’s new and different often obscures exciting issues in the future development of social sciences. When working on scenario processes, we have often noticed that finding the latest trends and in-

tegrating them into a scenario is far less interesting than taking a closer look at what's currently common or undisputed and then developing new development paths. One example is the often fascinating insights that come from the enquiries of social sciences into the reasons for the discrepancy between stated wishes and actual actions. Peter Manicas, futurologist and professor emeritus of sociology at the University of Hawaii, writes:

Social Science is potentially emancipatory in precisely the sense that it can show that, unwittingly, persons may well be acting in ways that are, in point of fact, contrary to their interests, contributing to their own oppression and, perhaps, also, to the destruction of the planet. Indeed, intended change requires that members have a grasp of the conditions of their activities and of their consequences. This is, of course, but the first step—but it is an absolutely essential first step (Manicas 1998, 403).

The futurologist community often neglects to move beyond searching for new themes, data, and facts and overlooks the findings offered by discourses in social sciences, which focus on the present.

Thesis 3: Families are no central driving force, they are primarily driven by other developments.

Rolf Kreibich, director of the Institut für Zukunftsstudien und Technologiebewertung GmbH in Berlin, writes that “[e]ven though the scientific approach to themes and strategies of the future was not limited to specific issues, a strong focus on scientific-technological problems is evident, also in Anglo-Saxon nations. This is undeniably down to the fact that we expect important insights into future developments to come primarily from where we consider the key driving forces of society to be. There can be no doubt that in industrial societies and during our current transition to knowledge societies, these forces can be found in the evolution of our paramount productive factors ‘science’ and ‘technology’” (Kreibich 2007, 180). This view is not uncommon among futurologists, even if it is not often stated this can-

didly. Social and cultural developments are seldom considered to be drivers of development (even if, e.g., the women's movement or the environmental movement could be used as counter-examples: Both were motivated by social value change and had far-reaching economic and political consequences). Rather, one may assume that futures research selects its issues based on an economic logic of exploitation, and/or opts for those publicly debated. One example for a study that received tremendous attention was the "Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change" published in 2006 (Stern 2006). Nicholas Stern's report, widely discussed at the time, showed in detail just how expensive non-action on climate change would be. Many politicians (including Tony Blair, John Howard, and Sigmar Gabriel) and representatives of NGOs (e.g., World Bank, Greenpeace, UN) and associations (e.g., IEA, Trades Union Congress) commented publicly. Ottmar Edenhofer, chief economist of the Potsdam-Institute for Climate Impact Research, declared the report to be a "Copernican turn in the history of climate policy" (cf. Edenhofer 2006). The fact that we lack a comparable example for a widely acclaimed publication on issues of social change shows how public attention and debate are currently focused on technology and the connection of ecology and the economy—families are not considered to have significant influence on "the tide of events," making visions of their future neither a focal point of public debate nor a major issue for futures research.

Thesis 4: Prejudices of social and cultural sciences against issues relevant for the future.

Even if debating the future seems to have become almost "fashionable," evident in recent years in issues such as demographic change and climate change, politics and futurology have remained at a distance, just as have science and futurology. The methods and approaches of futures research still have to make inroads into social science. Meinolf Dierkes, for many years director at the Social Science Research Center Berlin, already stated in 1996 that, except for the "short period" of the 1960s and 1970s, "in academia, futures research

continues to be considered as rather speculative and little reputable” (Dierkes 1996, 14). He wrote that “it is high time to not only fundamentally review this (pre)conception, but also overcome its implications for research programmes. The future is becoming an issue of such importance that social sciences will ignore it at their peril” (ibid).

But there are also voices in futurology, which call for more interest in social sciences among their own ranks. Eleonora Masini, professor emerita for futurology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, wrote:

On its part, futures studies has failed to show much interest in the social science, in part because of the latter’s reluctance to look ahead but also because of a certain disdain for established disciplines on the part of some futurists. This attitude prevented futurists from understanding the importance of sound field social research and indeed even made them unaware of what is actually happening in social dynamics and to people as members of societies (Masini 1998, 342).

The distance seems to come from both sides. We not only see a rapprochement of social sciences and futurology as offering hope for new visions on the future of families, but even consider it to be essential in times when families and the social sphere are at the interface of many key global (future) challenges, including demographic change, globalization, migration, food supply, or the road to sustainability. Both sides would gain from opening up and a mutual stimulation—the perspectives are manifold and remain to be seen, just as ultimately the future of the family.

NOTES

1. In Scenario 1, individual rights dominate and the global economy is enjoying robust growth. The result is “A Golden Age of Equality.” In Scenario 2, “Two Steps Forward, Two Steps Back,” the economy is

suffering from a global depression, while individual rights dominate globally. In the third scenario, “Separate, and Doing Fine—Thanks!” group rights—religious, political, tribal, or national—predominate, the global economy is robust. In Scenario 4, “Backlash,” a world of re-traditionalization comes as a result of dominating group rights and a global depression.

2. The scenarios’ base year is 1995—i.e., the authors describe developments over the course of 20 years.
3. The authors refer to a survey conducted among American adolescents in the mid-1990s, which found significant differences between girls’ and boys’ ideas for the future. Boys’ expectations regarding their adult family life emerged to be far more traditional than those of the girls’ (McCorduck 1996, 195).

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Table 1: Future of Families Studies, Methodologies

Background	Methodology	Title	Author / Client	Scenario Focus	Publication	Time Horizon	Relevance	Notes
Science	Scenario study (intuitive)	Zukunftsbilder	Karola Maltry et al. Centre for Gender Studies and Feminist Futures Studies	Future of Women (nine scenarios & Delphi results)	2004	2031	Marginal	A methodically unusual scenario—on the one hand, it relies on an intuitive approach (Delphi survey), on the other, the scenarios are the authors' individual interpretations and not mutually exclusive.
	Essay/Article (explorative)	The Future of Family	Christina Hardymnt	Future of the Family (one Scenario)	1998	-	Focus	The essay was published in the series "Predictions" and offers extensive descriptions of individual trend developments which the author eventually distills into a scenario.
	Scenario study (explorative)	Future of Women	Pamela Mc Corduck, Nancy Ramsey in cooperation with Global Business Network (Scenario Consultancy)	Future of Women (four scenarios)	1996	2015	Marginal	A systematic and detailed, classic scenario study.
	Article (explorative)	Futures of Women, Women of the Future	Christopher B. Jones, assistant professor of political science / published by the Hawaii Research Center of Future Studies (Jim Dator)	Future of Women in the US (five scenarios)	1993	-	Marginal	The article was used as a discussion paper and describes several trend-based, mutually exclusive scenarios, each only a few sentences in length.
	Study (explorative)	Future of Marriage	Jessie Bernard, professor emerita of sociology at Pennsylvania State University	Future of Marriage (no typical scenario study)	1972	-	Focus	The study begins by describing marriage from female and then male perspective before offering a comprehensive survey of utopias and visions on marriage.

Background	Methodology	Title	Author / Client	Scenario Focus	Publication	Time Horizon	Relevance	Notes
Public Institutions	Scenario study (projective)	Great Transition	Global Scenario Group / Stockholm Environment Institute, Boston & Tellus Group	Sustainable, global development (one scenario)	2002	-	Marginal	This projective scenario study aims to describe how a sustainable and just world might be achieved.
	Scenario study (explorative and intuitive)	Scenarios Europe 2010	Forward Studies Unit of the European Commission	Future of Europe (five scenarios)	1999	2010	Marginal	Traditional scenario study with a strong focus on economic and political structures.
Business	Article (not specified)	Family Life & Daily Life in 2017	Birthe Linddal Hansen & Julie Kronstrom / Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies	Family life (six scenarios)	2006	2017	Focus	Entertaining vision of future markets and products in daily family life.
	Scenario study (explorative and intuitive)	Horizons2020	TNS infratest / commissioned by Siemens AG	Impact of the economy, politics, the environment, technology, social values and structures on the future of communication (two scenarios)	2005	2020	Marginal	Traditional scenario study; two highly detailed scenarios, methodologically transparent. Product oriented, but not overwhelmingly so.
	Scenario study (intuitive)	Living Tomorrow	RAND Corporation ² commissioned by Deutsche Telekom	Social trends and the future of ICT (one scenario)	2005	2015	Marginal	A study light on insights and heavy on PR.

1. The Delphi method, developed by Project RAND members, became the most common forecasting method in the second half of the 1960s. It is a systematic survey of larger expert groups using two or more rounds of written questionnaires. The aim is to achieve consensus by providing everyone with the results and the anonymous opinions of all participants of the previous round (on the same issue). In the second "feedback round," all experts are asked to review their position (cf. Uerz 2006, 285).
2. Next to the Hudson Institute, the RAND Corporation under its director Herman Kahn was one of the preeminent centers of U.S. futures research in the 1960s (cf. Uerz 2006: 270).

