



## Profile

# Eleonora Masini: Nurturing visions of the future

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### Abstract

This profile is an overview of the remarkable career of Eleonora Barbieri Masini, the mother of Futures Studies, who dedicated her professional life to nurturing hopeful visions of the future. She was a leading proponent for studying the future and a reviewer of the field. An Italian sociologist, Masini was first influenced by French thinkers, then by the advocacy of Aurelio Peccei, co-founder of the Club of Rome, with whom she became a close friend. During the change swirling around her beloved Europe, as it struggled for post-war reconstruction, she helped establish the World Futures Studies Federation, taking this global network of futurists behind the Iron Curtain and into the developing world. She was always on the move, particularly seeking out and encouraging women to take seriously their special role in both envisioning and creating the future. Her own hope for the future, which she held against the tide, helped lift her beyond a bleak present.

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### 1. Introduction

The patchwork quilt of European politics was being repatterned, again. It had been clawed to tatters during two horrific wars that scattered social debris far and wide. Millions had died from explosives or in gas chambers. Other lives were wrecked. Cities lay demolished, their heritage ransacked or stolen. Under a nuclear shadow, a wall bisected Europe, dividing families and ideas between East and West. The communist Soviet Union, once a wartime ally, was the West's new enemy, along with North Korea and Vietnam.

By 1968, young people were in the streets from Berlin and Paris to Chicago and Mexico City. Change was rampant. To Mark Kurlansky [1], this was the birth of postmodernism and a media-driven world. Utopias and dystopias abounded. The future was uncertain.

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Against this background, it assumed a salience seldom seen in Europe's long history of human settlement and ideas.

It was in 1968 that the Italian sociologist, Eleonora Barbieri Masini, joined the Institute of Social Research, Istituto Ricerca Applicata Documentazione e Studi (IRADES) in Rome. Her youngest child, Alessandro, was seven. She would now begin to inquire systematically into the social change swirling about her. There soon followed a remarkable career dedicated to nurturing hopeful visions for the future.

Masini encountered futures studies in the political thinking of French economist and political philosopher, Bertrand de Jouvenel, his compatriots Gaston Berger and Jerome Monod, the Dutch sociologist and historian, Fred Polak, American futurist, John McHale, and others. The driving force in futures studies in Europe then came from France. Masini recalls Pierre Massé, a high-level French policy maker in the 1960s. He had put directly into practice what de Jouvenel and Berger had explained so well, believing that economic planning must be viewed in a long-term, as well as short-term, framework.

Back then, says Moroccan, Mahdi Elmandjra, who would work closely with Masini in futures studies, the world system was generally open to diverse ideologies and opinions. There was a degree of mutual tolerance between the holders of different value systems. "We really had the conviction that cultural communication could work and change the world into a better place." Yet these assets were slowly eroded by the advance of what Elmandjra calls a *pensée unique*, the American way of life. This was a semantic hoax whereby Americanisation began to signify globalisation. The total failure of the models of development propagated by the World Bank and the United Nations (UN) agencies were having less and less power. Funds were obliged to follow instructions in Washington. Elmandjra used to work at the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

## 2. A journey to the future

For Masini, an interest in the future could have germinated in her childhood. It seems her family was always on the move. She was born in Guatemala. Returning to Italy in 1936, she and her mother soon had to go into hiding from the Germans. She believes a hope for the future may have lifted her beyond a bleak present.

Later, as a leading futurist, she maintained this hope against the tide. She has tirelessly engaged the future and encouraged others to do so. She has built relationships, many of them long-lasting friendships, around the world. Always she has searched for ways, "even if in the long term", to promote coexistence among differences in cultures, with their varying religions and values. To fail in following a vision to share the richness of the planet would only lead to conflict, death and disaster. Ever hopeful, she still sees a certain awareness of this need is alive, especially among the young.

When at university, she studied comparative law, and Roman and common law—all "very past oriented, but with possibilities about the future". Later, as a postgraduate in sociology, she began concentrating on social change. Her academic interest in studying the future had begun. She would become a leading reviewer, advocate and organiser of futures studies.

Her professional interest in the future may have been confirmed in October 1970 when she went to a meeting in Kyoto, Japan: *Challenges from the Future*. It was sponsored by the Japanese Society for Futurology and organised by people such as Kato Hidetoshi, Hayashi

Yujiro and Okita Saburo. Here she first encountered Austrian, Robert Jungk, and Americans, John and Magda McHale, and Jim Dator.

Dator and Masini consider Kyoto to be the second conference of a like-minded group who would form the World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF), an international nongovernment organisation that would benefit greatly under Masini's leadership. The first was the one that Robert Jungk, Johan Galtung and James Wellesley-Wesley held in Oslo in 1967, also attended by Kato. WFSF became an international nongovernment organisation, a truly global futures network, affiliated with the UN system.

At IRADES Masini organized courses and meetings on futures studies, inviting John and Magda McHale, Jacques Delors, Yehezkel Dror and others prominent in the field. In 1971 she invited Jim Dator to IRADES where he met the people who were to create the WFSF. The pair would enjoy a close working partnership in WFSF. In Rome the group explored epistemological issues in futures studies in order to create futures libraries, including the library classification system best suited to futures studies. This significant hurdle has never been scaled for futures studies as it has for other fields. As Dator says, futures-relevant books and materials still lie scattered throughout library collections, at least in America, although this may no longer matter in a digital future.

### 3. Futures studies in Europe

In post-war Europe, Magda McHale assures us, there were Europeans other than Masini, identified as futurists. But she thinks no one was more involved than Eleonora. McHale calls her the *Mother of Future Studies*. "Indeed, she was around much too early." People like her are needed among the new generation to carry forward her creativity. Magda McHale followed her late husband, John, as vice-president of WFSF until Masini became president in 1981. "But nothing could have been done without her", McHale believes.

Futures thinking was particularly important to Europeans then, as cultural identities and economic systems were being rebuilt. "Above all", says Masini [2], "it addressed the possible ways to overcome the human propensity for destruction". De Jouvenal, and humanist, Gaston Berger, used the term *prospective*. Their work took on with French speakers and later, also, with the Spanish-speaking world. In Italy the term is *previsione*. The English sphere calls it *futures studies*. De Jouvenal believed people were the builders of the social future and their decisions entailed choices from a range of possible alternative futures. Berger added the notions of choice, action and the proposal of change.

Italy was influenced by the French futurists, although Masini reminds us of the much earlier Machiavelli and Ovid, Tommaso Campanella and Gian Battista Vico. Unlike France, Italian *previsione* achieved relatively little awareness among decision makers and the general public. However, during the 1970s, three Italian enthusiasts emerged: Aurelio Peccei, Pietro Ferraro and Bruno de Finetti.

In 1968, Peccei had founded the Club of Rome together with Alexander King. It became a catalyst for *The limits to growth* [3], published in 1972, which helped Peccei rise to prominence worldwide, although he remained less well known in Italy. The book sold 12 million copies in 37 languages. King, a former scientific adviser to the British government, was attracted to Peccei, an Italian businessperson, by a public warning in 1965 about the dramatic changes taking place, especially in science and technology. The Club of Rome is a

think-tank of scientists, economists, businesspeople, international civil servants and politicians from the five continents.

Masini met Peccei in 1971 at a meeting of the European Council for Culture in Stockholm. They became close collaborators and friends until his death in March 1984. She was invited into the Club of Rome in 1975. Here she met world leaders such as Michael Gorbachev (former Soviet Union), Pierre Trudeau (Canada), Bruno Krinsky (Austria), Olaf Palme (Norway). And she met Federico Mayor, later secretary-general of UNESCO, for which WFSF has long enjoyed as association.

In those days, she said, given the fears about the world, it was crucial to have hope about the future and to do something about it. Together, Peccei and Masini set about building awareness within institutions for the potential of futures studies. Business was keen. But their scenarios were used mainly for corporate and marketing analysis and not disseminated more widely. She is disappointed there was so little interest within Italian politics and public opinion. In the early 1980s she remembers trying, with Peccei, to meet senior Italian government officials. One minister asked her to anticipate the major problem Italy would face by 2000. Her answer: The ageing of the population and the burden of pensions on public debt. The minister just laughed.

Peccei “invested his hope in human capital, believing that human resources were being under-used in the face of enormous scientific and technological capability”[4], Masini has written. He often visited the Papal Gregorian University in Rome where Masini was invited to join the Faculty of Social Sciences in 1977. She said Peccei brought a message of confidence in people’s ability to save the planet entrusted to us. She recalls a tiring drive with him through the snowy Appenines to speak to a group of young volunteers. “You know Eleonora”, he said, “maybe we ask too much of ourselves, but young people have a right to it”. Peccei died in 1984.

#### 4. Tireless advocate and organiser

Masini, too, is not afraid to give too much. With four granddaughters and one grandson, she worked full time up to the end of the 2004 academic year, in addition to tirelessly pursuing social change. Since retiring as Professor Emeritus she has retained a handful of Ph.D. students.

For Islamic futurist, Ziauddin Sardar, Masini is the true *grandmother* of futures studies. But he is of a younger generation than McHale. Igor Bestuzhev-Lada, a Russian, closely involved with the foundation of WFSF, thinks Masini one of the outstanding personalities of modern futurists and praises her organising ability.

Göran Bäckstrand saw Masini as a champion at networking, long before the term became a code word with the Internet. She found new ways to communicate between people and cultures. As a first-class educator she spared no effort promoting her interlinked interests of peace, gender and futures studies. Bäckstrand developed a deep friendship with her after he was “parachuted in”, in 1981, to succeed her as secretary-general while she stepped up to president of WFSF. “Eleonora brought me into an adventure with visions for the future, introducing me to a world family of engaged people from all cultures. We were also able to make the newsletter into a regular publication for the WFSF members.”

Mária Kalas Kőszegi, who met her during the 1970s of the Cold War, explains how Masini set out to make WFSF a real world federation, networking to bring under the same

umbrella people and nations very different in their economic and social development, with different ideas about their futures. She tells how her friend Eleonora engaged national leaders and the heads of international organisations with an optimism: they had to share the responsibility of ensuring a better, peaceful future. Knowing well of female sensitivities towards the future, she engaged as many women as possible, as well as young people. Some of these have become futures researchers and scholars.

Like most pioneers of a field, Sardar says, Masini has produced a legion of students imbibed with her passion for futures and concern for professional standards. She has left an indelible mark on the field. Not surprisingly for a cultural critic, Sardar thinks her work sometimes lacks the required critical edge. Yet he readily praises her ground-breaking work on women, change and cultural futures. He is unequivocal of her wisdom and her grounding in empirical research.

## 5. Futures studies as social science

Masini's background in social science has earned a following from futurists who consider themselves practitioners of "scientific" futures methods. But as with Sardar, she is widely admired for her building of the field and her written synthesis.

Another cultural futurist, Sohail Inayatullah finds in her thinking the capacity to weave together, skillfully, different strands of the future. He finds each strand remains true to its founding web and contributes to a new whole. There are many words to describe her, he says, the one most impacting on his career being *supportive*.

Eleonora Masini brings to foresight a *human and social* perspective [5]. While variously influenced, she shares the French tradition for an operative rigour, emphasis on the set of actors and an exhaustive search for alternatives (54); there is an ethical responsibility to consider all possibilities (53).

When creating alternative scenarios of the future, she insists that decision makers operating in great uncertainty need knowledge and understanding to anticipate the context in which they have to act. Before taking a decision on the future, they should prudently examine the socio-economic context at global, regional and national levels. In a world of ever-increasing change with growing interrelations between geographic areas and interests, the mental horizon must be broadened and extended (50).

Masini stresses humility. Drawing scenarios is an ongoing, provisional quest for new data that compares perceptions with reality (54). The data bank, as complete as possible, must be based on vigorous exploration of existing knowledge originating, above all, from the social sciences (54). Those who will use the scenarios need to take part, freely and exhaustively exploring the different ideas that emerge until the group is satisfied with the analysis (55). They should be careful *notaries* ensuring that a reliable and credible account is produced with respect to participants and the outcomes. Creative reflection should be stimulated, taking care not merely to reproduce the status quo (56). There needs to be imagination, with underlying intuition, balanced by controls and parameters that ensure rational analysis and collective validation of questions and interests (64).

## 6. Truly European

At Gregorian, Masini established the first course in Human and Social Futures Studies. It is still the only such course in Italy. Her university, which celebrated its 450th

anniversary in September 2001, hosts the world's largest theological department with 1600 Roman Catholic student priests seminarians, religious, and lay people from 130 countries. Most professors are Jesuit priests. The university boasts, among its alumni, 14 popes (including Pius XII, Paul IV and John Paul I), 20 saints and 39 beatified.

Gregorian dates back to 1551 as the *Collegio Romano* (Roman College). Saint Ignatio di Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, opened it to train his missionary priests. Pope Gregory XIII inaugurated it in 1584. Pope Pio IX declared it a university in 1873.

Masini is the ultimate European, according to Serra. Being European has affected her work as much as her work has influenced futures studies in Europe. But she knew numerous non-European futurists, too, such as Elise and Kenneth Boulding, Louis Mumford, Marshall McLuhan and Alvin Toffler. Having met such people, Serra is not surprised she launched into significant academic and ethical challenges.

Among the splendid company she has known, there have been many Gregorian students, especially Ph.D. students from around the world: from Kenya to Sierra Leone, from Brazil and Uruguay and from Sri Lanka to India and Korea. Of course there were students from Europe, including Italy. Most of them have stayed in a collaborative network.

Her course in Human and Social Futures Studies is being continued by Riccardo Cinquegrani, whom Masini worked with closely for many years. He has studied the role of futures studies, particularly the use of scenarios, by the European Union.

Eleonora Masini also touched many others beyond Gregorian, through her articles and books. A comprehensive record of her contribution to futures thinking can be found in *Penser le futur* [6], which is read throughout the French-speaking world. It updates the earlier *Why future studies?* which has appeared in Italian, Spanish, Catalan and English [7]. Inayatullah joins many others in calling this a classic in the field: a *must* for anyone seriously studying the future.

## 7. World futures

As well as her extensive contacts through the Club of Rome, she has made many friends and colleagues through WFSF to which she dedicated an intensive two decades. While still at IRADES, before Gregorian, Masini organized a special conference of the WFSF in September 1973 after its formal establishment in Paris earlier that year.

The need to set up a world futures federation emerged during the International Future Research Conference in Oslo in 1967, sponsored by the *Institut fur Zukunftsfragen*, Mankind 2000 and the International Peace Research Institute. A few months later, in the *Prague Spring* of 1968, a new enthusiasm for democratic values went on display more publicly across the whole of Europe, and beyond, only to be harshly repressed. There was clearly a need for open dialogue across East and West, in the context of their respective visions of the future.

The decision to form WFSF was made in September 1972 at a conference, *The Common Future of Human Beings*, in Bucharest, Romania. It was organised by the philosopher, Pavel Apostol, with support from Mircea Malitza, then Minister for Education in the Romanian Government of Nicolae Ceausescu. Delegates came from both sides of the "wall". WFSF was referred to the judgement of Mahdi Elmandjra, at the time a director of UNESCO. Masini believes the idea of dreaming up a federation was easier than the complexities of making it happen.

Dator has vivid memories of the crucial Bucharest meeting. It was held in a wood-lined auditorium in the city centre. A mural backing the main stage glorified pre-war socialist labour was backdrop to the main stage. The babble of translations in Romanian, English, French and Russian spilled out over the top of unroofed booths around the room. There was a diverse group of futurists from Eastern and Western Europe, the USA and Asia.

When a draft constitution was presented to a plenary session, a spokesman from the USSR demanded: Why is it to be called the *World Futures Studies Federation*? The Soviet delegates had been missing when the draft was being hammered out. Their spokesman insisted on the word *Future*, not *Futures* (plural), there being only one future, that of the USSR. There could be no alternative futures—the notion borrowed from futurists such as de Jouvenal. No socialist country would join, the spokesman argued, if the plural were used. Dutifully, according to Dator, the *s* was erased. But it unofficially crept back in.

Next year, in 1973, the WFSF was formalised in Paris, with de Jouvenal as founding president. It remained registered there until becoming internationally free-floating in 1995.

A special WFSF conference Masini convened later in 1973 was titled, *Human Needs, New Societies, Supportive Technologies*. She was helped by Wellesley-Wellesley, of Mankind 2000, then in Rome. The event opened in Rome's spectacular *Campidoglio* and continued in a former convent in Frascati, outside Rome. Dator, both McHales, Elise Boulding, Magoroh Maruyama and Harold Linstone were there to discuss their interest in futures research. So were futurists from the Eastern Bloc, among them, Igor Bestuzhev-Lada (USSR), Andrej Sicinskj (Poland), and Erzebet Gidai and Mária Kalas Kőszegi (Hungary). For the first time there were scholars from non-European developing countries. Romesh Thapar came from India and Samir Ghabour from Egypt.

Dator recalls an audience that Pope Paul VI gave for some of the futurists when he gently but firmly lectured, in Latin and then English, on the Church's science of the future—eschatology. Dator remembers hearing that he need have no real worry about things to come; they were already in very good hands.

## 8. Leadership in WFSF

Peace researcher and international scholar-at-large, Johan Galtung, took over from founding president of WFSF, de Jouvenal, in 1974. A Norwegian, Galtung had founded the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo in 1959 and the *Journal of Peace Research* in 1964. During Galtung's presidency, in 1975, Masini took over from the first secretary-general, Peter Mencke-Glückert (Germany).

Meanwhile, the WFSF executive council had met in Berlin in 1974. It discussed a proposal from Galtung to contribute to the establishment of the Inter University Centre (IUC) in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, now Croatia. Courses on futures studies were to be held there until 1990 when the building used by IUC was destroyed in a fire during hostilities between Serbia and Croatia. The first courses were directed by Galtung, then by Bart van Steenberghe (Netherlands) with Masini, and finally by Masini on her own.

Dubrovnik was to be the site for a WFSF world conference in 1976. It was organised on a budget of US \$2000, with almost all participants paying their own travel and accommodation costs. The general assembly in Dubrovnik reelected Galtung president and Masini secretary-general. It was decided to hold the next conference in Cairo, Egypt, in 1978.

Mahdi Elmandjra (Morocco) took over as president from Galtung in 1977. This began a close working partnership with Masini until he stepped down in 1981. Masini was elected president, holding the office until 1990. Under Elmandjra's leadership the Cairo conference, "The Future of Communications and Cultural Identity", was a success in attracting strong participation among scholars from developing countries.

Elmandjra recognises Masini's great belief in the human person and the future of humankind. He thought she had the right mix of academic knowledge, intellectual competence, love of others and a passion for whatever task she undertook. Her tolerance and sense of dialogue made her most easy to work with. "She was not only a colleague but a school for me. I am fully conscious of the privilege to be so close to her and the members of her small and big families".

People from diverse backgrounds who experienced the WFSF of the 1970s glimpsed a congenial environment that, according to Elmandjra, was marked by mutual respect and commitment to the betterment of the quality of life and the defense of dignity. He finds it difficult to have seen the world undergo rapid and destructive changes. A new atmosphere has brought about great corruption in the countries of the South, fewer and fewer representative governments and most unfortunately a demise of many members of the "intellectual elite" who have succumbed to cultural alienation, opportunism and mercenary practices.

Elmandjra believes Masini fought as much as she could to keep the train of future studies on its original rails. But, in his view, the bulldozer of liberalisation, globalisation and militarisation has had the upper hand. It becomes very difficult to defend peace and combat humiliation, he explains. Many of us saw all this coming. Some accepted and continued with business as usual. Others took a reformist attitude and believed that things could be improved. Yet others were a little more realistic and felt the only possible change is a serious transformation of the international system and a greater authentic cultural communication. Eleonora could handle all these trends simultaneously, he says. Her optimism is one of her greatest qualities.

Masini would continue the initiative with Cairo, to take WFSF to other places outside Europe, including China. She and Elmandjra were to respond to a suggestion from Rajani Kothari, of the Centre for the Study of Developing Countries, to hold a world conference in New Delhi, India, in 1979. It had to be postponed. Masini received the Indian Ambassador in Rome confirming the conference, providing that changes could be made in the local organising committee. After a series of laborious contacts with the other members of the Executive Committee in India, Egypt and Norway (at the time there was no fax or email) it was agreed that an NGO such as WFSF could not give into pressure from any government. Hence the New Delhi meeting was cancelled, and the UNESCO funds already allocated for the conference were lost.

Owing to lack of funds, no conference was held in 1980 though the executive council did meet in northern Italy (Val d'Aosta, St. Vincent) to decide on the election of the next president and secretary general. Given the financial constraints this was done by mail. There was no other solution if the organisers wished to avoid asking WSFS members to make further financial sacrifices. Mahdi Elmandjra having resigned, Masini was elected president and Göran Bäckstrand of Sweden was appointed secretary-general. They would take up their posts in 1981.

The next world conference would be in Stockholm in 1982. Selected papers at this, the seventh WFSF conference, were published as, "The Future of Politics, Governance,

Movements and World Order". Bäckstrand resigned as secretary-general. After the Stockholm conference, and was replaced by Jim Dator. There she began another close partnership until Dator became president after he in 1990.

The 1984 conference was opened in San Jose, Costa Rica, by Oscar Arias the nation's president who took the Nobel Peace prize a few years later. This meeting stands out in Masini's mind for the presence of members from China and the high female participation. A delegation of women from her birthplace, Guatemala, asked her to be their spokeswoman.

Dator hosted a regional meeting in Hawaii in 1986 with the pioneering theme, 'Who Cares and How? The Futures of Caring Societies'. There was enthusiasm for a world meeting every two years, with regional meetings interspersed to ensure an exchange of ideas.

The 1988 world conference was held in Beijing, People's Republic of China. It was a watershed for WFSF for many reasons, including an attendance by 200 delegates internationally, and 400 from China. The executive committee was received by Premier Li Peng who expounded an openness accompanying the market-oriented policies introduced under Deng Xiao Ping 10 years before. In less than a year, Peng would gain global notoriety for declaring martial law and bringing in the tanks to suppress an uprising in Tiananmen Square, snuffing out the many hopes engendered by the conference. China's future was to eventuate in today's stampede to industrialise, opening a social chasm between urban rich and rural poor.

Masini well remembers the difficulties of organising such an event in Beijing. She made several planning visits and relied on the help of Qin Linzhen from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. It was also helpful that her son, Federico, a Sinologist, was then at the Italian embassy in China. The theme at Beijing, "The Futures of Development", covered not just the economic, but also the social, political and cultural aspects. The sociologist, Fei Xiaotong, and the philosopher, Zhao Fusan, joined in discussions.

Masini's presidency of WFSF ended at the 1990 conference at Budapest, Hungary. This was a time of great change for Eastern Europe, emerging from its political isolation in Europe. With her many colleagues from the former Soviet Union, including Bestuzhev Lada and Gennadi Dobrov, she saw first hand how the climate had begun to change from the events held in earlier years behind the Iron Curtain.

From the 1970s into the 1980s, Erzsébet Nováky (Hungary) recalls how planners in scientific institutions and universities in ex-socialist countries came to recognise that the economy could not remain independent from social development. National plans needed to consider possible future alternatives; otherwise, they would be one-sided and short-term. Nováky was among a group of younger academics at the Budapest (then, Karl Marx) University of Economic Sciences encouraged by Géza Kovács to elaborate the principles of futures studies in Hungary and integrate them into the international literature on social planning and futures studies.

However, research was not permitted officially beyond the borders of socialist ideology. Hence, contact with Eleonora Masini became a unique opportunity; she opened new perspectives and brought academics into cooperation from both sides of the Berlin Wall. "Masini supported us professionally and personally by discussing economics and society critically". She contributed to a new dynamics for futures studies in Hungary, paving the road towards a flourishing academic life after the transition period.

Nováky says Masini used to visit the former socialist countries where she helped the planners to make exact sociological investigations and take the long-range consequences into account. And she worked hard to bring together representatives of futures studies and sociology. In March 1998, Masini's "marvellous personal magic" was rewarded by the Budapest University of Economic Sciences with an honorary degree. "I am particularly thankful to have known *Eleonora* for so long. She strengthened me with the methodology of futures studies; she was a role model for cooperating with other scientists; and she was a good friend and a marvellous, generous tutor", says Nováky.

Masini was an excellent organiser, says Maria Kőszegi. She always found time to get acquainted and engage in conversation. She formed real friendships. Cesar Villanueva (Philippines), who later became secretary-general (1997–2001), was touched by her capacity to see things in the light of futures and humanity. She wove foresight principles with the realities of life and made futures thinking meaningful to his work in peace, justice and development. Villanueva said she had the educator's wisdom and patience for drawing out the best in people.

Dator, who took over as president in Budapest in 1990, gives all the credit for the existence and good work of the WFSF during the 1970s and '1980s to Masini and her family. That is hard to deny, but Dator holds back from saying that they were close collaborators in the 1980s, particularly. Mention WFSF and the pair immediately comes to mind. Jim Dator credits Eleonora with all the necessary hard organisation and networking. He remembers that, when she was to travel, she would notify WFSF members in the neighbourhood and call a "mini-WFSF" meeting. Before email, or even an easy telephone communication, and when even mail was very irregular to and from Rome, he believes these brief, warm chats *were* the federation.

## 9. Personal life

Eleonora Barbieri Masini was born in Guatemala where her father, an Italian engineer, worked for 8 years on water sanitisation, malaria control and hospital projects for the Rockefeller Foundation. He was also a high-ranking naval officer who had trained at the Royal Navy Academy in Leghorn. He spent World War I as a very young submarine officer. Her mother was from Scotland, but grew up in France, Germany and Italy, speaking the languages of these four countries, adding Spanish in Guatemala. Her parents met and married in Rome. They left for Guatemala soon afterwards, as he was antifascist.

Eleonora Barbieri returned to Italy with her parents in 1936. Her father had been ordered back into the navy and by 1950 had been sent to sea. The infant Eleonora spent a great part of her time before World War II at her parents' home on the hillside above Santa Margherita. She still finds haven there from busy Rome. First she spent mainly summers at Santa Margherita, but after 1939 she lived there, walking into the village for school every day, until her mother decided as a British-born citizen, they had better leave for Rome in 1941. They left the house to friends. By 1942 it had been taken over by the fascists as an army headquarters. From the house there is a clear view of the tower at Portofino, where the Germans made their headquarters. Today, Portofino has become the country's "richest promontory", bedecked with impressive yachts and serious villas.

In 1942, Eleonora and her mother, using false names, went into hiding in a convent. They heard they were on an SS list to be deported since her father was in the navy and her mother a British-born citizen. The Irish sisters of the Mount Celio convent in Rome gave

them refuge for 2 years along with about 20 others—Jews, American and British officers who had escaped from concentration camps, and antifascist writers from different countries. In the convent her mother found people to teach her Latin, Greek and mathematics. She taught Eleonora English.

Eleonora enjoyed being with so many different people and her mother never made her aware of the difficulties, including the need to find food. The convent had a garden, but they were fed otherwise on the sisters' food cards and often went hungry. They did not hear from her father for almost 2 years. When the Allies liberated Rome on 4 June 1944, they were able to return home and wait for her father.

After the war, her father used to stand on the top terrace of the reclaimed house above Santa Margherita to watch the shipping in the Golfo di Tigullio. They lived the last 25 years of their life there, dying only 2 months apart, in 1979.

Meanwhile, Eleonora returned to school and eventually went to the University of Rome to take her first degree in Comparative Law (Roman Law and Common Law). At age 24 she married Francesco (Franco) Maria Masini. For 8 years she dedicated herself to their three children and studied a second degree, in sociology. She is grateful to Franco, an orthopaedic surgeon, who supported her throughout her professional life. Dator, Serra, Kőszegi and many others believe it was so very helpful that she had a husband like Franco who supported her independent activities in what they believe was a very warm and loving way. Dator's wife, Rosemary McShane, sees Franco as encouraging his strong wife to live the independent life, without an apparent complaint.

Eleonora and Franco's first child, Alessandro, is now an orthopedic surgeon and head of the Orthopedic Department of a Rome hospital. Andrea, a psychiatrist, specialises in young people, and is professor at the University of Chieti. The youngest, Federico, is a professor of Chinese Language and Literature at Rome University where he heads the Faculty of Oriental Studies. Franco died in 2000 and "left a great solitude in me", she says.

In her professional futures life, Masini could always rely on Anna Arista, to whom she is deeply grateful. "She is my alter ego". Anna and Eleonora worked together since both left IRADES in 1973. Anna works now at the Rome University.

One of Eleonora's graduate students, Fabienne Goux Baudiment, a professional futurist for 20 years, met her in 1996 at the Fontevraud abbey, a symbolic site for two women futurists. Now a French cultural centre, it was founded nine centuries ago by Robert d'Arbrissel, a man ahead of his time in recognising women's equality with men. Goux Baudiment, who translated *Penser the future* from English into French, felt like a child in front of this small woman. There was a paradox. Eleonora looked fragile yet assured of her authority—an "iron fist in a velvet glove". This is a theme often repeated.

When Serra first met Masini she was already in the pantheon of the field. "For months I was hearing about *Dottora Masini*". She turned out to be rather petite and very softly mannered. He could not figure how she was running the World Futures Studies Federation. What turned Serra into a *Mansinian* was her capacity to listen. As a green youngster babbling restlessly she would still pay attention to what Serra was saying. "I suspect it was because she asked how old I was. I was then 19 and I still remember her look". She only said, "Oh dear, my younger son is 24!" He thinks that is when she adopted him in the field. She always seemed to be over busy and never stopped travelling, lecturing, writing and teaching. She was often unwell and was always taking medicines. Serra thinks she is the most energetic fragile person he has met.

Kalas Kőszegi believes Masini neglected her own health while attending to her most important task, bringing together the people and countries of Europe. She travelled continually to central and eastern Europe to encourage people to get involved with WFSF.

To Serra, Masini is the stereotypical Italian lady with a sediment of British manners. There is a pinch of Latin conceit and a deep Catholic faith. Many would expect a rather conservative person, but she remains very progressive, particularly about the rights of women, children and minorities. “Eleonora finds a way to reconcile things.”

Friends tell how very much Eleonora still misses Franco.

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